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“Meaning”, “Understanding”, and “Rule Following” in Dreams:
A Philosophical Investigation

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Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “a skillful man reads his dreams for self-knowledge.” From as far back as the Old Testament when Joseph interprets the Pharaoh’s dream and the prophecy he relates comes to pass, dreams have been considered to be revelations of knowledge—in ancient times knowledge from the Gods and of the universe, in modern times knowledge from the innermost parts of the self, knowledge revealing our truest natures. In the last hundred years so much experimental study and examination has been made of dreams that the mysterious, occlusive nature of the fading dream has been opened before our eyes. The work of many individuals considered to be both scientists and philosophers, such as Freud and Jung, has opened the inquiry into the nature of dreams, to the world. [Yet still, being able to describe all of the physiological occurrences in the body during the dream state and having access to so many studies of particular individual’s dreams, lay individuals and scientists alike disagree on what a dream actually is and what can be obtained from it.]

What is unique about this particular investigation, is that it will not focus on the work of Freud or Jung, or any of the great scientists and lecturers of dreams, but on Wittgenstein, a philosopher of language who has transformed the way in which not only philosophers, but the contemporary world as a whole conceives of language. The question of this inquiry is simply: “can we make sense of the content of dreams as the signs of a language?” This is an inquiry into dreams, but first and foremost, an inquiry into language. When one asks the traditional question, “does a dream speak a language”, or “can meaning be derived from dreams?”, the inquiry proceeds without a clear definition of terms. Much has been found by looking at dreams directly and trying to understand their dynamics. But moving through an analytical discourse on the nature of

“understanding”, “meaning” and “rule following” in language and then following this discourse into dreams solely in investigating the capability of its providing the conditions found to be necessary for the existence of these elements of language, may provide new results.

Many philosophers have expressed their ideas about the nature of language. This inquiry could not hope to examine a potential dream language inside of the parameters of all these different conceptions of what constitutes a language, what allows for meaning and understanding, and what they consists of, etc. So it seems wise to develop our analytical inquiry out of one set of concepts and this being the case it is easy to choose Wittgenstein. By agreement in the world of philosophy, his work on the nature of language has been of such a transformative scale that it has split the field into two divisions: 1) those schools that would say Philosophy came to an end with Wittgenstein and the distinctions he made concerning the impossibilities of language perform the trans-contextual inquiries into universals such as philosophy has sought, and 2) the schools that continue to do philosophy, but in a manner transformed by Wittgenstein’s writing. I can think of no other philosopher whose writing would be more suited to such an inquiry into dream language than Wittgenstein.

Grasping the concepts that Wittgenstein develops is a difficult task, as throughout his writing he presents objections to his own propositions and many times plays both sides of a contradictory coin. But for however many directions his investigations go, what surfaces are well developed ideas describing the nature of the most fundamental elements of language. Wittgenstein’s concepts are the grounding of this inquiry, the measures that must be set as to what ordinary signs in language are, before the potential signs of a

dream language can be examined. It is through analysis that his concepts begin to take shape, through looking at ordinary human linguistic expression and making observations, and then objections to those observations until the concepts are refined as much as they can be. The first section of the paper is written to provide this conceptual foundation of language, and I play the role an analytical objector, as does Wittgenstein for himself; the form of the concepts emerge not in presentation but inquiry. These are the tools of the examination of the content of the dream as possible linguistic expression; the analytical inquiry proceeds from the conceptual development of these tools to their application in the second section: "Examining the Dream." The determinations that are made exist, and are given life inside of active inquiry, inside of the conceptual foundation that the reader is part of creating through personal interaction with the propositions presented in the following pages, whether it be objection or agreement. It is the reader in the end, that makes the final determinations.

Section 1: The Concepts to be Applied

Wittgenstein begins the Philosophical Investigations with the intention of dislodging what he believes to be mistaken notions of 1)“meaning”, 2)“understanding” and 3)“rule following” in language.

A. Understanding and Internal Associative Experience:

The first misconception Wittgenstein speaks to is the notion that the grasping of the significance of any sign or symbol is a direct corollary of an inner process occurring in the individual. Wittgenstein attacks the widely held belief that experiential accompaniments or content such as an image held before one’s mind, are what is in fact constitutive of “meaning”. True, there may indeed be material held in the mind when we speak particular words and we may even find ourselves naturally inclined to make associations between a word and such a content that resurfaces when we exercise our understanding. But this is not enough to establish causal or even conditional association between word and mental content for Wittgenstein:

“At that word we both thought of him.’—and how can it mean MORE than that? But wouldn’t even those words be only a germ? They [themselves] must surely belong to language and to a content, in order to really be the expression of the thought of that man. If God looked into our minds he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of”(P.I. p.217).

If a different image, word, or association accompanies the thought of my father for every person who knows him, can we really say that the process of the surfacing of an association is of any significance at all in understanding?

“I have already remembered three times today that I must write to him.’ Of what importance is it what went on in me then?”(P.I. p 217)

This is a very difficult concept to grasp, that the images and other forms of mental content that we associate with signs, may be completely irrelevant to our “understanding” of these signs. Wittgenstein’s point demonstrates the fact that I can have “understanding” of the same sign while holding any number of different associations I carry of it. What is not so clear, and what is not proven by the fact that I can hold many associations of the same sign, is whether I can have understanding of a sign while holding no association of it. When I am a child and my dad points to a dog as he says the word “dog”, I most certainly learn to associate the sign of the word “dog” or the sound that corresponds to the word, with my dog or an image of my dog. It seems to me that my “understanding” exists inside of this association. How am I to imagine “understanding” free of any association what-so-ever, “understanding” inside of what seems to be nothing but thin air?!

When someone defines the names of colours for me by pointing to samples and saying “This colour is called ‘blue’, this ‘green’...” this case can be compared in many respects to putting a table in my hands, with the words written under the colour-samples...—One is now inclined to extend the comparison: to have understood the definition means to have in one’s mind an idea of the thing defined, and that is a sample or picture. So if I am shewn various different leaves and told “This is called a ‘leaf’”, I get an idea of the shape of a leaf, a picture of it in my mind.

It seems that this process describes the steps that must be followed for “understanding” to exist and yet there is a great complication with this method of necessary association of content and sign when we do not speak of particular things, but things in general:

-- But what does the picture of a leaf look like when it does not shew us any particular shape, but ‘what is common to all shapes of leaf’? Which shade is a ‘sample in my mind’ of the colour green—the sample of what is common to all shades of green?

“But might there not be such ‘general’ samples? Say a schematic leaf, or a sample of pure green?”—Certainly there might. But for such a schema to be understood as a schema, and not as the shape of a particular leaf, and for a slip of pure green to be understood as a sample of all that is greenish and not as a sample of pure green—this in turn resides in the way the samples are used.(P# 74)

So now in order for this association method to work, I must have associations for every particular leaf and shade of color, as well as general associations for situations when I am speaking of no particular leaf or shade of color, just “leaves” or “green” in general. It appears as if I am merely choosing a particular shape of a leaf, or shade of “green” to be my association for the thing in general, since the image that I hold of “leaf” must have some general resemblance to a real leaf lest it becomes so formless that it could be taken as any object. There must be a boundary here. This makes for the dynamic that “whoever sees a sample like *this* will in general use it in *this* way, and whoever sees it otherwise in another way.” (P.I. P# 74) And there is nothing wrong with the fact that I have different associations of ‘leaf’ than someone else, as the sign is not equal to the association.

Finding a schematic representation for all “leaves” or some representative shade of green for the spectrum of all that is “green” does not leave me satisfied with the idea that I can find a schematic image or content for all words taken outside of limited instance. Perhaps the example of trying to find an association for the word “game” can illustrate this difficulty:

I can *use* the word game “for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is not closed by a frontier... For how is the concept of a game bounded? What still counts as a game and what no longer does? (P.I. P# 68)

What is one element common to all things called “games”? Some are played on boards,

or on a field, while some have no playing surface and take place in the mind. Some have winners and losers, while some do not. Some have time limits or other clearly defined sets of rules, while others have no rules at all. Games do not even share a common purpose. Some are for fun and entertainment; some and for serious competition. There are relationships that can be seen between one type of “game” and another, but “can you give a boundary? No...” (P.I P# 68)

But this is not ignorance. We do not know the boundaries because none have been drawn... To repeat, we can draw a boundary for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable. [Does it take an association?] Not at all!

No more than it took the definition: 1 Pace = 75 cm. to make the measure of length ‘one pace’ usable. (P.I. P#69)

I have been using the word “game” throughout my entire life without ever having given it such a precise boundary. And it does not work to say here that every time I used “game” it was in such a limited particular instance such as “let’s go and play a ‘game’ of tennis”, that the particularity of the situation endowed the boundary-less “game” with more precision. How many times have I said in my childhood, “let’s make up a game” using “game” precisely in all of its boundary-less character.

One might say that the concept ‘game’ is a concept with blurred edges.—“But is a blurred concept a concept at all?” Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all.” Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn’t the indistinct one often exactly what we need?

Frege compares a concept to an area and says that an area with vague boundaries cannot be called an area at all. This presumable means that we cannot do anything with it.—But is it senseless to say: “Stand roughly there”? (P.I. P#71)

When as a child I say: “lets make up a “game” and someone asks me what image I have in my mind when I say “game”, I respond: “I don’t know, I don’t think anything was.” Yet I was using the word “game” in a certain way, a way that communicated my meaning. I have today written a portion of this paper making *use* of hundreds of words

without an image ever coming into my mind associated with any of them. Where does my “understanding” of these words lie? It is certainly not in my mind then, but rather in whatever mechanical process is the very typing of the words and my placing them together in sentences according a shared system of “rules” that give them “meaning” for those that read them. I really can exercise “understanding” with no associative content in my mind and I can see also that Wittgenstein has turned upside down the concept of “understanding” that I have held as stemming from some deep internal locus of comprehension. “Understanding” appears to be something much more active, something that lies in the very application of signs in language.

Wittgenstein continues to develop this concept of “understanding” that lies outside of the category of internal associative activity by separating “understanding” from the realm of sensation and other experiential modes. States of experience traditionally call to mind conditions such as sadness, pain, depression, anxiety, excitement, happiness, and loneliness. For Wittgenstein, these “experiential” states are as much processes of the mind, as is imagination, the process of dwelling in an internal realm of picture and or sound. Wittgenstein has just said that “understanding” may be accompanied with one of these states, but it is certainly not constituted by them, nor does it need to be accompanied by any experience *whatsoever*. How is this possible? What differentiates understanding from other mental processes? Wittgenstein argues that understanding, if it is to be called a state, is something wholly different from the mental and emotional states that house sadness, anxiety, etc. in that they relate to time and temporality in a completely unique manner.

“We say: ‘He was depressed the whole day.’ He was in great excitement the whole day.’ ‘He has been in continuous pain since yesterday.’ We also say ‘since

yesterday I have understood this word.’ ‘Continuously’, though?—To be sure, one can speak of an interruption of understanding. But in what cases? Compare: ‘When did your pains get less?’ and ‘When did you stop understanding that word?’(P.I. P# 149)

It seems clear that understanding is not emotion (even if some emotions are associated with particular understandings for individuals). But someone could now say: “Certainly holding an image before one’s mind is something different from being happy or excited. How can these things be placed into the same category as mental experience? But it is easy to see that the surfacing of the image associated with a particular understanding can come and go like a pain and another one can become associated with the same bit of understanding, while the understanding itself does not come and go like my headache. This is Wittgenstein’s point and he has made it well. My “understanding” of a word does not come and go with the passing wind.

Yet still there are times when I say “my understanding has left me!” It has been two years since I have taken calculus, and my “understanding” of how to apply this formula has faded. But then again, in my lifetime, I will never lose my “understanding” of the word book (unless I incur damage to my brain). It seems that there is a different level to which I can grasp something, or master an ability. I have lost my “understanding” of most of the calculus I knew, but will never lose my ability to perform addition. Is one type of “understanding” a “truer” form than the other? Is Wittgenstein speaking only of the more permanent kind of understanding? In any case I can understand the difference between losing my “understanding” (taken in the sense of ability to use a sign) and losing a pain.

If my “understanding” does not coincide with a mental image, emotion or other state of experience, it looks as if what is going on internally when I am “understanding” must be blank. It is the case, as I know from being a lifetime chess player that I can be exercising my understanding and be emotionally sterile, using the pieces that are expressions of a rule, just as a word in language is an expression of a rule, without having any image, thought, or feeling. The signs of language are audio and visual representations of the rule that are their use, just as a chess piece is a three dimensional representation of the rule that is its use, e.g.--unlimited movement on a rank or file, one space in any direction. Exercise of understanding in chess, at least in following the rules of the game, is mechanical and unthinking just as is typical conversation about practical occurrences, or my experience mechanically writing the words most expressive of my deliberate meaning. It makes sense how Wittgenstein can say that understanding is not held within any mental process; he believes it to be something so unreflective, that it is at the level of performing mechanical function.

B. Understanding as Ability in Action: Application of Rules

Wittgenstein uses the statement “Now I know how to go on”(P.I. P#179) to designate when “understanding” has occurred.

“We can also imagine a case where nothing at all occurred in B’s mind except that he has suddenly said “Now I know how to go on”—perhaps with a feeling of relief; and that he did in fact go on working out the series without using a formula”(P.I. P# 179).

Here a person understands how to go on in working out a series. This may be any kind of series: a mathematical series or geometric series, or series of chess moves. In the next

proposition, Wittgenstein gives the words *"This is how these words are used"* a seeming description of rules of application for the set of words and then says:

"It would be quite misleading, in this last case, for instance, to call the words 'a description of a mental state.' – One might rather call them a 'signal'; and we judge whether it was rightly employed by what he goes on to do. P.180.)

→ In order to understand this, we need to also consider the following: suppose B says he knows how to go on—but when he wants to go on he hesitates and can't do it: are we to say that he was wrong when he said he could go on, or rather that he was able to go on then, only now is not? (P.I. P#179).

Earlier notions of understanding as something occurring in the internal recesses of the human mind and demonstration of that understanding in action as only a sign or symptom of true understanding, might deduce that this person failing "to go on" did not have true understanding. Wittgenstein argues that understanding is, in fact, in this capacity to use the sign correctly, this ability in action.

Is Wittgenstein equating "understanding" of a language with "understanding" of how to ride a bicycle, to drive a car, to ski, to type a type 60 words a minute. Can speaking the English language be added to the end of this list? With time I mechanically learn how to perform functions that I had difficulty with in the beginning. With repetition skills may be developed to such a mechanical proficiency that the only possibility of failure of correct application is to deliberately break the rule. How hard is this to accomplish! One must plow against formed inclinations. I may intend in my mind to stop performing the function in a certain way, and yet my body betrays me. This is more evidence that what has been at work in performing the tasks has not been a conscious rule following.

Perhaps a child learns to speak through mimicry. My dad points to a dog and I say "dog". I thought I learned through the association I made of "dog" to the image of my

dog. But the fact that I can throw this association away and still use the word “dog” correctly shows that it has been engrained in me to a mechanical, unthinking, level. This explanation of “understanding” also explains the phenomenon of “forgetting calculus”. The forgetting did not happen in some internal mindful place. It was never performed enough to become part of the machine-like capability I have that applies math rules. 2 or 3

the mechanical tendency. I am reading a book and saying the words out loud and yet my mind is elsewhere. To all who hear me I read perfectly. I seem to be driven by some mechanism.

But the words “now I know how to go on” seem so conscious! They seem so un-mechanical and deliberate. Does our rule following behavior begin in a place of conscious awareness of the fact that “I know how to go on” and become mechanical with time? The word “know” in Wittgenstein’s phrase, “now I *know* how to go on”, is what is creating confusion for me. I do not have a good enough grasp of the distinction between “knowledge” and “understanding.” I have conceded my old opinion, that “understanding” is a mental process but I am not ready to say that knowledge lies outside of the mind as well. And in this phrase, “now I know how to go on”, “understanding” occurs for me in the moment that I “know” something; the two words are tied together. I am taught the rules of chess and exclaim “Now I know how to go on!” What do I know? I know how to follow a rule. I say also “I know how to ride a bike”, “I know how to ski”, I know how to perform this function or that. But however mechanical the performing of the function may be, isn’t there some spark of thought or intelligence connected to my mechanical abilities that lets me “know” in my mind that they are now ready for action, or capable of the action. If “understanding” lies in my ability to apply signs in certain ways, then I

“understand” English when I am speaking it and “understand” how to play the piano when I am playing. It is fine to say that my understanding isn’t somewhere inside my mind, as I may be demonstrating “understanding” while mechanically “reading” sounds corresponding to words the whole time occupying my mind with other things so that I comprehend nothing. But if “understanding” has been relegated to the realm of the mechanical and the unthinking, there must be a thinking part of ourselves that is cognizant of what is “going on”, aware of the actions that we are performing.

→ The word “Understanding” for Wittgenstein does not encompass “awareness” but “ability” so the “know” in “I know how to go on” must be the ^{ability?} awareness speaking. The other phrase he gives, “now I can go on” with the “know” absent seems also to be the awareness speaking, even if the awareness is of the ability to perform a mechanical process. Contemplating the implications of the proposition that our “understanding” is mechanical and not mindful is a rather frightening thought until the realization is made that I am aware of all my mechanical acts, that my mechanical rule following behavior is coupled with thought directing our mechanisms. The example of writing this paper is perfect as there is an incredibly thoughtful and deliberative element of working out concepts and then beneath this is the more mechanical, less reflective procedure of applying the signs that are the carriers of meaning. I am not thinking when I write the word “the”, or punctuate a sentence, or type. These rules are being followed blindly. Yet I am aware that I am mechanically, and thoughtlessly performing the function of typing.

The question of how fixed the rules I am blindly applying are, seems to jump out at me now in this point of the discussion. It is true that to a greater or lesser extent, I can mechanically choose and type the words that must correspond my meanings to the signs

that are most suitable for their expression. But how often have others read my paper and not received the meaning I wished to express? We are speaking the same language!—or so I thought. I now notice that I do indeed many times deliberate about words to use. This makes my rule following in writing English less mechanical and more deliberate. Don't say I can be deliberately mechanical! Can following a rule be a thoughtful thing? But Wittgenstein speaks of being a "master" of the use of a word, of a "language", and of a "technique". Perhaps, in terms of expressing my meanings in English, I am as of yet, a novice.

C. Meanings as Rules- The Determinations of Use

The question here then is if to the extent that I am not a master of using words and speaking English, to the extent that their uses have not been perfectly drilled in and mechanized, I must sort, compare and evaluate with my mind, until I find the correct and best rule to apply. It must also be considered whether using words to express meanings in language can ever be as precise as applying formulas in mathematics. When I am

→ deliberating over two words to use, I am deliberating over the that rules confine their application so that I may find the best carrier of my significance. The signs and characters of this paper have meaning in so much as they have determinations of use. Each meaning

→ is a determination of the signs use and is like a rule in the sense that it dictates certain applications of each sign. From this description of meaning, one can arrive at the popular statement made of Wittgenstein's work, that "meaning is use." Saying that the uses of the signs of language are "determined" makes it seem as if there should be no question for me what word to use in any particular circumstance, and yet sometimes I have great difficulty. Is it because I am not a master of word usage, or because the inexactness of

this language will always require a degree of interpretation? Even when I don't have difficulty choosing words and believe my expression to be the perfect representation of my meaning, others may not understand me!

In Proposition 81, Wittgenstein states that he did at one point "think that if anyone utters a sentence and means or understands it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules." If this were the case and English were as fixed a system as calculus, then the phrase "master of a technique" would have much more force. I am a chess player in the midst of my deepest calculations in the middle of a game. I look at every possibility I have and calculate my opponents' best possible responses. There may be four or five and following these a myriad of possibilities of my responses and then my opponents' retaliations again. The simple less reflective chess that I mentioned at the beginning in which I held no thought has transformed. Each move is now much slower to make, just as writing this paper may take longer to select words for than when having a simple conversation. But what has changed really? I am still following rules, but some effort and reflection is involved. What happens when the deliberative seems to be intertwined with the mechanical? What is this deliberative element? If it is interpretation, my thoughts filling in the gaps of unclear rules, ² ~~than~~ I am not really following rules anymore, and the process of interpretation is what is slowing things. But this is not the case in chess, I must evaluate every chain of moves possible and the desirability of every outcome according to rules that are perfectly clear. It just takes time. There may be a point at which my mind breaks down in trying to follow the rules, just as if a part of a machine broke. I just said "mind" and yes it sure does feel as if I use my mind. Is this an illusion? All I am working with are rules, but the formula is such and the process long enough that I have to hold

results somewhere temporarily and compare and decide. But all my comparisons and decisions, things usually associated with thought, are made according to rules. There is no degree of freedom for opinion if I am truly a “master of a technique” and this is the entirety of the point I wish to make here. It does not matter that my rule following here takes time. The fact that I have to reflect and deliberate does not make the mechanical nature of what I am doing any less mechanical, nor does it make it a less blind form of rule following.

Wittgenstein distinguishes rule following as being blind so long as I have no ultimate reason for making the move I make or for speaking the words I speak. Why do I move my queen this way? Because this is how a queen moves. Why do I call this color red? Because this is what it is called. Why do I take so long then to follow a rule in the middle of a chess game and give a long strategy-based answer as to why I moved the way I did? Only because I have not described the complexity of rules at place, that if I am aware of, have only one application that I must follow. The rules of chess are certain, and if I am a master of them, no matter how long it takes me to implement them, they are blind. Can the mind assist in following rules as a machine?

Wittgenstein does however, recognize that speaking can never hope to be the same sort of activity as solving a math problem or operating a calculus.

I said that the application of a word is not everywhere bounded by rules. In philosophy we often compare the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using our language must be playing such a game. (P#81)

I deliberate over which of my words to choose, not because this rule following procedure is a slower one like that of calculating the best move in a chess game, but because the

rules are less fixed and exact than chess or mathematics. So I make interpretations, and follow my intuition in cases. I let my emotion and associations for a word come into my blind rule following of their application and this process becomes less blind. This is not to say that there is not a great degree of determinacy of the meanings or the determinations of the uses of words. If this were not so there would be no possibility of communication.

D. Interpretation: Clarification of Rules and Meanings

The need for clarification of meanings of signs in communication results in interpretations being made of words, and then confusion of this act of “interpretation” with “understanding”. It is somewhat difficult to understand what exactly Wittgenstein means by “interpretation” as he makes statements that give us as readers two different senses of how he is using the word. When I look into myself to find what I mean when I say “interpret”, I find that I want to say something like “make a subjective determination as to the intended meaning of another’s expression so that I can “go on”. Wittgenstein describes interpretation as 1) “a rule determining the application of a rule”(P.I. P#84) and 2) the substitution of one expression of the rule for another”(P.I. 201) Like an image corresponding with “understanding” of a word, “understanding” may also seem to come for a person inside either of these explanations of interpretation, and therefore become confused, as is the tendency with the “habitual association or mental content”, as a necessity of understanding. It is true that determinations of meaning are made through definitions 1 and 2 of “interpretation”: the “understanding” of an unfamiliar word may appear to be found in equating the rule of use of this word with one already known. In

order to fully develop the concept of “understanding” as blind application of rules, Wittgenstein develops these two concepts of interpretation, to reject them as processes constitutive of understanding.

Looking at the first concept of interpretation, my creating “a rule to determine the application of a rule” in language, I can see that this is only necessarily where there is some sort of gap in understanding. People are speaking according to rules of language, I am understanding their intended meaning more or less accurately, depending on the degree to which I understand the rules of usage of the words and expressions that I am hearing. Wittgenstein uses the word “interpretation” as a clarifying determination made as to the correct application of an unclear rule, so that it can be applied or followed. This seems to resemble what we think of understanding. I do not know how to use the rule, so I “interpret” or “determine” of my own capacity how it is to be used so that I can say “I understand, I know how to go on.”

A rule stands there like a sign-post.—Does the sign-post leave no doubt open about the way I have to go? Does it shew which direction I am to take when I have passed it; whether along the road or the footpath or cross-country? But or in the opposite one?—And if there were, not a single sign post, but a chain of adjacent ones or of chalk marks on the ground—is there only one way of interpreting them? So I can say, the sign-post does after all leave no room for doubt. Or rather: it sometimes leaves room for doubt and sometimes not”(P.I. P#85)

Here Wittgenstein paints a picture of “interpretation” as that process which resolves the doubt that exists when trying to apply a rule, when trying to follow the sign-post. And if there is “only one way of interpreting them” after one has grasped the rule, then the term “interpretation” really has no significance at all. This language would be a calculus, and there are no interpretations in math. There is simply rule following. Interpreting in this sense, only exists inside of the possibility of doubt, as it is its resolution.

Suppose I give this explanation: 'I take 'Moses' to mean the man, if there was such a man, who led the Israelites out of Egypt, whatever he was called then and whatever he may or may not have done besides.—But similar doubts about 'Moses' are possible, about the words of this explanation (what are you calling 'Egypt', whom the 'Israelites', etc.?). Nor would these questions come to an end when we got down to words like 'red', 'dark', 'sweet'.-- "But then how does an explanation help me to understand, if after all it is not the final one? In that case the explanation is never completed; so I don't understand what he means, and never shall! As though an explanation as it were hung in the air unless supported by another one. Whereas an explanation may indeed rest on another one that has been given, but none stands in need of another—unless we require it to prevent a misunderstanding

P.I. P#87

It seems that when Wittgenstein says that these questions do not “come to an end with words like ‘red’, he simply means that there simplicity does not enhance their clarity. We may need as much of a clarifying explanation when told to paint a “dark” “blue” picture as we do in understanding what someone means by “Armenian”, or “Arabic.” By Armenian do you mean “those that speak Armenian, or those that live in Armenia, or must it be both? What shade of a blue are you envisioning, and how intense of a “dark” blue do you mean? Is the “doubt” a phenomenon of human subjectivity in using rules, or is it that the rule of the use of blue itself is poorly defined? Is not the rule of the use of the word “blue” deliberately precise enough to encompass a particular section of the prism of light and yet vague enough to hold all of this section’s shades. If this is so ² ~~then~~ the rule of use of the word “blue” itself has perfect clarity except for the fact that it is spoken to me by a human being. One's eyes may be formed so that she sees green shades in blue. Yet, do not the vast majority of us agree on what is blue? Is not my need for an explanation of what shade of blue, and how dark, a function of the necessity for more rules, not an inadequacy of the rules that I have. I will paint a “dark” “blue” picture in some sense of these words and if my client wants a more precise job, there

should have been more precise instructions given! The question to be answered here is whether all cases of a need for interpretation are cases in which a more precise explication of rules could have been given, or whether interpretations are necessary in nearly all cases to some degree as there can never be a perfect expression of our intended meaning since English is not a calculus.

It does appear that no matter how precise I attempt to be with my ordinary spoken language, my intended meaning will be in need of some degree of interpretation by others, or explanation by me, depending on what degree of exactness of my meaning others want. There is no need to make an interpretation of how to apply +16 or -12 to a mathematical problem. What is the difference here between the use of the expression “+16” in mathematics, and the use of the words “hot” and “unattractive” in spoken language? “Unattractive” is used to convey such particular taste. This points to something: are there words that express subjective meanings, and others like “+16” that express objective meanings. But if I say “computer”, a seemingly more objective word, this could require ten thousand qualifications—do I mean a specific type of computer, a personal computer in which case I have to describe its size, speed, age, make, model, etc. Or do I mean all computers in general, those in a calculator, in my house alarm system? And once I am going to make all of these qualifications, I realize that I could just as easily clarify what I mean by “unattractive” in a much more precise fashion.

Our language allows us to express our human particularity and to use explanations as much as necessary to clarify our terms so that others can understand our meanings when ~~can~~ interact: “Why do you say that this piece of art or this movie is so “powerful.” “Because it depicts bright, natural scenes- flowers, mountains, the sky, etc. things that let

me feel the beauty of this life.”-- Ok I understand your “use” of the word “powerful” in this instance.— When Wittgenstein says that “an explanation serves to remove or avert a misunderstanding—one, that is, that would occur but for the explanation”(p#87) he makes it seem that we can indeed understand each other’s meanings in proportion to the degree that our language and then explanation of our particular uses of the words we use, can express these meanings. This is in direct conflict with the interlocutor in the same proposition asking “how does an explanation help me to understand, if after all it is not the final one? In that case the explanation is never completed; so I don’t understand what he means, and never shall”(P.I. P#87)! When I said that I felt the painting to be powerful because its scenes evoked for me a presence of the beauty of life, someone could have asked: “well what do you mean by “evoked”, just exactly what did you feel?” And how can I describe this. “Or what did you mean by “beauty” here, or “life”? Did you mean the miracle that you are alive, or the vastness of all the things that the universe holds, or something else? The clarifying questions can go on forever, as finding an exactness of the terms is near impossible and explanation of a term surfaces new ones that may need to be clarified. and so it seems that lest we desire to continue our personal questions until the end of time, we make interpretations that resolve the doubts that are brought into expression through our own subjective use of expression, at least enough for us “to go on” in the sense of communicating, and acting. But for Wittgenstein all this interpreting does not mean that there is not understanding.

And let us consider what we call an ‘exact’ explanation... Perhaps something like drawing a chalk line round an area? Here it strikes us at once that the line has breadth. So a colour-edge would be more exact. But has this exactness still got a function here: isn’t the engine idling? And remember too that we have not yet defined what is to count as over stepping this exact boundary; how, with what instruments, it is to be established. And so on... No single ideal of exactness has

been laid down; we do not know what we should be supposed to imagine under this head—unless you yourself lay down what is to be so called. But you will find it difficult to hit upon such a convention, at least any that satisfies you”(P.I. P#88)

When I am told the chalk line is the boundary, I do not ask all these questions, and I do, to an acceptable measure understand what area is meant to be “encircled” in spite of all my inexactness.

There do exist agreed upon uses for expressions in ordinary communication, just as there are in mathematics, despite the fact that the former achieves a much lower degree of exactness in expression and reception of intended meaning. The distinction in objectivity of communication of these languages, is that in addition to these agreed upon uses in ordinary language, there exist for each individual very subtle and particular nuances, uses and associations with words, a subjectivity that does not exist in mathematics. We can understand each other because to a great degree the rules of our spoken language are agreed upon, and to this extent, determinate, and partially fixed. We can also seriously misunderstand each other, and find various interpretations of another’s intended meanings because of the relativity that exists in trying to find fixed words to describe the subjective complex emotions, thoughts, and feelings that we experience as particular human beings, as well as the fact that this particularity forces us to process all of our sense experience in such unique, varying ways. The sense of the word interpretation given by Wittgenstein as “a rule determining the application of a rule”(P.I. P#84) is given as being an active determination that must be made when choosing “how to go on” in following in rule when there is a need for explication, and there is none to give it.

A second description of the use of the word “interpretation” by Wittgenstein is that by “interpret,” he means “to restrict the term... to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another”(P.I. P.#201). Thus, strictly speaking, to make an interpretation of a sign does not mean to make any determination of the use of the sign, but rather to translate the sign from one form to another. If I translate or “interpret” a piece of English syntax that is foreign to me into an one with which I am familiar, I may feel that I have achieved understanding (and indeed I have in the sense of being able to say “now I know how to go on” in correctly using this word in my spoken language.) If there existed no familiar word and understanding of its use that stood as a foundation for determination of how to use the foreign word, being a suitable substitutive expression, I would have no understanding of how it should be used. Explanations by way of translation into familiar terms must come to an end somewhere (P.I. P#87). Should someone ask me to explain what I ~~explain~~ mean by the word “hate”, surely I will make a translation of this word into one I believe my audience will understand, perhaps by saying: “Hate is a stronger, or a more intense form of anger”. When I do this, I assume that this person already understands the words of my explanation. And how did they first learn the word “anger”, or “strong”? Perhaps they do not and it will again be required that I should have to find an explanation to help them to understand these words. Here all I am doing is associating a piece lifeless syntax with one that holds life for me. But in the beginning, were not all linguistic signs lifeless to me and none available to be foundations of understanding? For this reason, Wittgenstein makes the statement: “any interpretation still hangs in the air with what it interprets and cannot give it any support. Interpretations themselves do not determine meaning”(198).

E. Agreement Within a Custom as Prerequisite of Understanding

Having now stated why “understanding” does not lie somewhere in mental process, or the process of determining the use of an unknown word by substitution of expression, or making a subjective choice to clarify an uncertain rule, Wittgenstein’s unique description of “understanding” as rule application stands powerfully and clearly without any confusion created by these other notions. I “understand” when I apply signs according to the determinations of use that are their “meaning” and I follow these rules in language simply because they ARE the rules, not because I have a reason for doing so or because I have interpreted that this is the correct application of a rule.

There is one last mistaken notion to be gotten rid of, and this is the notion that these determinations of the use of the sign, lie somehow inherently within the sign itself, a prevalent notion before Wittgenstein’s writings.

“Everything is already there in...” How does it come about that this arrow *points*? Doesn’t it seem to carry in it something besides itself?—“No, not that dead line on paper; only the psychical thing, the meaning, can do that.”—That is both true and false. The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it. (P.I. 454)

This example works to show the absurdity of the belief that this line on paper has any inherent significance. But it points to something else, the fact that a custom must exist in order for a rule to be followed. This arrow only has the meaning it does, and can be used to communicate a specific meaning, because the “application that the living being makes of it” is shared in a community that holds this custom.

If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also(queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. It is one thing to describe the methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call “measuring” is partially determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement. (P.I. P#239-241)

We say that, in order to communicate, people must agree with one another about the meanings of words. But the criterion for this agreement is not just agreement with reference to definitions e.g. ostensive definitions—but also agreement in judgments. It is essential for communication that we agree in a large number of judgments. (*Remarks* p.343)

Chess is a consistent practice of a game that holds within it a system of rules.

English likewise can be called a custom- a “language game”, that holds within it signs that have two elements: their definitions and the applications made of them. But doesn’t a definition consist in the statement of how the sign is applied? When I want to look up the meaning of a sign or the determination of its use, don’t I consult a dictionary? The difference between “definition” and “judgment” appears to be action. Judgment is a definition in action.

It is true that anything can be somehow justified. But the phenomenon of language is based on regularity, on agreement, in action. Here it is of the greatest importance that all or the enormous majority of us agree in certain things. I can, e.g. be quite sure that the colour of this object will be called ‘green’ by the far most of the human beings who see it. (*Remarks* p.343)

At this point, our rule following conversation will move to the notion of private systems of rules and rule following, or the possibility of such and of shared systems of rules. The rules of chess exist inside of their agreement and set parameters. Chess in England does not differ from chess in India in the sense that a queen can move in a different fashion in one place. The queen moves in the same fashion in this language game, by all who play it. In chess the meanings are the determinations of use of the pieces that clothe and give representation to the rules. And these are absolutely determinate in chess. I can’t move a queen like a king. In language it is true that some meanings are quite determinate as well. I can’t call a “clock” a “pants” and expect to

oh yes
you
can!

make any sense. But when I say “I love you”, my meaning has much less determinacy. By saying this I could be expressing my feelings of connection to someone after years shared with them, I could simply mean that I have love for them (although what “love” is, is quite a difficult thing to describe), I could mean “I am sorry”, or “I am about to kiss you.” If there were not a custom that kept me from using the expression within common enough bounds, communication would break down. Significance exists inside of the possibility of consistent application which realm of consistent application is “custom”.

Here we can see that where there is a custom for the correct application of a rule it must be said that one's thinking that one is obeying a rule does not constitute one's obeying a rule. This follows directly from Wittgenstein's statement that “understanding” is not some internal process or state, but alive in demonstrated action. Thinking that one has grasped something internally has no actual relationship with the reality of whether or not the sign is used correctly. Indeed I may think that I know what this arrow means, when in fact I have no idea. Wittgenstein's argument that there can be no such thing as an individual following a private system of rules is simply that: within the private language the distinction between actual rule following in performed mechanical function and apparent rule following (what the individual believes his actions are, that they are in accordance with rules) breaks down completely. When I call a thing “red” or “hard” in agreement with custom, I am exercising no opinion, and have no “reason” for why I call it red except for the fact that it is in custom called red. This reasonless determination is a judgment; it cannot be proved wrong since all agreement supports it. When we have reasons for calling a thing what we do, we are exercising opinion, and others may

disagree with us and give us reasons for their opinions. Language must dwell in the realm of judgments.

Section 2: Examining the Dream

Having defined “understanding”, “meaning”, “rule following” and distinguishing custom and agreement in judgments as the necessary conditions for these basic elements

of language, it seems a less difficult task to look at a dream and see if it can satisfy these conditions. My original question was: "Can we understand the content of dreams as the signs of a language." Now it is more clear what this means, what has to exist in a dream for this to be so. The sign must have a consistent use, not a link to an associative content, to be meaningful. And as the condition for this consistent use is that there exists a custom bound by agreement so that the determination of a use is found, not because of a chain of reasons as a Freudian dream interpretation would give, but simply for the fact that agreement and custom have said it to be so: signs in dreams cannot, by definition, have unique use and significance for each individual. The method for answering the original question is now much more developed as so many qualifications have been made as to what being able to make determinations of the use of signs in dreams requires. This investigation is only as good as the concepts that have been developed as the task at hand is simply to examine whether or not the conditions thus designated to be necessary for "meaning", "understanding", and "rule following" are found to be existent in dreams. While in the introduction looking at the history of the disagreement of the concept of language in a dream, it seemed difficult and quite an ambitious thought to think that something so slippery could be penetrated by analytical claws in order to make any real determinations. The answers to the inquiry now seem as they will have a basis of analytical support and clarity.

A. Dreams: An "Inwardly Visual Experience"

To begin with the examination of dreams there needs to be some general qualifications made as to what a dream is that will be agreed upon the majority of human beings. In the book *The Meaning of Dreams* by Calvin S. Hall, a definition and

characteristics of a dream are given as being:

“a succession of images, predominantly visual in quality, which are experienced during sleep. A dream commonly has one or more scenes, several characters in addition to the dreamer, and a sequence of actions and interactions usually involving the dreamer. It resembles a motion picture or dramatic production in which the dreamer is both a participant and observer. Although a dream is a hallucination, since the events of a dream do not actually take place, the dreamer experiences it as though he were seeing something real. Scenes, people, objects and actions often seem just as real to the dreamer as they would if seen by him in waking life. Sometimes we even confuse a dream with an actual experience and ask ourselves, ‘Did it really happen or was it only a dream?’ Talking and walking during sleep also confirm the idea that a dream is often experienced as though it were real. (Hall 2-3)

This description does an excellent job of expressing a dream as a particular type of experience. The senses are functioning to such a degree that the hallucination of a dream may feel as completely real and consuming as our everyday empirical reality. What is neglected in this description though, is that dreams are composed of more than just a succession of visual images. They are full of sound and are experienced many times with the same emotions of fear, sadness, despair, loneliness, and joy with which we experience life. Webster Dictionary gives a similar definition, noting that a dream is a series of mental images, thoughts, and emotions occurring in certain stages of sleep. Here the word “emotions” is added, as well as “thoughts”. And it is true of my personal experience that I experience what feels like my same waking thought process, many times during my sleep. This is so sometimes even without the presence of visual images.

What is it then, can I say, that actually differentiates the experience that I have in dreams from the experience that I have while awake. My neurons are still firing to give me sensation. A working definition of dreams for the moment must be one that allows

for it to be considered a full mind and body experience. Sufficient scientific evidence of the existence of these “experiences” that we are calling dreams is important as personal claims of knowledge, even at the level of saying “last night while sleeping, I experienced active sensations of pain and dreamt that I broke my leg”, cannot prove the reality of a dream. Until such evidence was given by scientists, many skeptics believed that dreams may be something completely made up upon awakening. Hall, describes the phenomena present during a test that is considered to be “an objective indicator of dreaming”(p.xi):

There are “periodic bursts of rapid coordinated movements of the two eyes of a sleeping person. The eyes moved as if they were inspecting a visual scene, an assumption that later research was to confirm by establishing a correlation between eye movements and events in the dream. The dreamer seemed to be watching his own dream! In fact, if one watches the eyes of a sleeping person with the eyelids taped back, it appears for all the world as though he were awake and looking around in a perfectly natural way. Within a short time another indicator was discovered, namely, a type of brain wave characterized by low voltage and fast frequency. This type of brain wave ordinarily occurs in conjunction with rapid eye movements. Soon laboratories all over the United States, and some in other countries, were engaged in investigating this unique stage of sleep using the electrophalograph as the chief instrument for invading, as it was thought, the erstwhile privacy of the dream world. In the intervening years, other physiological changes have been shown to accompany rapid eye movements and low voltage brain waves. These include accelerated and more variable heart rate and breathing, relaxation of the head and neck muscles, and partial or complete erection of the penis. As a result of these physiological studies of sleep, it is now customary to speak of two kinds of sleep. One kind is REM sleep which has already been described; the other kind is characterized by ocular quiescence, by more regular breathing and heart beat, by tension in head and neck muscles, by absence of penile erections, and by slower, higher voltage brain waves. (Hall xii)

The physiological processes described here occurring in REM sleep seems suspect of physiological processes occurring when we are awake and experiencing—change of heart rate, change of breathing patterns, active eye movement resembling waking eyes taking in a world of phenomena. This description supports the working definition of dreams as sentient experience.

There is much about dreams to be discussed just from considering them as experiences. The first of these things, is our activity or passivity to what occurs. If I have an experience in a dream of being an observer to events of which I am not a part, meaning that I am watching them as if they were on television, then I am passive in one sense and active in another. I am passive in the sense that I am not making any action, and active in the sense that I am observing the events, and processing what is happening either in my thoughts or just through perceiving them. If I am making actions in the dream: talking, reading, etc., then I am not exercising “understanding”, in the sense that I am exercising my ability to use particular signs in certain ways? Or is it that these do not count in a dream as there is no “correct” or “certain” way for me to apply any sign?

QUOTE

The dream state of experience appears to be a state without rules and if this is so, perhaps this is the fundamental difference between it and waking experience. But how can I determine for sure whether or not I exist inside of any “language games” in a dream? This question is primary to the question of whether or not I can make any determinations of the uses of the signs in dreams. Perhaps I will determine that I do exist inside of a “language game” in a dream, though have not yet learned what the rules are, just as if I am placed before a chessboard or a more complex game of which I know there exists a system of rules of which I have not yet learned.

Wittgenstein himself does state his recognition of the persuasive nature of dream phenomena as resembling a language game of some sort:

There seems to be something in dream images that has a certain resemblance to the signs of a language. As a series of marks on paper or on sand might have. There might be no mark which we recognized as a conventional sign in any alphabet we knew, and yet we might have a strong feeling that they must be a language of some sort: that they mean something. There is a cathedral in Moscow with five spires. On each of these spires there is a different sort of curving configuration. One gets the strong impression that these different shapes and arrangements must mean something. (Bouveresse 110)

Yet though there exists for Wittgenstein the feeling that he is in the presence of something meaningful, he points out the overt problem that the expressions of dreams seem to defy being confined to the rules of a language.

Suppose you look on a dream as a kind of language. A way of saying something or a way of symbolizing something. There might be regular, not necessarily alphabetical - it might be like Chinese, say. We might then find a way of translating this symbolism into the language of ordinary speech, ordinary thoughts. But then the translation ought to be possible both ways. It ought to be possible by employing the same technique to translate ordinary thoughts into dream language. As Freud recognizes this is never done and cannot be done. So we might question whether dreaming is a way of thinking something, whether it is a language at all. ()

Wittgenstein indicates here that there is some feature of the content in dreams that does not match with the signs of ordinary language such that a two way translation of sign into sign can occur. What is his evidence for this? Do I accept this fact based on his authority? If this is so, then is the failure of translation due to a dynamic in the dream that makes this impossible? Or is it possible that the failure of translation can fall on the part of the translator? I want now to try and clarify Wittgenstein's statement, to see if there are certain features of a dreams that can be spoken about more specifically that hinder two way translation.

Am I going to follow intuition to determine whether or not the phenomena that I experience in a dream are occurring inside any structure of rules? Wittgenstein senses that he is, yet his analysis tells him that he cannot be. Since intuition has no validity in an analytical investigation, I had better find what he see analytically. I can look into myself, into my own dreams after recording them and analyze them to look for regular use of a particular sign or symbol. Immediately, I notice something powerfully different about a dream experience from ordinary experience. When I am experiencing life while awake, my eyes may be open to the world, perceiving events and occurrences, while inside my imagination, I can conjure up a visual image. This happens constantly, as Wittgenstein indicates distinguishing “understanding”: when we are speaking, we may be continually holding specific images in our minds that we associate with words. The image “coming before our mind”, does not shut off our other modes of perception and experience of the world. Both occur simultaneously. This is not so in dreams. They have been turned into one thing. The world of phenomena is now held within the world of the internal visual image and the boundary between the worlds has dissolved. The representational objects that I perceive in a dream may in fact be the very associations that I hold for particular concepts, people and places: I dream that I am at a yoga studio in Thailand, having a conversation with a dolphin—all associations I have of my wife. Perhaps both my wife and the associations I have of her are present: perhaps the dolphin turns into my wife. I can think in a dream, reflect to some degree on what is happening, in some cases even to the degree that my thinking effects my actions and course of the dream. But can I turn inwardly in a dream in the same way that I can turn inwardly when awake? It seems as if I already have turned inward. I am as far in as I can go. When I perceive that I am

swimming, I am not at a real pool in the external world. I am swimming in what seems like the same external world but in my imagination; there is no further imagination to escape to.

It now seems possible to qualify the experience of the dream state as being of a different dimensional character than my ordinary experience. But have I completely severed the external dimension of my experience? My eyes are closed, so admittedly, all that I “see” must be in my imagination. But some would argue here that while my eyes to the external world have been closed, what I experience or what I see, hear and feel internally, can be affected by

“sounds, smells and lights, temperature changes, bodily positions, bladder pressure, stomach aches, muscular cramps, fever, and other [real] external and internal forces acting upon the sleeping person. It cannot be denied that bodily states and external happenings do produce or [affect] dreams. Everyone who dreams can recall a bladder dream or a muscular cramp or an alarm clock dream or one which can be traced to a specific condition. Experiments have been performed in the laboratory on sleeping persons which demonstrate that a bottle of perfume held under the nose, stroking or pinching a part of the body, depressing on one side of the bed, or a cry for help, are registered in dreams... We all know of children who dream that they are going to the bathroom and awaken to find that the bed is wet, or adults who dream that they are having sexual relations and awaken to find that they are having an orgasm... It has been demonstrated that nightmares may be induced when respiration is interfered with. (Hall 4)

And when lying in my bed in Colorado I dream of my alarm clock going off in the middle of a trip to Italy, I can see that though my dreams may be influenced by things going on outside of my imagination, these external events certainly do not comprise the whole of my dream. And though my ears may hear real external sounds, and my body be affected by actual external and internal sensations, the part of my dream that is the “succession of images” or visualization, brings all of these external things inside of itself. In this sense, a dream swallows the external world to my imagination and my visual

experience can only be a imaginary, even if partially constituted by real, external phenomena. The following quote gives evidence of this transformation of the real into the imaginary:

“The same stimulus may be experienced in a variety of ways by different dreamers or by the same dreamer in different dreams. In one experiment, a wax candle was placed in the hand of a sleeping person on two different occasions. The first time he dreamed he was playing golf and the second time that he was trying to lift a bar in physical training class” (Hall 7).

The real external qualities of the objects and phenomena affecting me while in the dream state, are consumed and distorted at the will of my imagination when they become pulled into it. If the wax candle remained a wax candle, it would be easier to defend the position that the external dimension still retains its ability to be experienced completely as an external dimension during a dream. Yet for the reason that dreams can be influenced by the external world, it seems incorrect to label them uni-dimensional, completely imaginary, or completely internal. It is the visual component that loses its external eye and designating the dream as a completely “inwardly visual experience” seems to be the most accurate qualification that can be made of it.

This point may seem to be of little consequence, but it is of ultimate importance to the investigation of whether or not determinations of usage of signs or “meanings”, can be extracted from dreams. Wittgenstein has made it very clear that the meaning of a word does not consist in designating some necessary association between the sign and a particular content. Thousands of different images or types of mental content can be associated with the same word, so none seem to be of any significance or bear any actual relationship to the meaning. But on the other hand they do indeed bear a relationship to the meaning, as, dependent on the strength and habitual quality of the association with the

meaning, it might give clues as to what it is. How convoluted things become then when the realm of all my associations is given representation to dance around in my dreams, and I go on a hunt to decide what meanings correspond to these associations. What is the sign and what is the association? How am I to tell? When there existed a definite external world in which I beheld a clear external word or expression and I could distinguish this from my internal imagination where I held associations of these words, there existed the possibility for differentiating the signs of the language, from passing images in my mind's eye. Is it possible to find what is meant to be a sign in a dream from something extraneous? I have a much more difficult task than determining the use of signs now, I have the task of determining what if any signs there are.

There is another possibility here: perhaps the twist in a dream language, is that the associations have become the signs. The real significance of a word, as Wittgenstein has demonstrated has no visibility. Though there may be images associated with it and its use, none need be for me to understand a word and its significance in language. Even if my mind is empty when I am expressing my meaning in language, a dream could not hope to do the same and communicate anything. What could I possibly understand from having a vision of nothing?! Then I am told that the meanings expressed did not need to be associated with any particular content to be understood. Well, I did not understand them.

If I look further into the dream as an “inwardly visual experience” it appears as if the fact that my associations have been let loose may lend as much light as confusion. Don't I know my own associations for words, or wouldn't I at least recognize them if I saw them? Don't I know that for the word ocean, I think of water, and this picture of an

ocean, and cold, and perhaps a city I have lived in near an ocean? But I associate cold with many things, and many memories, as well as San Diego California. When I see San Diego in a dream, I don't realize that it was my dreams pick to signify "ocean". Just show me an ocean! But when I see the ocean, how do I know whether I am to take it for an "ocean", or if it is intended to be an association of some other word? Herein lies the problem: mental contents are many times representational things. Sometimes they are used as an association of a sign, and sometimes they just are the things they are. In a dream it seems I have lost objectivity in being able to tell which they are.

Perhaps I need go no further. Wittgenstein's objection to the content of dreams being considered as signs is that though one may determine a use of a symbol and translate this into speech the opposite of this is not possible. I can say now, that not only can I not translate my speech into the symbols of a dreams, but I could not have any objectivity either, in determining what part of the content of a dream are symbols to start with. It is not only that I cannot determine a use, I cannot determine a sign! This looks to be the more technical clarification of Wittgenstein's objection to dream language on the grounds that it fails the test of two-way translation. But I am not yet ready to concede this inquiry to an impossibility of determining meaning in dreams just yet. It is true that deriving determinations of the use of the represented contents that I believe to be associated with meanings is going to be quite difficult as perhaps I have associated many contents with one meaning or use, and a particular content for many different meanings or uses. But is it impossible in all cases, or so subjective of an endeavor that it is as futile to even try? Examples of dream content that seem persuasive that meaning about the particular life of the dreaming human being is being transmitted in a comprehensible

form or with a determinable link between expression or content and particular use, are the following two examples regarding physical ailments: A case of a man that had dreams of a rat gnawing at his stomach just before being diagnosed with an ulcer and of a woman who dreamt of the shattering of a contact lens just before the shattering of one of the disks in her vertebrae is noted by an MD, PhD, Mona Lisa Schulz in her analysis of body phenomena reflected in unconscious mental process. (Schultz pg.48, 53)

Now these people could listen to Wittgenstein or me and say to themselves, “well, it looks as if the border between the associative content I carry for a word, and the words themselves, has dissolved in my dream, so it is no use to pay any attention to these useless dream manifestations.” But should years go down the road and either of these two individuals begin to have dreams where these same contents of the contact lens or the rat are used in similar ways, it would be wise for them to go and see a doctor. Or if the application of a symbol seems to resemble either instance e.g. the man begins to dream of little black specs filling his lungs, he would benefit from checking to see if he has developed lung cancer. The problem that has almost ended this inquiry has simply been that objectivity seems to be lost in the dream in terms of designating a sign from the wreckage. But was not custom distinguished as the prerequisite of objectivity. How can this be hoped to be found in examining a single dream.

B. Dreams Series: A Custom of Their Own

It is Wittgenstein’s own words, that lent me new thought to proceed at this inquiry from another angle.

What is intriguing about a dream is not its causal connection with events in my life, etc., but rather the impression it gives of being a fragment of a story—a very *vivid* fragment to be sure—the rest of which remains obscure.... (Cioffi 132).

The book *The Meaning of Dreams* supports Wittgenstein's intuition with observational data. Observations are made that consist of examining, a "series of dreams collected from a person rather than single dreams as is customary in most systems of dream interpretation." (Hall 18). One series given in this book, is of a teenage boy that consciously recognizes his desire to have sex with his girlfriend. In one dream, the boy is kissing his girlfriend in a bedroom, and as things progress past a certain point, he hears church bells, that call his attention elsewhere and stop the sexual encounter. In another dream, the boy is careening down a road out of control as his brakes have run out. Then he sees his girlfriend in the road, fears that he will run her over her, but as he approaches, the cars brakes suddenly begin to work again and stop the car. Within a series of a thousand dreams from any one individual, certain themes seem to be recurrent, and reflective of the individuals desires, fears, thoughts and conceptions about reality, as well as of events in the individuals past and present life.

When the question was asked, "why does this arrow have the meaning it has", it was determined that it only had its particular meaning or determination of use, because human beings have given it one and let it become a part of a custom of the shared language. Who determines the meaning of a sign in a dream series? For a moment I will consider that the church bells ringing really are a symbol in this boys dream as is the girl in the second dream. At first glance I could say that through analysis of this two dream portion of a dream series, I have found support for my argument that the content in a dream is not used consistently enough to be determined to be any particular sign: church bells and the girl seem to have the same use in stopping the sexual desire that has gotten out of control (so long as we consider that the out of control brake-less car represents the