

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE IMAGINATION MODEL OF DREAMING IN THE CASE OF THE DREAM SKEPTICISM

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Abstract

My intention in the following paper is to explore the epistemological consequences of the imagination model of dreaming in the case of the dream skepticism. I start off by distinguishing the dream scenario from other skeptical scenarios, and stating the problem of dream skepticism. After that I contrast the hallucination model of dreaming with the imagination model of dreaming. I accept that the phenomenal character of our dream experiences is more like imagery than perception, but I reject that in dreams we do not form beliefs. This is followed by showing the failure of Sosa's use of the imagination model of dreaming against the dream skepticism. At the end I try to indicate a way in which we can have the imagination model of dreaming with genuine beliefs and with some anti skeptical strength.

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1. The dream skepticism

One of the main preoccupations of epistemology since Descartes has been its attempt to deal with different skeptical scenarios. A skeptical scenario is a way the world might be which is, when obtained, incompatible with our reflective knowledge of certain proposition. In order to have reflective knowledge one must be able to defend one's beliefs against alternative explanations. This means that in order to know one has to know that she knows. For example the world might be such that I am deceived by Evil Demon, or that I am a brain in a vat, or that I am a part of the Matrix. If this were a case, then it would be incompatible with my knowing of some things I think I know – that I am not brain in a vat, that there is a real world I interact with. In order to know these I would have to eliminate the possibilities that I am a brain in a vat or that I am a part of the Matrix. The dream scenario is one important skeptical scenario. Right now I think that I know I am writing these lines. My knowledge of this should overrule any other explanation of my current epistemic situation. Among other things I should know that I am not merely dreaming that I am writing these lines. But, as the skeptic's story goes, everything that I think I know is compatible with my only dreaming that I am writing these lines. So, unless I can rule out the possibility that I am now dreaming, I can not know that I am writing these lines, even if I am in fact not dreaming.

Most epistemologists think that Descartes' standards for knowledge were set too high. According to them Descartes required absolute certainty as a condition for knowledge. In order to know, one has to know that one knows. This means that one has to rule out all alternatives incompatible with one's knowledge, no matter how improbable they are. In modern terms this condition is called Cartesian sensitivity. My true belief that p is sensitive just in case, if not p, I would not believe that p. This is a very strict condition, because, for

every contingent belief I have, it is easy to construe a situation in which that belief is false but I still believe it. Some propositions nevertheless satisfy the sensitivity condition. For example all necessary truths satisfy it, because, by definition, they are true in all possible situations. The proposition “I exist” satisfies this condition for another reason – even though it is possible to construe the situation in which I do not exist, the sensitivity condition would not be undermined, because in the situation in which I do not exist I would not hold any beliefs. But the fact that necessary truths and some propositions with special status satisfy the sensitivity condition does not provide much comfort. The majority of our beliefs still fail to meet this condition. All of our beliefs about the external world, past and other minds can not be counted as knowledge.

Ernest Sosa rejected sensitivity as a requirement for knowledge and replaced it with safety. This condition requires only that our beliefs be true in nearby possible worlds. My true belief that *p* is safe, just in case, if in most near-by possible worlds in which I believe that *p*, *p* is true. The brain in a vat scenario does not threaten my belief that now I am writing these lines, because there is no near-by possible world where I still have that belief and it is false because it is caused by a neuroscientist who stimulates my brain. The Brain in a vat scenario, as well as The Matrix scenario, is too distant to be a threat to my knowledge. The dream scenario, however, seems to be immune to shift from sensitivity to safety. I could easily be dreaming that I am writing these lines. Because I dream often, this is not a distant possibility. So the dream scenario prevents us from having knowledge not just because it makes our contingent beliefs not sensitive, but because it also makes them unsafe. The reason the dream scenario is able to do that is the following. The way the other skeptical scenarios describe the world might be requires imagining the actual as being fundamentally different (in the brain in a vat scenario we are just brains in vats being fed misleading sensations by a neuroscientist, in The Matrix scenario the world is a wasteland with fields for breeding humans). The dream

scenario suggests that the world might be the way it actually is, the world in which people often dream, and yet we could not know majority of things we think we know.

The skeptical argument from the dream scenario is really simple. When I am awake, well rested, under sufficient light, at optimal distance from my computer looking at it, I usually take myself to know that there is a computer in front of me. If I were just dreaming that I was looking at my computer from optimal distance in good light, I would not know that there was a computer in front of me. In order for the skeptical argument to work, the skeptic has to claim that my epistemic situation with respect to my knowledge of the external world (if there is a computer in front of me) is the same in both described situations. The skeptic has to claim that my evidence for claiming that I know that there is a computer in front of me is compatible with the evidence I would have if I were dreaming that there is a computer in front of me. In its usual form the argument works by showing that the content of my experience is phenomenally the same in those situations. Since there are “no clear and distinct marks”¹ by which it is possible to distinguish dreams from waking experiences then I could not know if I am dreaming, and consequently I could not know if there is computer in front of me. Furthermore, since the content of my experience is subjectively indistinguishable in both situations, I can not know whether I am dreaming now.

¹ Descartes, R. 1986: *Meditations on First Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press

2. The imagination model of dreaming

The skeptical conclusion is, in my opinion, a consequence of the traditional or hallucination model of dreaming. According to this model of dreaming, dreams cause non-veridical sensations. While awake we have sensory experiences (percepts) and we form beliefs on the basis of them. These percepts can be veridical or non-veridical. Veridical percepts are perceptions and non-veridical percepts are illusions or hallucinations. Dreams, as described by the hallucination model, give us non-veridical percepts which lead to false beliefs.

With the hallucination model of dreaming I would like to contrast the imagination model of dreaming as presented in the works of Colin McGinn, Ernest Sosa and Jonathan Ichikawa. According to this model we do not have sensory experiences or form beliefs when we dream. When we dream we experience mental imagery, and imagine things.² While dreaming about my cat I do not have hallucination-like visual experiences of my cat, and come to believe that my cat talks. Rather I form the mental image of my cat, and imagine that he talks. I will argue for the imagination model of dreaming as a more accurate account of our dreams, and I will try to see if it helps us against the dream skepticism.

The imagination model of dreaming comprises two claims:

1. The phenomenal character of dream experience is more like imagery than perception
2. I do not form (genuine) beliefs in dreams; rather I am engaged in some kind of propositional imagination.

These two claims are separable and I will say something about both of them. Colin McGinn³ considered dreams as imagistic and not perceptual experiences, but he is not entirely clear

² Jonathan Ichikawa „Skepticism and the Imagination model of dreaming”, „The Philosophical Quarterly Volume 58, Number 232, July 2008 , pp. 519-527(9)

³ Colin McGinn, “Mindsight”, Harvard University Press (2004)

whether the dream belief is a genuine belief or something that only simulates it. Ernest Sosa⁴ holds that dream experiences are possibly perceptual (he was not arguing for that), but in dreams we do not affirm content of experience or form beliefs. Jonathan Ichikawa⁵ claims that in dreams we have imagistic experiences and we do not form beliefs. My intent here is not to clarify their positions. I will try to characterize the imagination model of dreaming using parts of the analysis they provided. The conclusion I hope to achieve should be that in dreams we are engaged in imagistic experience but we form beliefs.

2.1. Differences between images and percepts

The following example should clarify what I mean by the claim that dream experiences are more like imagery experiences than percepts. I have a dream about a blue eyed girl. On the hallucination model of dreaming I have visual color experiences, the same kind I have when I actually see blue. According to the imagination model of dreaming my dream experience is color imagery. I have the same kind of sensory experience when I close my eyes and imagine what a blue eyed girl looks like. These two sorts of experiences are different in kind and not only in degree.

The main difference between percepts and images is that imagery is subject to the will. In this McGinn follows Wittgenstein and Sartre. The idea they all share is that imagination is an activity and under our control. This is not the case with percepts. As we can choose what to imagine we can not choose to see white wall as being green. David Sosa objects to this by pointing out that we have some control over our perceptual experiences, because we can choose what to attend to. I do not think that this remark shows that imagery and percepts are subject to the will in the same way. When Sosa says that we have some control over our

⁴ Sosa, E. 2007: *A Virtue Epistemology*, v. I. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Jonathan Ichikawa, „Skepticism and the Imagination model of dreaming”, „The Philosophical Quarterly Volume 58, Number 232, July 2008 , pp. 519-527(9)

perceptual experience this is not the same kind of control we have over our imagery. I can change my perceptual experience of seeing red to seeing green by turning my eyes from some red object towards a green object. This, however, is not the same kind of control I have when I decide to stop imagining some object as red and start imagining it as green. In the later case I performed the action that changed my experience directly, while in the former case it was possible only indirectly. But, and this is Sosa's second remark, imagery is not always voluntary, because sometimes we can not get rid of some annoying tune playing in our head or some disturbing picture. This remark is misplaced because even if we can not banish a disturbing picture we can still try to banish it. It makes sense to try to banish it; we say that we might banish it, although we fail to banish it. The disturbing picture is more like an unwelcome habit or addiction than an unwelcome chain of events.⁶ On the other hand, I can try to concentrate as hard as I might but the color of the wall is not going to change from white to green by sheer power of my will. A command like "Start seeing the green wall instead of white" is a confused command. This, I think, shows that images are different from percepts in kind and not only in a degree.

2.2. Dream experiences are images rather than percepts

So, in order to establish the imagination model of dreaming it is necessary to show that dream experiences are not percepts but images. Before going any further one interesting question could be raised. Whether the showing that dream experiences are images rather than percepts will entail that dream experiences are subject to the will in the same way the waking images are? My answer to this question, I hope, will be clear at the end of this paper. My intention is to propose the lucid dream model of dreaming as a help against dream skepticism. The lucid dream is a dream in which a dreamer is aware that she is dreaming. After realizing that she is dreaming she can shape her dream the way she wants. She can choose to change

⁶ Jonathan Ichikawa "Dreaming and imagination", *Mind and language*, Volume 24, Number 1 February 2009, p5

the direction her dream has taken, and instead of dreaming the assassins going after her trying to kill her, she can choose to dream an army of eligible bachelors going after her trying to win her hand. In this way she can decide what her dream experiences are going to be, and in this case, her dream experiences are under her voluntary control. If, however, a dreamer is engaged in the regular (non-lucid) dream, I think that we can say that the situation is similar to the one with an annoying tune playing in our head. Although it is not the case that anyone at any time can switch from the regular dream to a lucid one, with appropriate exercises it makes sense for anyone to try to do this. In the next step I will try to offer some considerations in favor of claim that dream experiences are more like images rather than percepts. I will say more about lucid dreams later. The following three differences are first offered by Collin McGinn⁷, but the way that I am going to present them in the following three paragraphs is taken from Jonathan Ichikawa.⁸

External perceptual stimuli. If I am dreaming and a telephone rings next to my bed I will wake up. I have an auditory percept of the ringing and it wakes me. According to the hallucination model of dreaming, if I have a dream in which a telephone rings, I would have the same sort of auditory experience I had when my phone really rang. But why then only the real ringing wakes me up? Although I often dream of hearing loud sounds, my dreams are never interrupted by them. If the hallucination model is correct, I should be woken up by the dream ringing.

Attention. When I am awake I can just notice something and then turn my head and take a better look at it, or I can, while sitting in the bar, have audio sensations caused by different conversations. I can choose which ones to attend to, and then I can understand them,

⁷ Colin McGinn, "Mindsight", Harvard University Press (2004)

⁸ Jonathan Ichikawa "Dreaming and imagination", *Mind and language*, Volume 24, Number 1 February 2009, pp 5-8

but I have audio percepts corresponding to all of them. In dreams, however, whatever I attend to is present. I can not fail to notice a part of my dream. If I fail to notice it is not there.

In dreams we can have indeterminate colors. In the 1950s most people believed that visual experience in dreams was a black and white phenomenon. According to the hallucination model of dreaming, one of three following alternatives must be the case: 1. our dreams become colorized in the late 50s; 2.almost everybody in the 50s was wrong about the visual experiences in dreams; 3. almost everybody today is. There is no similar problem for the imagination model of dreaming. We can have indeterminate colors in visual imagery. Since dream experience consists of images rather than sensations, in dreams we can have indeterminate colors. Besides indeterminate colors, in our dreams, we can also have indeterminate facts in general. I can have a dream about a girl without dreaming about her as being blond or a brunette.

3. Do we form genuine beliefs in dreams?

These were some considerations in favor of the claim that dream experiences are not percepts but images. Now I will present the reasons that Sosa and Ichikawa give for the claim that instead of forming beliefs in dreams, we are engaged in some kind of propositional imagination. Since I do not think that in dreams we do not form beliefs, I will also offer some criticism of their view. Let us return to the dream about a blue eyed girl. In that dream I have many beliefs. For example, I believe that she is blue eyed, and I also believe that my dark eyes are going to attract her because of the attraction of the opposites. On the hallucination model of dreaming, while I am dreaming, I really have these beliefs. On the imagination model of dreaming defended by Sosa and Ichikawa, the fact that I have these beliefs in my dream does not entail that I actually have them. It entails only that I am actually imagining that the blue eyed girl will be attracted by my dark eyes.

Jonathan Ichikawa described the following dream. “I have a dream in which I run into my mother in the mall, but she looked just like my former boss. But it was perfectly natural, within the dream, for that to be my mother; it wasn’t until I woke up that anything seemed odd about it at all.” When someone tells us a dream like that we usually do not think that he actually dreamed of his boss and somehow confused her with his mother. No, in the dream his mother just looked like his boss. According to the hallucination model of dreaming, the beliefs in dreams are formed on the basis of the percepts. In the described sense it would mean that Ichikawa’s belief that he is talking to his mother is ill-formed. If he had these sensory experiences in his waking life, he would form the belief that he is talking to his former boss. The imagination model of dreaming has no problem in explaining this fact. It is possible to imagine that one is talking to one’s mother and that mother looks like one’s former boss.

According to Sosa, beliefs are like other intentional mental states such as intentions in the following aspects. They are persisting dispositional states with some conscious manifestation (assent). St. Augustine considered a case in which someone dreams about intending to seduce his neighbor's wife. If he could really consciously assent to choices in dreams, he would be blamable for assenting to misdeeds: he is not blamable for assenting to misdeeds in dreams; therefore, he does not consciously assent to choices in dreams. So, the fact that someone intended something in the dream does not entail that he really intended to do that because his "intention" lacks conscious assent. Sosa thinks that the same holds in the case of dream belief. We retain most of our beliefs and intentions during sleep. If in dreams we formed belief, they would consist in dispositions. These dispositions would be incompatible with our retained beliefs. So if I believe that in my dream I am chased by a lion, this belief should manifest itself in a disposition to run from the lion. Although in my dream I am running from the lion, in reality I do not manifest the disposition for leaving my bed. Furthermore, as in the case of the dream intention, my dream belief also lacks the conscious assent. The "belief" that I formed in my dream was not real belief.

The described situation with a lion is similar to the earlier example with a phone ringing. In the phone case I was inclined to agree with Ichikawa and Sosa that the experiences we have while we are dreaming that a phone is ringing are different in kind from the experiences we have when a phone really rings. The reason for that lies in the fact that if the two experiences were of the same kind, then the ringing in my dream would also wake me up. Similarly, one might argue, in the case of a dreamt lion, if both the experiences of encountering a lion and only dreaming about encountering a lion caused a belief, I would, while dreaming that I am chased by a lion, try to escape from the lion in reality. However, although I am inclined to accept that the phone ringing case shows that our dream experiences

are imaginings rather than percepts, I do not agree that the lion case shows that in our dream we do not form genuine beliefs. I will try to offer some reasons for this.

According to Jonathan Ichikawa⁹ if we are to argue in favor of the claim that in our dream we form genuine beliefs, then we have to claim either that during dreams our longstanding beliefs that are inconsistent with our dream beliefs are temporarily abandoned, or we have to claim that we continue to have the longstanding beliefs, and temporarily acquire an additional, logically inconsistent belief. Either way, Ichikawa claims, we are eventually doomed to reject the claim that we are forming genuine beliefs in dreams. Since I think that in dreams we form genuine beliefs, I will present his arguments in support of his claim and then offer some criticism.

If I accept that during a dream my longstanding beliefs are abandoned what I have to accept is that it was not the case that, at 3 a.m. this morning, I believed that I was a philosophy student, if I was then dreaming that I was not one. I had this belief before I went to sleep and immediately after waking, but during the time that I am dreaming I cease to have this belief. If we are to claim that every night, during dreams, we suspend our longstanding beliefs and reclaim them immediately after waking, we have to explain this interesting fact. Ichikawa calls us to consider the following example. “Suppose I dream that academic philosophy is, and always has been, a front for an elaborate government conspiracy. Under ordinary circumstances, were I to acquire a belief with that content, it would come gradually in response to mounting evidence; there would be a period where I come to question my longstanding beliefs to the contrary. I’d eventually reject those beliefs in favor of the conspiracy theory. But there is no such transition in dreams.”¹⁰ If I have a dream like that, I do not always at the beginning of the dream confront evidence to that effect and at the end overturn my earlier beliefs. Although I can have a dream in which I gradually discover a conspiracy of

⁹ Jonathan Ichikawa “Dreaming and imagination”, *Mind and language*, Volume 24, Number 1 February 2009, p9

¹⁰ Ibid

philosophers from the beginning of that discipline, but I can only dream that the conspiracy is the case without dreaming that I confronted any evidence for that. Actually, I can dream that I always knew about that conspiracy and even being an important part of it. From this Ichikawa concludes that if dream beliefs are beliefs and our long-standing beliefs temporarily disappear, then we have cases of belief revisions that are different from our usual belief revisions. According to him if we accept that our long-standing beliefs are suspended during the night, then we have to explain why these revisions are so different from our usual waking revisions.

If, on the other hand, we accept that that during dreams we continue to have our long-standing beliefs and temporarily acquire an additional logically inconsistent belief, we must admit then that, during dreams, we exhibit a kind of epistemic irrationality that can only be resolved upon waking. This is not satisfying for Ichikawa for at least two reasons. First, to him dreaming does not seem to be an intellectually irrational activity. We are not required, if we are interested in our positive epistemic status, to avoid dreaming or to try to dream only truths. He points out that the target of this objection is not to show that it is impossible to have contradictory beliefs, but that our activities during dreams do not have the model of self-deception in which subjects might be said to have contradictory beliefs. Furthermore, I can dream that I am a famous basketball player. But, after waking up, I do not introspect my belief that I am a philosophy student, notice disagreement between that belief and belief that I am a basketball player and reject the belief that I am a basketball player. As soon as my dream is over, Ichikawa claims, all my dream beliefs are already finished and I do not have to reject false beliefs I have acquired. Again the problem is not that it is impossible to have contradictory beliefs; the problem is that dreaming does not fit this model.

One way of responding to Ichikawa could be to claim that dreaming usually does involve some kind of epistemic irrationality, and for that reason we do not usually base our

waking beliefs and actions on dream beliefs. But that fact does not show that dream beliefs are not beliefs. Although we are not required to avoid dreaming if we are interested in our positive epistemic status, usually we are not going to be considered as epistemically responsible subjects if we base our judgments on the evidence we acquired in dreams. If a judge asks a witness how she knew that events happened the way she described with such a strong conviction and she responds that she dreamt that, her testimony will not be considered as a strong one. Even in mundane situations, when I ask my friend if it is going to rain tomorrow, and she answers that it is not going to rain, and she knows it because in her dream she saw that it is going to rain, I would not believe her even if she is convinced that what happens in her dream is going to happen next day. What I am trying to say is that although it is not epistemically irresponsible not to take steps to avoid dreaming, it is usually epistemically irresponsible to take dream beliefs as a support for some waking decisions and actions. But this fact does not show that dream beliefs are not beliefs. It rather shows that they are not based in the right way.

Suppose I undergo periods of hallucinations that I always (or almost always) find out later on; i.e. I learnt that the last half an hour was a hallucination. It would be a mistake to base my beliefs on experiences I had when I know I was hallucinating. But, for all this, it still seems possible to be entirely rational while I am hallucinating. For example, I have a very life-like hallucination that Szt Istvan square is turned into a football pitch. It seems that I would feel some surprise, even confusion, how this was possible to do overnight. An hour later I learn it was a hallucination; so in the future, I won't base my beliefs on this experience. However, I was still rational while having the hallucination, and noticed the clash between beliefs. It's not like that in dreams.¹¹ When in a dream I find out that Szt Istvan Square is turned into a football pitch I am not surprised at all. I do not ask myself how it is possible and

¹¹ I owe this objection and example to professor Katalin Farkas

I continue to act as if it is completely normal. And Ichikawa seems to be right here when he claims that after I wake up my dream is over and all my dream beliefs are already finished so I do not have to reject false beliefs about Szt Istvan Square I have acquired. But this does not entirely cover how we act while we are dreaming.

One of the reasons we act like this in our dreams is that in dreams our cognitive faculties are diminished, and because of that we are not always aware of our longstanding beliefs. One of these beliefs is that almost every night I go to sleep, and the other is that I went to bed two hours before I saw that lion in front of me. If we add that in dreams usually I am not aware of my beliefs about the imagination model of dreaming and the fact that the lion is actually a product of my imagination, it is quite natural that I assent that there is a lion in front of me and I try to escape from it. The fact that in reality I am still in my bed and that there is no lion in my surroundings does not mean that I did not assent to the claim that there was a lion in front of me. The usual disposition that goes with that assent might be missing, but the assent is still there. We think that there is a lion in front of us, and we are trying to escape. We believe that that is really happening. The fact that there is no usual response to the situations does not show that there is no genuine belief. We are not really running because while we are sleeping our body is not behaving as it behaves when we are awake. This is also one of the long standing beliefs we are unaware of while we are dreaming.

When I was discussing reasons in favor of the claim that our dream experiences are imaginings rather than percepts, I considered the case of telephone ringing. I claimed then that the fact that only real telephone ringing wakes me up shows that in dreams we have different kind of experiences. Now it seems that I am claiming that the fact that while I am dreaming I do not act the same way I would act in waking life if confronted with the same situation, shows that what I do in waking life (forming genuine beliefs) does not differ from what I do in my dreams. I am facing a dilemma here. If I say that that dreaming is like being paralyzed

and that is why I do have disposition to run when I dream a lion that might imply, however, two further things. It could be claimed that in the telephone case I am not waken not because my dream experiences are imaginings rather than percepts, but because my ears are shut and I can not respond in the right way. In my opinion these cases could be considered as similar only if we assume that I was talking about the phenomenal aspect of having a belief. If so, I would rather abandon the telephone ringing case, because I provided other, independent, reasons for the claim that our dream experiences are imaginings.

The other horn of the dilemma is that maybe I do have the *disposition* to run, but the disposition cannot be manifested. Accepting this line of reasoning might lead to too much further complications – it could put us into discussion about the nature of disposition. The questions as if we wrap a fragile glass in bubble wrap so that when you drop it, it doesn't break, is the glass still fragile, can emerge and I can not discuss them here. If we are to claim that what makes a belief is only a set of appropriate dispositions then, because of obvious lack of these during dreams, we could argue that in dreams we do not form beliefs. If, as I am inclined to think, an assent is what makes a belief, then in dreams we do form genuine beliefs.

What makes the question of dream belief so difficult is the fact that the notion of belief is taken for granted. Sosa and Ichikawa never provided a theory of belief. This is of course a very complex issue, and I can not provide a theory of belief, but I will try to outline some properties genuine belief is considered to have and then try to see if dream believes have those properties.

Conscious assent is one of them. Whenever we form a belief, we assent to something. This goes for the waking belief, and Sosa and Ichikawa claim that in dreams we do not assent. With every belief goes a set of standing dispositions. We saw that a question about dispositions in dreams is a complicated one. A third feature beliefs have is that beliefs are more or less integrated with other beliefs. Often beliefs are not completely integrated, but

there are tensions among beliefs that people hold.]. This is true for most of our waking beliefs but in case of dream beliefs, it is not that clear. The final feature is that beliefs are efficacious in actions. Dream beliefs do not seem to always provide appropriate actions. It is not clearly answered by Sosa, Ichikawa or McGinn whether all of these features are necessary or sufficient for mental state to be a genuine belief. I will try to show what my opinion on this issue is.

4. Are we insane while dreaming?

When we are dreaming, our cognitive capacities are diminished. By that I mean that both our reasoning and our memory capacities are diminished. In a non-lucid dream I do not judge, when I encounter a lion, that I am in Africa, nor ask myself how I got there, nor do I judge that I am dreaming. This is helped by the fact that I do not remember that I went to bed two hours ago. But it does not mean that I do not really believe that there is a lion in front of me. It only shows that, due to my diminished cognitive faculties, I formed a false belief. There are waking situations in which we act in the similar manner but we do not question if we formed genuine beliefs. Let us consider the following situation. I have not slept for two nights before the logic exam. I try to solve the test, and all of a sudden everything becomes easy. The reason for this is that I proved the theorem which I used after that to solve some otherwise difficult problems. Unfortunately, in the “proof” of the theorem I used a rule of negating the antecedent. I become aware of the mistake two days after the test is over. During the test I really believed that my theorem was well formed, and my reasoning was well established. But, due to my sleep deprivation, I did not notice the fact that the logical rule I used was incorrect. The situation is similar in non-lucid dreams. When I dream I can not remember that I went to bed several hours ago, I do not draw the conclusion I would usually draw I was awake. I do not even ask myself how it is possible that I found myself in that weird situation. But, as in the case of the ill-justified theorem, I do form a false belief. Once I regain my reasoning capacities, I can realize that the theorem is wrong. In the same way, as soon as I realize that I am dreaming I can enter the lucid dream and correct my previous false beliefs. And the fact that I can correct those beliefs shows that I had beliefs in the first place. And the fact that the revision of our dream beliefs upon waking up does not fit the usual revisions we perform when our waking beliefs are confronted with new evidence, does not show that in dreams we do not form genuine beliefs. For if it were possible for a dreamer to realize that there is not really a lion chasing her but that she is in her bed merely dreaming that

the lion chases her, she could revise her belief about a lion going after her and this would fit our usual model for revising beliefs.

A lucid dream is a dream where we are aware that we are dreaming and by that aware of our long standing beliefs. Once we enter the lucid dream it is easy to compare our long standing beliefs with our dream beliefs. If we accept this line of reasoning, according to which dream belief seem to differ from genuine beliefs because our reasoning capacities are diminished, then we can see that non-lucid dream belief has a conscious assent, dispositions are not activated because our motor abilities are impaired, for the same reason they are not efficacious in actions, and, because of reduced memory, we can not compare them with our long standing beliefs. However, as soon as we enter a lucid dream, we recognize that we are authoring what is happening in front of us and do not assent to it any more. In a non-lucid dream, we mistake an image for a perception, and that's why we assent and have beliefs; however, we are prevented from acting. In a lucid dream, however, we recognize our images for what they are: images. In that case we do not assent to the dream experience. And are they really efficacious in action? They are efficacious in *dream* actions; but that's true of non-lucid dreams as well. If, for some reason, in a lucid dream I decide to dream that I'm chased by a lion, I still won't jump out of bed and run. Finally, we can compare these beliefs with our waking beliefs. This is a way for us to wake in our dream.

The non-lucid dreamer's position is similar to that of an insane person. We do not blame an insane person for assenting to her delusions. But that does not show that she did not assent. Actually it only shows that there exists an assent for which we do not blame her. Similarly, we do not claim that insane person did not form those beliefs. In situations like these we are inclined to ascribe beliefs to insane persons but to claim that beliefs are false because they are ill formed. When dreaming we are acting as temporarily insane persons.

“Dreaming is sleeping insanity; insanity is waking dream”¹² Percepts usually control beliefs, but sometimes the images can also do that. In both cases we may form false beliefs. It is happening almost always in dreams and delusions of the insane persons and only occasionally, via hallucinations and illusions in our waking life. Insane persons really assent to their illusions and they are unaware that they are the source of these illusions. Although the voices they hear and scenes they see are not happening in reality, their assent really happens. The healing starts when they recognize their own authorship over these illusions. In non-lucid dreams similar thing happens. Since we are unaware that various ordinary and extraordinary events taking place in front of us are nothing but products of our own imagination we assent to them as if they are really happening. The fact that events are not real does not imply that the assent is not real. In a lucid dream, we don't assent anymore. In this respect lucid dreaming is similar to the healing of insanity, supposedly when recovering from insanity, one stops assenting to their delusions.

¹² Colin McGinn, “Mindsight”, Harvard University Press (2004), p113

5. Sosa's anti-skeptical strategy

The imagination model of dreaming is introduced by Sosa as a better account of our dreams because it seemed that this model could help against dream skepticism. I hope that considerations from the previous paragraphs shook the claim that in dreams we do not form beliefs. So far I tried to argue that Sosa's account of the imagination model of dreaming, in so far as it assumes that in dreams we do not form genuine beliefs, is wrong for the reasons independent of its anti-skeptical role. In what follows I will try to show that even if we take for granted that in dreams we do not form beliefs, it won't help us against dream skepticism. Actually, that claim will lead to an even worse form of dream skepticism. A quick reply to the skeptic could be formulated as follows: „It is not the case that my belief that I am wearing jeans is threatened by dream skepticism, for if I merely dreamt those jeans, I would only *imagine* this; there would be no false belief.”¹³ My belief that I am in jeans is safe from the dream scenario, because there is no possible world in which I have that belief and it is false.

The problem is, however, that even if a dream could not cause my belief that I am wearing jeans, it could cause the experience which is subjectively indistinguishable from my belief that I am wearing jeans. These experiences are not indistinguishable in the sense that they are phenomenally same. The previous discussion, I hope, showed that they are different in this sense, because they are different in kind. Waking experiences are percepts while dream experiences are imaginings. This does not help us much because when we have these experiences, we can not discriminate between them. To discriminate between a and b is to activate knowledge that a and b are distinct. This means that when I want to know if the experience I am having now is different from my merely dreaming to have that experience, I would have to be able to point out to some distinguishing features of these situations, while I am having one experience or another. In the case of non-lucid dream I am unable to do this. I

¹³ Jonathan Ichikawa, „Skepticism and the Imagination model of dreaming”, „The Philosophical Quarterly Volume 58, Number 232, July 2008 , pp. 519-527(9), p 521

believe (assent) that those are real jeans, but I would assent this even if I would only dreaming that I am wearing them. If Sosa is correct and in dreams we do not really assent but only quasi-affirming, since, from the subject's point of view, these two processes are indiscriminable, then judging from the subject's perspective we can not know whether assent or quasi-affirming is happening now. So if the imagination model is correct, instead of worrying that my belief is false, I now have to worry "whether my belief is a belief!"¹⁴

In order to answer how I can know that my experience is not caused by a dream Sosa offered a two-step strategy. In the negative part he argues that the fact that while we are dreaming we are unable to distinguish whether we are dreaming or awake does not imply that we are unable to do that while we are awake. He compares it with being dead or being unconscious. I know that I am not unconscious, even though if I were unconscious I would not know that. So dreams are distinguishable from waking experiences if we can tell that we are awake (and not dreaming) while we are awake. The fact that we can not distinguish these states when we are dreaming does not threaten the knowledge we have when we are awake. In the positive part Sosa tries to show how we can know that we are awake while we are awake by arguing that the proposition 'I am awake' as well as the proposition "I am" has a special a priori status in a way that it is impossible for any of them to be affirmed falsely, because, if the imagination model of dreaming is correct, then in dreams we do not really affirm anything. ("Affirm" means "came to believe").

¹⁴

Jonathan Ichikawa, „Skepticism and the Imagination model of dreaming” 521

6. Criticism of Sosa's anti-skeptical strategy

In his criticism Ichikawa attacks both the positive and the negative part of Sosa's argument. In attacking the negative part, Ichikawa stresses that dreaming is an experience, while being dead is not. Although there are some states that can not be recognized from within, it does not mean that we can not know we are not in them. This is why for dreaming, we may sensibly raise the question "Is this experience which I am now having a dream?"¹⁵ Dreaming is an experience that we often have and it is such an experience that when we are having it, we can not tell that we are having it. Actually, it often happens that we are very surprised when we learn that the experience we just had was not a waking experience. So, it is not clear that the affirmation of wakefulness has the rationality Sosa suggested it does.

The criticism of the positive part is more complex but shows that Sosa is wrong in this part too. What Sosa tries to prove could be formulated in the following way: I know that I can not falsely affirm that I am awake, so it is rational so to affirm. „To affirm” means „to come to believe” and since we do not come to believe the content of our dreams we do not affirm while we are dreaming. What we do while we are dreaming is that we come to imagine. Ichikawa calls this activity quasi-affirmation. The quasi-affirmation is similar to affirmation in the same way that imagination is similar to belief. When we dream, then on the basis of the evidence we have in dream, we quasi-affirm. But we do not know that we are quasi-affirming. From an internal point of view, we go through a process that would result in affirming, were we awake; since we are dreaming, it is a quasi-affirming instead. From the fact that I can not wrongly affirm something does not follow that it is rational to affirm it. Because an attempt to affirm something may result in quasi-affirming it, and this would be epistemically wrong.

The following example may illustrate this. Suppose that I am captured and I can escape by swimming or by taking a train. If I escape by taking a train my road to freedom would be comfortable, because the train is warm. If I escape by swimming, my road to

¹⁵

Ibid 522

freedom, due the coldness of the water, would be miserable. But from the fact that the train is more comfortable than swimming it does not follow that I should try to escape by train, even if the risk of failure is too great.¹⁶ I would need an independent reason to think that I could escape by train.

The other part of Sosa's answer to a skeptic consists in trying to prove that, on the imagination model of dreaming, affirming that one is awake has the same epistemic status as cogito, namely that it is impossible for any of them to be affirmed falsely. If affirmed, they have to be true. The result of this is that, according to Sosa, I can have reflective knowledge of the claim that now I am awake and not dreaming. On the hallucination model of dreaming, on the other hand, I have the reflective knowledge of cogito in a way that dreaming is compatible with my affirming many things. If in my dream I affirm that I think p, then I do affirm that I think that p. On the imagination model of dreaming, it could be a part of my dream that I judge myself to be awake even when I am asleep, and, according to this model, in no position to judge or affirm anything. On the imagination model I can be in a state subjectively indistinguishable from one in which I judge that I am awake, even though I am asleep and not judging or affirming anything. So, when I consider how things subjectively seem to me it is arbitrary and irrational to say that I am not dreaming.

The problem could be formulated like this. Our aim is to have reflective knowledge. This means that we have to be able to defend our beliefs against alternative explanations. So in order to reflectively know something, I must know that I know. Since knowledge implies belief, if I am to know that I know, I have to know that I believe. But to know that I believe I have to rule out all relevant alternatives, including the alternative that I do not (really) believe but only imagine. The previous paragraph showed that I can not know this.

¹⁶

I borrowed this example from Jessica Brown "Sosa on Skepticism" *Philos Stud* (2009) 143, p 400

The result of introducing the imagination model of dreaming is worse than advocates of this view expected. Instead of helping us against dream skepticism, it put us into a position in which we, when confronted with a dream argument, lose even more of our knowledge than we were losing under the hallucination model of dreaming. Since the imagination model looks to me as a better way of explaining our dream experience I will suggest a possible strategy that can help us against this new sort of skepticism. As I said at the beginning, there are two aspects of the imagination model of dreaming:

1. The phenomenal character of dream experience is more like imagery than perception
2. I do not have beliefs in dreams.

One could hold the first without holding the second. It is possible to have the imagination model of dreaming, and acknowledge genuine beliefs in dreams. In this case dreams are similar to psychotic hallucinations. There is evidence that they are image-like, but they seem to cause genuine beliefs because people suffering from this are unable to recognize their own authorship over these hallucinations. The recovery of patients suffering from psychotic hallucinations starts when they recognize that they are the authors of the images they take for perceptions. I already suggested that in dreams, we are acting like insane people. Is there then a way for us to recognize our own authorship over the content of our dreams?

The problem of dream skepticism is that we can not recognize dreams as such when they occur. I hope that the previous discussion showed that the main assumption of the dream skepticism according to which there are no clear and distinct marks by which we can tell the difference between dream experience and waking experience is not true. There are some phenomenal differences between these kinds of experiences. This claim could satisfy some epistemic externalist, but an internalist would not be satisfied with idea that there is some external sense in which it is possible to distinguish being awake from being asleep. If we are

ready to accept this kind of externalism, then not only dream skepticism, but also brain-in-a-vat skepticism could be defeated. The skeptic may challenge me by asking how I know that I am wearing jeans now, and, if I am a disjunctivist I can reply that I have perceptual experiences as of wearing jeans. And if he insists and point out that I may just be hallucinating or dreaming this, I can respond that if I were hallucinating or dreaming I would not be having sensory experiences and beliefs like I am now having, but completely different kind of experiences. I can not exhibit here a criticism of this view, but I do not think that it is necessary because, in my opinion it is possible to find an internalist solution to dream skepticism. For a satisfying internalist solution it should be possible to show that from a subjective point of view it is possible to distinguish between those states. We have also seen that the insistence on the imagination model of dreaming on which we do not form beliefs in dreams caused an even worse form of skepticism. My suggestion is to accept the imagination model of dreaming on which the phenomenal character of dream experiences is more like imagery than perceptions, but I also suggest that in dreams we do form genuine beliefs. The question is whether the indistinguishability of dream experience is indistinguishability in principle or just a contingent fact, because the later does not imply the former. If there is only a difference in phenomenal character, than it may be that we can learn to be sensitive to it.

7. Can we know that we are dreaming?

Under the imagination model of dreaming our position is similar to the position of the schizophrenic who takes his delusions for real events but he does that just because he does not recognize his own authoring of those delusions. Lucid dream is a kind of dream in which we are aware that we are dreaming. There are know-how guides for lucid dreaming and some serious authors, such as Stephen LaBerge¹⁷, Michael Schredl, and Daniel Erlacher¹⁸ to name only some of them, claim that they can help us to recognize that we are dreaming while we are dreaming. According to this strategy, we could fight dream skepticism by developing the skills for recognizing dreams. The extent to which we can develop these skills is a contingent fact and it would not be the same in all persons, but it would at least show that it is possible to tell the difference between the dream experiences and waking experience.

Techniques for lucid dreaming teach us to recognize the dream content by teaching us to pay attention to some peculiarities that dream experience has. The basic exercise, for example, is to ask ourselves during the day whether we are awake or dreaming. We are supposed to do this whenever we feel sleepy. After asking this question we are supposed to check our surroundings. We should look at the familiar objects around us, count fingers slowly, or try to turn the lights on or off. If we are awake, then nothing unusual is going to happen, the familiar objects are going to have their regular features, the number of fingers is going to be the same, and if we turn the light switch off, the light will be reduced. If, however, we are dreaming, something unusual is going to happen, the objects are going to have unusual features, the number of fingers is going to change, and the level of light is not going to change, and that would mean that the lucid dream started. The repetition of these simple exercises is supposed to train us to check our experiences regularly. By mastering this

¹⁷ LaBerge, S. 2004: *Lucid Dreaming: A Concise Guide to Awakening in Your Dreams and in Your Life*. New York: Sounds True Press

¹⁸ Michael Schredl and Daniel Erlacher 2004: *Lucid dreaming frequency and personality* www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

technique it is possible to know if we are dreaming. This knowledge presupposes belief, but not anymore a belief in what the dream experience represents, but a belief that the occurrences I am witnessing are product of my own imagination. Again, the analogy with a schizophrenic is useful. In a lucid dream the dreamer is like a schizophrenic who after medical treatment realizes that the experiences that haunted him were nothing but products of his tormented mind. The lucid dreamer's position is even better because he can shape dream experiences and experience things impossible in reality. Because the entire time he is aware that he is dreaming, these extraordinary experiences are further means for distinguishing, from subject's point of view, between dreaming and being awake.

The aim of this paper, as stated at the beginning, is to explore the epistemological consequences of the imagination model of dreaming and to see if this model can help us against dream skepticism. Dream skepticism is chosen because dreams are not remote possibilities that can occur only if our world suffers some serious changes. We dream every night and we often mistake dream occurrences for waking ones. The skeptical argumentation based on the dream possibility ascribed this indistinguishability to the lack of clear and distinct marks between dream experiences and waking experiences. The basis of this approach was the hallucination model of dreaming. According to this model, these experiences are of the same kind. In dreams just as in waking life we form beliefs on the basis of our percepts: veridical in waking life and non veridical in dreams and hallucinations. With this model I tried to confront the imagination model of dreaming. The main claim of this model is that dream experiences are different in kind from our waking experiences. Dream experiences are more like imaginings than percepts. As defended in Sosa's and Ichikawa's works while dreaming about my cat, I do not have hallucination-like visual experiences of my cat, and come to believe that my cat talks. Rather I form the mental image of my cat, and imagine that he talks. I tried to argue for the imagination model of dreaming in which, while dreaming, we

do form genuine beliefs. I accepted the imagination model of dreaming for two reasons. First, I think (and I hope have provided reasons) that the imagination model of dreaming provides more accurate account of our dream experiences and second, it has better anti-skeptical potential. I revised Sosa's anti-skeptical arguments and tried to show that they end up in an even worse skepticism – not only that we are not sure if our beliefs are true, we are (if following Sosa) no longer sure if our beliefs are (really) beliefs. The imagination model of dreaming up to this point only showed that there are some differences between dreams and waking experiences. Unless we are inclined to endorse epistemic externalism, we are not going to be happy with the solution that claims that de facto there are differences but that it does not matter if we can discriminate them. The satisfying internalist solution has to be able to show that we can activate knowledge that the two kinds of experiences are distinct while we are having one or another. The way out is acceptance of lucid dreams. The lucid dream is a dream we can enter if we learn to recognize the differences between dream experiences and waking experiences. Once we are able to do this - and there are manuals with very simple exercise for mastering the lucid dream techniques - we can tell that what happens is a dream and, by the imagination model of dreaming, the product of our imagination. Our position in non lucid dream is similar to the position of an insane person. We wrongly identify the causes of the events we think are happening in our surroundings. And, as in the case of insane person, as soon as we learn that we are authors of confusing events we can improve our epistemic position. The confusion in dreams is an effect of diminished cognitive abilities we suffer while we are dreaming. Because of it we are unable to recognize clear and distinct marks of dream experiences. In this respect Descartes' lines from the Sixth Meditation could be understood. "So I should have no more fears about the falsity of what my senses tell me every day... This applies especially to the chief reason for doubt, namely my inability to distinguish dreams from waking experience. For I now notice that *the two are vastly different*,

in that dreams are never linked by memory with all other actions of life as waking experiences are.”¹⁹

8. Conclusion

The lucid dream is a way for us to wake in our dreams and regain our cognitive abilities. If I am correct then the kind of skeptical argumentation that relies on the hallucination model of dreaming and assumptions that there are no clear and distinct marks that distinguish dreams from waking experiences, and that even if there were those marks we would not be able to recognize them, has to be abandoned. The lucid dream approach, however, does not imply anything about other skeptical scenarios.

¹⁹ Descartes, R. 1986: *Meditations on First Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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