Imagination, Philosophy, and the Arts

Edited by Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes

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INTRODUCTION

Much progress in aesthetics during the second half of the twentieth century may be ascribed to the assumption that an understanding of representation in art provides the key to many problems in aesthetics. A good part of the success of aesthetics during the past twenty years may be credited to attempts to work out how mental representation figures in the appreciation of art—where "mental representation", when it comes to appreciating art, has often meant "imagination". (True, the imagination has always formed part of the subject-matter of aesthetics, but its recent revival can be traced to recent advances in philosophy of language and philosophy of mind.) The seventeen chapters that make up this volume attest to the richness of what might be called imagination theory. But if a rich body of philosophical work is often the child of skeptical impulses, this volume is no exception, for each chapter seeks to extend imagination theory in a new direction. The best introduction to proposals for a change of course makes clear where we are and why we must move forward.

Imagination in make-believe

Kendall Walton's *Mimesis as Make-Believe* revolutionized philosophical thinking about representational art, fiction, imagination, and appreciation. Despite the intense analytic scrutiny these concepts had already endured, the so-called paradoxes of fiction remained seemingly intractable, the concept of imagination had been banished from philosophy of art and philosophy of mind, and scant progress had been made toward understanding appreciation. In place of clarifications or refinements of the existing concepts Walton proposed an entirely new way to carve up the categories. Revolution can be disorienting. Thus, Walton holds that all art is representational, that all representational works are fictions, and that appreciation always involves a kind of fiction-making. Nevertheless, a theorist is right to reconceptualize what he wishes to explain provided that the explanation is illuminating.

What precipitates Walton's recarving is the insight that the categories of representational art, fiction, imagination, and appreciation all connect to make-believe. This notion appears first as part of the theory of representation that is the

principal offering of *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Representational works, according to Walton, function as props in games of make-believe.

Good models of such games are to be found in children's play. Suppose that Turner and Desmond are playing Star Wars. In their game, paper tubes are light sabers, trees are droids, skateboards are spacecraft, the garden shed is the Death Star, and the boys are Jedi. Using these props, they make-believe that they destroy the droids with their light sabers and fly their spacecraft to the Death Star: waving a paper tube across a tree is destroying a droid, and riding a skateboard to the garden shed is flying to the Death Star. The role of the props is to determine what is true in the game. When Turner falls off his skateboard, it is true within the game of Star Wars that he has been hit by the enemy.

Walton defines a fictional truth as what is true in a game of make-believe. In consequence, fictional truth is not any special kind of truth—there is no special sense in which it is true that Dracula is immortal. A fictional truth is quite simply a fact about what is fictional. Moreover, since props in games of make-believe have the role of generating fictional truths, representations function as props that generate fictional truths. Dracula functions as a prop in a game properly played with works of literature to generate fictional truths. When I read *Dracula* it is fictional, for example, that I am reading a report of the career of a vampire.

Representations function to generate fictional truths and users of representations are meant to imagine these truths. It is fictional that *p* if and only if there is, in a game of make-believe, a mandate to imagine *p*. To say that it is a fictional truth that Turner has destroyed the Death Star is to say that the game of Star Wars prescribes that we are to imagine that Turner has destroyed the Death Star. It is fictional that Dracula avoids mirrors because this is what we are asked to imagine when we read *Dracula*. (Note that we need not actually imagine what a game mandates that we imagine so a fictional truth need not be an imagined truth.)

In sum, representations function as props in games of make-believe. Props in such games have the role of generating fictional truths. Fictional truths are what players of games of make-believe are prescribed to imagine. Thus representations function to prescribe imaginings.

This network of conceptions has some surprising features. First, since representations are analyzed as props that function to generate fictional truths, all representations are works of fiction. Some of the incredulity this claim may engender is alleviated by a second feature of Walton's account. Fictional truth is compatible with truth and imagining with believing. It is fictional in the game of Star Wars that Desmond is human but it is also true that he is human; the game prescribes that its players imagine that Desmond is human even as they believe that he is human. Likewise, *Dracula's* readers imagine that Transylvania is mountainous even as some of them believe truly that Transylvania is mountainous. In effect, a fictional truth is not, on Walton's account, anything like what it is in the ordinary sense. It is not, for example, a non-deceptive falsehood. A truth is fictional if and only if there is a prescription in a game of make-believe to imagine it.

One might seek empirical evidence in support of this theory of representation or the conceptions of fiction and imagination that comprise it. It might be possible, for example, to locate practices that constitute games of make-believe in people's interactions with artworks. In the case of literary works these would include "principles of generation" that determine what is fictional given the sentences of the text. However, this strategy is unlikely to succeed unless art-using practices are fairly stable across texts and Walton doubts that this condition obtains. He doubts, for instance, that David Lewis's reality and mutual belief principles are employed in any systematic fashion to determine what a literary text makes fictional (Lewis 1983).

In lieu of a direct argument Walton submits that his proposals best explain certain longstanding puzzles regarding our appreciation of artworks. In particular, the notion of make-believe makes available a novel notion of what Walton calls participation.

The key to participation is that the player is a prop in most games of make-believe, including the games governing our interactions with artworks. Peter Lamarque sets the idea out succinctly (Lamarque 1991:163). John is watching a movie in which a monster attacks New York. There are three ways to characterize his appreciation of the fiction:

(1) it is fictional that John believes that the monster is attacking New York;
(2) John believes that it is fictional that the monster is attacking New York;
(3) John believes that the fictional monster is attacking New York.

Walton rejects (3) since it construes John's belief about the monster as *de re,* but it is the distinction between (1) and (2) that concerns us here. In (1) John's belief falls within the scope of the fiction operator whereas in (2) the content of John's belief (that the monster is attacking New York) falls within the scope of fiction operator but his believing it does not. Walton prefers, wherever possible, giving the fiction operator the wide scope it has in (1). When the fiction operator has wide scope some of what is fictionally true concerns John and some concerns the work.

Walton distinguishes two fictional worlds, each accessed by a distinct set of fictional truths. The "work world" is accessed by what is fictional in the work (e.g. that the monster is attacking New York) and these fictions are generated by the representation alone. The "game world" is accessed by fictional truths about the spectator (e.g. that he believes that the monster is attacking New York) and these fictions are generated partly by the spectator himself in so far as he, alongside the work, is a prop in the proceedings. What is true in the game depends on what is true in the work world but the converse does not hold. Participation in many games of make-believe is not, therefore, limited to imagining what is true in the work world; it also includes imagining truths about oneself as a constituent of the game world.

Walton submits that this conception of participation delivers solutions to three puzzles: the paradox of emotional responses to fiction, the puzzle of how we can derive pleasure from tragedy, and the puzzle of how well-known stories can sustain suspense. The adequacy of Walton's solutions to these puzzles has received more attention than any other aspect of his account. But before proceeding to this it is helpful to consider in more detail the theories of imagination inspired by Walton.

Imagination as an attitude

Walton acknowledges that there are many forms of imagination. However, given the work that it is made to do in his theory, the operative notion of imagination is a prepositional attitude. Two questions to ask are what kind of attitude the imagination is and what principles generate imaginings. The answer to the first question depends on the answer to the second.

It is natural to define imagination as that attitude taking fictional propositions as its contents (where a fictional proposition is one that is not true). But on recent theories of imagination, such as Walton's, imagination is prior to fiction: fictional truths are those that are to be imagined. Thus it is fictional that George W.Bush is the President of the United States wherever it is prescribed that one *imagine* that Bush is the President of the United States. The contents of imaginings are fictional propositions in the trivial sense that they are to be imagined, not in the ordinary sense that they are a species of falsehood.

Since we cannot characterize the attitude of imagination nontrivially by its contents, we must characterize it functionally, by the way imaginings are generated or by the inferential relations obtaining among them. Walton offers one characterization; a second derives from the view that imagination is mental simulation.

Simulation theory originated as an explanation of the attribution of attitudes to others. In the version of the theory developed by Gregory Currie, simulation is a mental operation that consists in allowing the belief-desire system to run "off-line", disconnected from its normal sensory inputs and behavioral outputs and from the simulator's own beliefs and desires, yet taking into account the situation of another person (Currie 1995a). While run off-line, the simulator's belief-desire system nevertheless continues to operate in an otherwise normal way, generating inferences and causing emotional responses, thereby telling her what mental state she would be in were she in the other's situation. Suppose that upon seeing a distant hiker suddenly double back in the presence of a bear, I attribute to him the state of fear. According to simulation theory, I do this by substituting for my beliefs (e.g. that my surroundings are safe) beliefs representing the hiker's environment (that it is bear-infested) and allowing my belief-desire system to process the substituted input. I discover in this way that I would feel fear, so I attribute fear to the hiker—but since my belief-desire system has been run off-line, I do not experience fear myself. Currie proposes that imagination is mental

simulation. Imaginings are belief-like and desire-like states that are generated by running the belief-desire system off-line. Works of art generate imaginings by providing inputs to the belief-desire system, run off-line.

The attitude of imagination is defined by the conjunction of two features of mental simulation. First, imaginings are inferentially insulated from other prepositional attitudes. What is imagined is independent of what is believed or desired. One's imagining that Holmes inhabits 221B Baker Street is not impugned by any belief one has that is inconsistent with it. Second, imaginings retain belief-like inferential relations to other imaginings (Currie 1995a:149–50). This is the point of describing imagination as the operation of the *belief-desire* system run *off-line,* for the belief-desire system is what sustains inferential and causal connections among mental contents. But states of imagination rely on the same inference generator and have similar effects on the affective system as do beliefs and desires. Were this not so, simulation would be unreliable as a mechanism for attributing mental states to others.

In sum, imaginings are not beliefs because they do not have the right inferential connections to other beliefs and desires, but they may be described as quasi-beliefs (and quasi-desires) because they preserve belief-like (or desire-like) functional and causal connections to other imaginings and to emotions. If I believe that *p* and I believe that *q* then I believe that *p* and *q*. Hence if I imagine that *p* and I imagine that *q* then I imagine that *p* and *q*. Likewise, if I believe that *p* and *p* is dangerous then I will probably experience fear. I will be put into a state of fear, or something relevantly similar to it, if I imagine that *p*.

According to the make-believe theory, imaginings are prescribed in games of make-believe comprising conditional rules mandating that when a given state of affairs obtains, some proposition is to be imagined. Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* is designed to function as a prop in a game of make-believe, which prescribes, in view of the way the picture's surface is marked, that one imagine that a woman is holding a balance.

Imaginings generated in games of make-believe are inferentially insulated from other propositional attitudes. Imagining that Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street does not imply that one does not believe that 221B Baker Street is uninhabited, and believing that 221B Baker Street is a vacant lot and imagining that Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street does not imply either that one imagines or believes that Holmes inhabits a vacant lot. Fictional truths are inferentially elaborated within games of make-believe: some fictional truths entail others. However, what inferential relations obtain between fictional truths is up for grabs, depending only upon the rules of the relevant game of make-believe. Imagining that *p* and imagining that *q* may not, in some games of make-believe, entail imagining *p* and *q*. According to simulation theory, imaginings are the product of the normal belief-forming mechanism and its inference generator; according to make-believe theory, imaginings are generated in accordance with inference rules that need not match those that generate beliefs.

Response and resistance

Parts I and II of this volume are taken up with the nature and shaping of our imaginative responses to works and our resistance to them. Tolstoy's creation of *Anna Karenina* is not to be understood as asserting that any such person exists, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is not a historical tale or future prediction, and Borges's *Labyrinths* is unconcerned with what is strictly possible or not. We are to imagine the characters and states of affairs as represented without any concern for what is or even could be the case. Yet, in doing so we affectively respond to them and their plight in ways that are common to our emotional responses to actual people. We fear Dracula, pity Anna Karenina, and are intrigued by the infinite library. In real life we fear those with great power and evil intent, pity those trapped in lovelorn marriages, and are curious about intellectual puzzles. The only difference is that in the case of fictions our emotional responses are directed toward objects we understand to be nonexistent. Pre-reflectively this all seems straightforward enough. But as Colin Radford originally pointed out, why think that our responses to nonexistent objects ought to be consistent with our responses to actual objects (Radford 1975)? Indeed, what grounds do we have for thinking such responses are rational at all? If we know that Mephistopheles does not exist, it is clearly irrational to be afraid of him. If we believe Christ never existed, it is irrational to pity him. So if it is not part of the content of what we imagine that we believe Dracula, Karenina, or the infinite library to exist, then it is irrational for us to feel for or respond to them.

It is important to clarify what emotions are being taken to be on this line of thought. Emotions are held to be constituted by a phenomenological feeling conjoined with a cognitive element such as judgment or belief. I can feel the same way in two cases but my emotions may differ depending on what I believe. For example, in two different cases my palms get sweaty, my heart races, and I feel jittery. Yet, in one case I may be fearful and in the other I may be embarrassed. What explains the difference? In the former case I believe that something is threatening me whereas in the other I believe that I have done something shameful. It is this "cognitive" view of emotion that leads to a paradox. To have the genuine emotion of fear requires the judgment or belief that I am being threatened, but when watching a horror movie I seem to feel fear while believing that I am in no danger at all, for I am well aware that the monster represented on the screen is not going to jump out at me. It is this paradox which pushes Radford to conclude that our emotional responses to fiction are irrational.

Walton argues that the paradox can be resolved if we construe our responses to fictions not as genuine emotions but rather as quasi-emotions felt in the context of games of make-believe. Playing such games, we imagine that we are afraid and our imagining this is partly constituted by our imagining that we believe we are in danger. Such responses are not genuine emotions: they have the same feel or affective aspect as genuine emotions but we do not believe Dracula threatens us. Nevertheless our imaginings help explain how and why we make the inferences

we do and why we come to care for fictional characters and respond to fictional situations. On Walton's account, our affective responses to fictions are rational since they do not depend upon judgment or belief.

It does seem counterintuitive to claim that our affective responses to fiction are make-believe rather than genuine emotions and Walton's theory has been criticized on this basis. The very intensity of our "sadness" for the fate of a tragic character suggests that we are genuinely moved (Carroll 1990:73–4). Moreover, we often cannot just switch our affective responses on and off at will, at least if the artwork is any good, which is surely what would be suggested if our responses were make-believe ones. It seems that we genuinely respond to thoughts we entertain and do not merely pretend to do so. The thought theory holds that in entertaining thoughts about what is fictionally true we come to be genuinely sad (Lamarque 1981; Carroll 1990:84–6).

But objections to Walton's account based on appeals to phenomenology are inadequate because it is part of the account that quasi-fear *feels* the same as genuine fear. What makes our response to Dracula a quasi-emotion rather than a proper one is the difference in their cognitive components (an imagining in one case and a belief in the other). It follows that intensity of feeling cannot be a good criterion for whether an emotion is genuine or not. Consider someone who attends a really good horror movie and is subject to intense and visceral fear, horror, and disgust (which is what makes it a good horror movie). On the way out she is set upon and verbally abused by a stranger. The feelings she is subject to during this incident might be much more attenuated than the feelings she was subject to in the cinema yet in both cases she genuinely feels them. Which emotions are genuine depends upon what she believes rather than the degree of feeling involved.

Furthermore, it does not follow from Walton's account that quasi-emotions can be switched on and off at will within games of make-believe. Walton could argue that as long as one's involvement in the game is whole-hearted and the prescriptions concerning what we should imagine are of the right sort, we will be prompted to have certain affective responses whether we will it so or not. Walton is committed only to the commonplace recognition that we can stop playing the game and thereby avoid being subject to feelings it prompts. Indeed, he has suggested that the thought theory of emotional responses seems to entail that I genuinely fear a collection of properties or thought contents (Walton 1997:47). This would either be a bizarre result or involve the need to talk of a special kind of fear. So, Walton argues, the thought theory is less faithful than Walton to the phenomenology of emotional responses to art.

One might remain skeptical of Walton's account for a different reason. Affective responses to fiction are being characterized as atypical or peculiar because we are responding to states of affairs, fictional ones, we believe we can do nothing about. But there is a wide range of similar non-fictional cases (Moran 1994). Just think of our emotional responses to the past or to modal facts—how things might or could have been. If Walton were to claim such responses were

irrational, which is a hard claim to make out, then there is nothing particular to the paradox in the case of fiction. Alternatively this may provide good grounds for thinking our affective responses to fictions are genuine. What prompts them is perhaps more a function of the expressive aspect of a work than the bare prescription to imagine a certain proposition.

There are different ways to present fictional truths and how they are presented to us shapes the nature of our affective responses. Different takes on the same scene may prescribe the same imaginings but solicit highly divergent responses. Consider a movie scene of someone eating dinner. The shots might concentrate on the formality of the diner, the precision with which each mouthful is savored, and the complementary contrast of the different colors and textures of each dish. Or the same scene could be shot in a way that emphasizes the outsized nature of the food consumed, the sheen of juices, the flecked spittle of the diner, the gape of the mouth as the meaty flesh is brought up to be engorged. In the former case the scene is shot in a way that prescribes admiration for the diner's taste and discrimination; in the latter it solicits repulsion. Thus, the expressive qualities of a work play a large part in shaping our complex cognitive-affective attitudes toward what is represented, in ways that are not strictly relevant to the generation of fictional truths.

We should therefore distinguish between prepositional imaginings, where we imagine *that* something is the case, from the expressively imaginative aspect of a work, which concerns the connections, associations, emotional mood, or tone suggested by the way the propositional imaginings are prescribed. It is the way the scene is presented that prompts the mind to respond in certain ways. The second scene of the diner focuses on the glistening spittle and sheen of the meat juices, prompts us to experience it as seeing something flecked and oozing, not merely to imagine that it is flecked and oozing. Whether they are genuine or quasi-emotions, many of our responses to expressive aspects of a work are prior to rather than part of the content of the imagining. In exploring this possibility, we need a better understanding of non-propositional imagining generally and this is something the chapters in Part III of the volume help provide (more on this below).

There are also limits to participation, as the phenomenon of imaginative resistance shows. An example commonly used to illustrate the phenomenon is Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. Riefenstahl's film is an immensely powerful and beautiful quasi-documentary of the 1934 Nuremburg rallies. The technique, composition, and editing are not only highly innovative but are designed to solicit responses of admiration and awe for Nazism. From the opening shots of the plane descending from the heavens to the sweeping shots of the crowds and the heroic isolation of Hitler, we are presented with an aesthetically appealing intimation of fascism as bold, noble, pure, and righteous. Yet, assuming we hold Nazism to be morally repugnant, it seems we either cannot or will not imagine what the film mandates even while we appreciate its artistry. Our entering into and responding fully to the film is somehow precluded since it

would involve entertaining or assenting to values and ideals we take to be deeply wrong.

Walton has noted a curious asymmetry (Walton 1994a). We are willing to imagine deviations in fictional worlds from laws of nature but we are much more reluctant to, or cannot, entertain deviations from moral truths. In science fiction, for example, we are prepared to imagine possibilities regarding time travel, multiple identity, or causality which we take to be actually impossible, just because imagining them is mandated. But a story decreeing that genocide is right is insufficient to make us accept that in the fictional world this is so.

Walton's explanation of the asymmetry is based on a supervenience principle. Since we generally assume that moral properties supervene on natural properties, where there is a divergence of moral properties in the fictional world from the actual world we conclude that there is a divergence in the natural properties. Where the fictional world, as it is represented, fails to respect this principle then we are entitled to hold that things could not be as they are represented, no matter what imaginings the work mandates. However, this diagnosis of imaginative resistance looks far too broad if it is supposed to be distinctive to the moral case and it looks as if we can imagine worlds which are at odds with the supervenience principle. After all, even if we assume that the mental supervenes on the physical we do not resist imagining a Cartesian fiction.

According to Moran, imaginative resistance is psychological and an upshot of our character; we are reluctant to imagine morally inverted worlds because to do so would be to endorse certain sentiments that should be condemned (Moran 1994). But this explanation looks problematic in a different way. Just to imagine a morally inverted world does not entail the actual endorsement of the relevant sentiments. I might fully imagine certain racist attitudes and values, and allow my responses to proceed on that basis, but it does not follow that I actually endorse them. I may just take up an attitude of fictional assent; if these were the appropriate attitudes and values then I would respond as I do in reading the racist novel. I can, conceptually and psychologically, do this while nonetheless holding that such attitudes and values are actually deeply pernicious and wrong. Heightened resistance to moral falsehoods might reflect a psychological tendency to fear the corruption of our own characters, whereby we tend to react strongly against attempts to get us to imagine some moral falsehoods for fear of coming to internalize them ourselves. But truly great artistry can overcome this reluctance if we are prepared to allow it to do so. This would explain why there remains something important to Plato's thought that truly great art can be dangerous indeed (Kieran 2003).

Making sense of imagination

It is an axiom of contemporary theories of imagining that states of imagination are mental states with prepositional contents. Attitude theorists need not deny that there are sensory imaginings, but they do hold that sensory imaginings are

propositional imaginings, albeit of a special sort. We have seen that a notion of non-propositional imagining might help account for the rationality of emotional responses to fictions and for the phenomenon of imaginative resistance. Part III of this volume contains several non-propositional accounts of sensory imagination.

A simulation theorist may opt to restrict his account to cases of non-sensory imagining and either deny that sensory imagining exists or grant that it exists as a phenomenon independent of prepositional imagining. But Currie takes sensory imagination to be a kind of prepositional imagination and proposes that simulation theory accommodates it, specifically as it is brought to bear in the interpretation of pictures. In his view, grasping what a picture depicts requires that one visually imagine the scene it depicts. It is fictional, for instance, in *A Fist Full of Dollars* that the Man With No Name keeps on walking despite having been hit by several gunshots. But my imagining this state of affairs while watching the movie differs in obvious and important ways from the imagining that is *required* to comprehending a description of the event (a literary fiction may evoke a sensory imagining but none is required to grasp the fiction). Currie accepts that the former but not the latter necessarily shares many features in common with *seeing* a man rise and continue to approach an enemy who is shooting him. It involves "perceptual imaginings".

Perceptual imaginings are a species of propositional imagining unlike that required to comprehend a literary fiction. Since imagination is quasi-belief, we should hew to the principle that "distinctions between kinds of imaginings ought to have their basis in distinctions between types of belief" (Currie 1995a:182). This, after all, is the point of taking states of imagination to be the product of the belief-desire system run off-line. Thus, perceptual imaginings parallel perceptual beliefs.

A perceptual belief is a belief with a particular kind of content. First, it is one in which there is a counterfactual dependence between the belief's content and the perceptible properties of the object of belief (if the object were redder or if it were square instead of round, the believer would have believed that it is redder or that it is square). Second, perceptual beliefs represent objects as having properties that are highly specific and that are "bundled" together in a way that reflects their origin in a sense modality. This distinguishes visual beliefs from auditory beliefs or from beliefs in other sense modalities—visual beliefs, for instance, bundle the specific shape, size, and color of objects; auditory beliefs bundle other types of properties.

Two objections may be raised against the hypothesis that sensory imagining is perceptual imagining so defined. First, it does not capture the distinction between perceptual and literary imaginings. A reliable witness in a who-done-it novel may describe the perpetrator of a crime in a way that is counterfactually dependent upon the perpetrator's features, that bundles them by sense modality, and that is highly specific. The reader's imagining will be highly specific, bundled by sense modality, and counterfactually dependent on the perpetrator's features. Yet, this imagining is quite unlike that we have when we see the perpetrator on screen or

in the "mind's eye". The point may be put another way. We may respond to the who-done-it novel with two kinds of imagining, one required and one optional. The optional imagining is like seeing the perpetrator; the required imagining is like believing a journalistic report. How do these imaginings differ if perceptual imagining is quasi-believing? One might reply by crafting a more nuanced account of the specificity or bundling of properties in perceptual belief and imagining. However, if the second objection is effective, the first goes through, no matter how specificity and bundling are defined.

The second objection is that sensory imagining—including the kind of imagining that might be thought to be in play when we watch movies or look at pictures—cannot be characterized as akin to belief, since it shares properties of experience incompatible with belief. Belief is one kind of mental state; experience is another. The differences are myriad, of course, but we should emphasize the following. First, experiences, but not beliefs, are necessarily occurrent. They always have a precise duration and occupy a precise location in the stream of conscious mental events. This is not the case with either beliefs or prepositional imaginings, which are quite often dispositional. (This explains the fact that experiences but not beliefs are the stuff of episodic memory: I can remember that I experienced such and such without recalling the experience itself but I cannot remember having a belief without recalling the belief itself.) Second, experiences necessarily have a phenomenal character (beliefs need not) and a full description of an experience must include what it is like to have the experience. Thus, unlike belief, experience can be more or less vivid. Third, the contents of experience are frequently, if not invariably, belief-independent. This is strikingly brought out in illusions, such as the Müller-Lyer illusion: my seeing the lines as different in length is not corrected by my belief that they are equal in length. Finally, the content of experience is non-conceptual: the properties it represents *need not* be ones of which the perceiver possesses concepts. A perceiver may have experiences as of shapes, colors, chords, and timbres for which she possesses no concepts. That this is so is consistent with the doctrine that all experience is concept-laden: perhaps some concepts must be applied to experience but representing some properties in experience need not require the possession of concepts of those properties. By contrast, the contents of belief are conceptual: each property represented in belief is necessarily one of which the believer possesses a concept.

My seeing the monster in *Alien* or my running "If She Marries a Taxi Driver" through my head necessarily has a precise duration and is accessible to episodic memory. Sensory imagining also has, by necessity, a phenomenal character—Frank Jackson's Mary can learn what it is like to experience red by sensorily imagining red or by seeing the blood of the movie monster's victims (she cannot learn what it is like to experience red by propositionally imagining that she sees a red object.) Its content is non-conceptual—the precise color and consistency of the slime dripping from the alien's teeth may be properties of which I possess no concepts (DeBellis 1995; Lopes 2000). This content is also belief-independent. I may believe that the monster is a harmless latex dummy and may do my best to

resist imagining otherwise, but for all that it *looks* as if there is an alien monster on the rampage. Interestingly, the contents of pure sensory images are also belief-independent—the lines in a mental image of the Müller-Lyer illusion appear different in length, even if one believes they are equal (Pressy and Wilson 1974; Berbaum and Chung 1981; Wallace 1984). The hypothesis that sensory imaginings are akin to perceptual beliefs is false if they have certain experience-like features.

It should be—and it has been—acknowledged from the start that imagination is not a unitary phenomenon. There are many forms of imagination and each needs its own explanation. But this is no setback. The best first step toward understanding imagination in all its guises is to provide an account of one central form of imagination. Its limitations inform us about other varieties of imagination and guide us in devising accounts of them.

Part I

IMAGINATION, NARRATIVE, AND EMOTION

1
REASONS, EMOTIONS, AND FICTIONS

Berys Gaut

It is obvious that one can imagine having an emotion. Less obvious is whether one can have an actual emotion directed toward a merely imagined state of affairs. The latter is a quite general issue about the relation of imagination to emotion. A particular application of this issue has received extensive discussion in philosophical aesthetics in the last twenty years, in respect of emotions directed toward fictional objects. Generally the question has been put like this: is it *possible* to feel real emotions toward events and situations known to be fictional, and if so, how? The so-called "paradox of fiction" is then construed as the problem of how there can be real emotions directed towards known fictions. On the face of it, such emotions are puzzling: when we are afraid of something, for instance, it seems that we must believe that the feared object exists and is dangerous, and also be disposed to remove ourselves from its dangers. Yet, watching a horror film, we do not believe that the depicted monsters actually exist or are really dangerous, and far from rushing in terror from the cinema, we stay and watch with enjoyment.

Some aestheticians, including Kendall Walton, Gregory Currie, and Jerrold Levinson, have tried to dissolve the paradox by arguing that (with various nuances and qualifications) it is not, in fact, possible to feel real emotions toward known fictional events: very broadly, what is happening is that the spectator is imagining feeling these emotions (Currie 1990; Walton 1990; Levinson 1997; Walton 1997). These theorists do not deny that spectators may feel real emotions toward real-world analogues of fictional events, nor do they deny that there is something emotion-like going on in spectators when they are moved by fictions: it is simply not real fear, pity, disgust, and so forth, that they are feeling toward the fictional events. Let us dub this view *emotional irrealism*.

Returning a different answer to the question are philosophers such as Peter Lamarque, Noël Carroll, John Morreall, Richard Moran, Derek Matravers, and Richard Joyce, who argue that the phenomenology of spectatorship supports the claim that spectators can feel real emotions toward fictions, and that there are no good philosophical reasons for holding that the phenomenology is non-veridical in such cases (Lamarque 1981; Carroll 1990; Morreall 1993; Moran 1994; Matravers 1998; Joyce 2000). Let us term this view *emotional realism*.

I argue here for the truth of emotional realism. I also show that there is a distinct puzzle concerning not the possibility but the *rationality* of fiction-directed emotions. The latter puzzle has often not been as sharply separated from the former issue as it ought to be; for instance, Colin Radford in one of the earliest papers in the debate addressed the question of the rationality of fiction-directed emotions, but his position encouraged a conflation of this with the distinct question of their possibility (Radford 1975). Though distinct, there is nevertheless an important connection between the two issues: it will turn out that the strongest arguments for emotional irrealism stem from arguments based on rationality considerations, so that the puzzle about the rationality of fiction-directed emotions needs to be solved or dissolved in order to resolve the issue of realism.

I first examine the possibility puzzle, and show how realism can dissolve it, since it is based on a misconception of what is required for something to be an emotion. I then turn to the rationality puzzle, examine various realist attempts to solve it, and offer my own solution, based on three rationality criteria grounded on the main characteristics of emotional states. Finally, I compare the solution offered here to three recent attempts to solve the puzzles, and argue for its superiority to them.

The possibility of fiction-directed emotions

Before turning to the paradox of fiction, we need to consider what an emotion is. In one broad, but legitimate, sense of the term, an emotion is a state that is characteristically felt, a state that characteristically has a phenomenology (unlike, say, a belief, which has none). In this sense, we may say that someone is very emotional, and simply mean that he is prone to swings of mood, or tends to feel things deeply. In a narrower sense of the term, an emotion is just one of the various kinds of state that are characteristically felt. It is hard precisely to delineate emotions in this narrower sense from other affective states—indeed, it has plausibly been suggested that emotions do not form a natural class at all (Rorty 1980:1). But it is useful at least to distinguish emotions from moods. A mood, such as happiness or sadness, need not have an intentional object: someone can simply be happy or sad, without being happy or sad *about* anything. An emotion in contrast has an intentional object: I am afraid of something, I pity someone. According to the dominant (and I would argue correct) cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions, an emotion not only has an intentional object, but also essentially incorporates an evaluation of that object. So to be afraid of something essentially involves evaluating that thing as dangerous; to pity someone essentially involves construing her as suffering; to be angry with someone essentially involves thinking of that person as having wronged someone about whom one cares. (Cognitive-evaluative theories in various forms are defended by Lyons 1980; de Sousa 1987; Greenspan 1988; Roberts 1988. The particular evaluations mentioned as being essentially connected with each emotion are used for

illustrative purposes only; in fact, they may be more complex than is commonly suggested, but that does not matter for our present purposes.) Finally, an emotion is a state that characteristically can motivate actions: I run away because I am afraid, I help someone because I pity her, I strike someone because I am angry with him.

There are, then, three main characteristic aspects to an emotion: the affective, the cognitive-evaluative, and the motivational. In most fully fledged occurrent emotions all three are present, but it is not necessary that all three be present for an emotion to exist. Not all of the characteristic features of an emotion are essential to it. In particular, many emotional episodes are non-occurrent: one can be angry with someone for a long time, even when he is absent and one is not thinking about him. One need not have any feeling of anger during these long periods. Nevertheless, if one's anger does become occurrent, perhaps because the person is present, characteristically one will experience a feeling of anger. According to the cognitive-evaluative theory, an emotion is not however individuated by its particular feeling. The feelings that we experience when we are ashamed and when we feel guilty, for instance, might well be identical, and what individuates them is the content of the respective evaluative thoughts—of having done something shameful, as opposed to having done something morally wrong. Lyons, for instance, holds that an occurrent emotion involves bodily sensations of felt disturbance caused by certain evaluations; but he does not maintain that each emotion has a unique feeling associated with it by which we individuate the emotion (Lyons 1980). A feeling must be present in occurrent emotion, but what feeling it is might vary from occasion to occasion, or from person to person.

Turning back to our problem, the paradox of fiction has been discussed chiefly in terms of the emotions of pity and fear, the emotions aroused by tragic representations. But if we cast our net wider, the irrealist case becomes less compelling. Disgust, for instance, is (certainly in the broad sense) an emotion; but it is odd to say that one has to know whether something really occurred if one is to be disgusted at the thought of it. If I describe in vivid and detailed fashion the jam-and-live-mouse sandwich that I breakfasted on the other day, you might well be disgusted, without supposing that I am telling the truth. And if I tell you a joke, you don't have to wait to find out whether the events I describe really happened before you can find the joke funny. I can also be awed by or feel wonder at a depicted landscape, even though I know that the artist invented it. Nor does there seem to be anything problematic (contra Walton 1990:203) about the possibility of admiring a fictional character, such as Superman.

Stronger, though, are the intuitions supporting the irrealist case in respect of fear and pity. How can one really fear something, or fear for someone, if one does not believe that the thing is dangerous or the person endangered? And how can one not be motivated to flee if danger really threatens one? Indeed, how could one enjoy these states if one really were afraid? Similar considerations apply to pitying someone.

If the irrealist is right about these matters, he or she owes an account of what is going on in such cases. Perhaps the most developed version of such an account is due to Kendall Walton. Walton holds that it is only fictional that Charles, the spectator of a horror movie, is afraid of the green slime that features in it, and what makes this the case is that Charles "experiences quasi fear [the sensations and physiological reactions normally associated with fear] as a result of realizing that fictionally the slime threatens him. This makes it fictional that his quasi fear is caused by a belief that the slime poses a danger, and hence that he fears the slime" (Walton 1990:245). According to this analysis, spectators actually experience the sensations and physiological reactions normally associated with fear; these reactions do not, however, constitute fear when directed toward fictions. The account thus readily provides an error theory for why spectators might falsely conclude that they really are afraid, even though they are only make-believedly afraid.

One evident disadvantage that such an account has over realism is its far greater complexity: whereas the realist holds simply that Charles is afraid of the Green Slime, the irrealist holds that he is in the complex state described above, which would involve his possession of concepts such as quasi-fear. We can indeed ascribe such concepts to spectators if they are necessary to explain the phenomena, even if spectators are not explicitly aware of possessing the concepts (think of how Chomskyans ascribe knowledge of deep grammatical structures to competent speakers, though such speakers have no explicit knowledge of them). But if there is a simpler account available, which adequately explains the phenomena, we ought on general heuristic grounds to adopt that. And this means that, unless the irrealist has good grounds for showing that realism is inadequate, then realism ought to be the preferred account.

We have already adverted to the kinds of considerations to which irrealists can appeal; they can be organized around the three aspects of an emotion: the affective, the cognitive-evaluative, and the motivational.

First, if a fiction-directed emotion is genuine, how could one enjoy feeling it? After all, real fear is intrinsically unpleasant, and people go out of their way to avoid it. But spectators enjoy horror films, and also a wide variety of other fictions in which they fear for characters. That strongly suggests that such spectators are only make-believedly afraid, not really so. However, this argument fails. For one of the many merits of Walton's account is that it allows for make-believe fear to have exactly the same phenomenology as real fear—that is what quasi-fear is. And any adequate account of make-believe fear must keep its phenomenology the same as that of fear, because it is a truth of introspection that one can be in a state that *feels* like fear when watching a horror film. But if one insists that one cannot enjoy fear, because the feel of fear is unpleasant, then one must equally insist that one cannot enjoy make-believe fear, since, sharing the same phenomenology, that too must be unpleasant. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere (Gaut 1993), it is a mistake to hold that fear is intrinsically unpleasant. According to the cognitive-evaluative theory it is not the feeling that individuates the emotion, but the cognitive content; and this allows for at least some cases where fear can be felt

as pleasant (perhaps because of its associated "arousal jag"). Bunjee-jumpers, mountaineers, and many others who are confronted with real danger, can seek out and enjoy fear; the cognitive theory shows how this is possible.

The second, cognitive-evaluative aspect of an emotion seems to provide a stronger ground for the irrealist case. Real emotions require their subjects to have appropriate beliefs: real fear requires one to believe that someone about whom one cares is threatened. If a man in a pub tells you a harrowing story about his sister, then you will cease to be harrowed if the man then admits that he made the story up, and does not have a sister (Radford 1975). However, the example does not prove that an emotion requires a belief: if one's emotion does evaporate on being told that the sister is an invention, that merely shows that *if* an emotion is grounded on a belief, removal of that belief tends to remove the emotion grounded on it. It does not support the more general claim that having an appropriate belief is a necessary condition for the existence of an emotion.

The claim that to have an emotion, a person must have the appropriate evaluative belief, might seem to follow from the cognitive-evaluative theory of the emotions. But in fact cognition is a broader category than belief, including imaginings in a broad sense—unasserted thoughts, construals, seeings-as, and so on. The more restricted version of cognitivism, which holds that emotions require *beliefs* about their objects has been dubbed *judgmentalism,* and there are good reasons to reject it. Consider Fido, an old and harmless dog. Due to a traumatic childhood incident, Fred has a neurotic fear of dogs, and Fred fears Fido. Fred does not believe that Fido is dangerous: Fred has, for instance, no tendency to warn others about him. Fred simply cannot help seeing Fido as dangerous, and he responds to Fido with fear. So it is possible to feel fear while not possessing a belief that the object of one's fear is dangerous (Greenspan 1988: chapter 2). Or consider cases where I vividly imagine my hand being mangled by a machine, and I feel fear, though I firmly believe that my hand is not caught in the machine (Carroll 1990: 78–9); or when I vividly imagine plunging to my death on the rocks below, though I believe that I am safely behind the parapet on the cliff-top. It is also possible to fear merely counterfactual cases (Moran 1994). For instance, it makes sense to be afraid of what would have happened if Hitler had won the Second World War. And a visitor to the CN Tower in Toronto can have the experience of walking on a glass floor several hundred feet up on the observation deck of the tower, seeing the ground far below one's feet. As one edges gingerly across the floor, one certainly believes that it is safe to do so (otherwise it would be madness to walk across), but the experience of fear is perfectly genuine: the appearance of extreme danger is a very vivid one, and grounds one's fear of falling.

The irrealist will deny the possibility of these cases. First, it will be objected that all of these examples are ones in which one does have a belief, albeit an irrational and probably subconscious one. Several phobic fears may be like this: someone who fears flying may well have an irrational belief that flying is dangerous. However, while this may be true of some phobias, it fails as a plausible

explanation for the full range of cases considered above: I do not, for instance, have a subconscious and irrational belief that Hitler really did win the Second World War, or that I will fall to my death when I walk across the glass floor—if I did have the latter belief, I would not walk across. The better explanation is that the vivid imagining or appearance of danger is sufficient to ground real fear.

Second, it has been objected that anti-judgmentalist accounts mistake the intentional object of emotions. Carroll dubs his version of the anti-judgmentalist view the *Thought Theory,* and holds that Charles fears the thought of the Green Slime, and this thought need not be asserted (Carroll 1990). A related position is defended by Lamarque (Lamarque 1981). Walton has objected to the latter that one does not fear the thought, but the *object* of the thought—the Green Slime (Walton 1990:203). The anti-judgmentalist should simply agree: the theory should hold that one fears not the act of *thinking* of the Green Slime, but the *thought-content:* that is, the Green Slime. Judgmentalism holds that asserted thoughts, that is, beliefs, are necessary for emotions; and that the intentional object of the fear is the belief-content, that is, what the belief is about; anti-judgmentalism holds that unasserted thoughts are all that may be required for an emotion, and should relatedly hold that the object of fear is the thought-content, that is, what the thought is about.

Finally, an irrealist can object that the Fido case and its ilk show only that it is not necessary to believe that an object is dangerous to fear it; but it is compatible with this that one must believe that the object exists in order to fear it. So fear does not require *characterizing* beliefs that something is dangerous, but it does require *existential* beliefs, and hence the paradox of fiction is not solved by the anti-judgmentalist stratagem. Something like this suggestion is made by Levinson (Levinson 1997). However, such a half-way position lacks motivation: fear has as its formal object the dangerous, so the fact that one believes that the object of fear exists, even though it lacks the property of being dangerous, would be no less puzzling than the case where one does not believe that object of fear exists at all. And far from it being the case that fear must be directed to what one believes exists, fear is often felt toward what *may* happen in the future, not what one believes is presently so.

The third, motivational, aspect of emotions grounds what some irrealists have seen as their most powerful argument. Walton remains neutral on Greenspan's anti-judgmentalism, but holds that there are nevertheless good reasons for thinking that Charles, unlike Fred who fears Fido, is not really afraid, for Charles is not motivated to flee, and "fear emasculated by subtracting its distinctive motivational force is not fear at all" (Walton 1990:102). Similarly, the irrealist can hold that I am not motivated to help Anna Karenina, and that this undermines the claim that I pity her.

In reply, the realist needs to get clearer about what the motivational aspect of an emotion involves. Consider a parallel argument to the above in respect of historical victims: it might be claimed that I do not really pity Anne Boleyn, since I am not motivated to help her in any way. But I really can pity Anne Boleyn;

and this is so by virtue of the fact that I have a genuine desire or wish that she had not suffered as she did. It is the presence of such a desire or wish that constitutes the motivational aspect of the emotion of pity. If, for instance, I said that I pitied Anne, but had no desire at all that she not suffer as she did, there would be defeasible grounds for questioning whether I really did pity her. But I do not try to help Anne, since I lack the belief that there is something I can do to help her. It is absence of this belief, not of the desire (or therefore of the emotion), that explains why I do not act. So the absence of motivated action does not prove that I do not pity Anne; rather, I lack the appropriate beliefs about being able to help her. In the same way, I may genuinely pity Anna Karenina, since I wish that she had not suffered as she did, but I lack the belief about being able to help her in any way; so I do not try to do so. The point applies not just to historical cases, but also to anyone whom I believe I cannot help. If I watch a live television broadcast of a hurricane sweeping through a small Florida town, I can genuinely pity the inhabitants, though I do not try to get them out of the way of the hurricane, since I know that there is nothing I can do to prevent it from engulfing them. (For a similar set of considerations see Matravers 1991 and 1998: chapter 4.)

A parallel argument applies to the case of fear. It is not the case that the desire criterial for fear is a desire to flee, since in the case of certain fears, fleeing is not appropriate—as in the case of my fear that I will lose my job. Rather, the desire is not to be threatened or endangered. And here again, spectators do not flee, since they lack the appropriate beliefs to motivate flight. Charles does not *believe* that he is endangered, but only *imagines* it; and given this, his desire not to be threatened does not motivate flight. However, this desire, imagined to be frustrated, may express itself in his reactions: covering his eyes, flinching, moaning, and so forth. Charles may in addition desire to flee the Green Slime, but even then he is not motivated to flee it, since he knows that no action available to him could count as fleeing it, since he cannot physically remove himself from the Slime: it occupies a fictional space, distinct from the physical space he occupies, and no point of this physical space is closer or more distant from the Slime than any other. (He may of course flee the cinema, but this action counts as fleeing the image of the Slime, not the Slime itself.) So again, the motivational aspect of fear is constituted by the presence of a desire or wish; lack of the motivated action of flight may be explained by the absence of appropriate beliefs, not by the absence of the emotion.

(Note that I have not maintained that motivated action invariably requires an appropriate belief as well as a desire—for Fred only imagines Fido to be dangerous, and this imagining, combined with his desire not to be endangered, is sufficient to motivate him to flee Fido. An imagining here takes the role of a belief in motivation; but—to anticipate the later discussion—this looks like it is an aspect of Fred's irrationality, and that in rational persons, an appropriate belief is required together with a desire to motivate action. Since the present section discusses the possibility of fiction-directed emotions, I am assuming here that spectators of fictions are rational, so that if they lack the appropriate belief, they will

not be motivated to act. The rationality claim will be defended in the next section.)

The irrealist may object that we do not genuinely pity fictional characters, for we have desires that require them to suffer. I do not genuinely pity Anna, since I want to read *Anna Karenina* because it is a great tragic novel, and Anna's suffering is necessary to its being a tragedy. If someone produced a Bowdlerized version of the novel, in which Anna goes off to live happily ever after with Vronsky, I would not want to read it. So my feeling of pity is illusory: I really do want Anna to suffer.

One can in general desire that some state of affairs occur, insofar as it has some property, and also desire that the same state of affairs not occur, insofar as it has a different property. I want to eat this chocolate cake insofar as it will taste delectable; I also want not to eat the chocolate cake insofar as it will make me fat. Having such conflicting desires is possible, indeed common, and not in the least irrational. Moreover, if I decide overall that the latter desire is the stronger, and I do not eat the cake, that does not show that the desire to eat the cake is not real or strong—it is, as witnessed by my pangs of regret as I reluctantly refuse a slice. In the same way, I may genuinely desire that Anna not suffer, insofar as she is loveable and the suffering is overall undeserved, while also desiring that Anna suffer, insofar as her suffering is a necessary constituent of a great novel. The greater strength of the latter desire does not prove that the former does not exist. So my desire that she not suffer, and my pity for her, are genuine (Neill 1993 gives a somewhat similar response).

We have seen that irrealist arguments drawing on all three aspects of an emotion fail to show that we cannot have fiction-directed emotions. The realist replies in each case drew not just on discussion of fictional cases, but also crucially on non-fictional cases, such as emotions felt toward counterfactual cases, or to real life cases, and on emotions felt toward historical personages or toward contemporaries whom one cannot help. It emerged that it is not a requirement that one has an appropriate belief for one to have a genuine emotion, a mere imagining may suffice; and we also saw that the motivational aspect of an emotion can involve merely the presence of a wish or desire. And as we noted, the greater complexity of Walton's make-believe account gives reason to prefer the realist account, if realism is at least as adequate an account of the phenomena. Realism is, in fact, a better account of the phenomena, being grounded on an anti-judgmentalist theory of the cognitive aspect of emotions, and a better understanding of the motivational aspect of emotions.

There are other irrealist accounts besides Walton's. Most prominently, Currie has offered an account of make-believe emotions directed toward fictions, which holds that such states are simulated emotions; these are emotions which are running "off-line", that is, without their normal connections to the input system of beliefs and the output system of actions (Currie 1990: chapter 5). Currie's account has the advantage that it lacks some of the complexity of Walton's, eschewing talk of quasi-emotions, for instance. But, in light of the account of

emotions offered above, there is reason to deny that if an emotion is detached from its normal inputs and outputs, it is only a simulated emotion. Emotions can be detached from beliefs (Fido-type cases) or not motivate actions (Anne Boleyn-type cases) while being perfectly genuine. More recently, Currie has suggested that the issue between realism and irrealism rests on little more than a verbal point about how one decides to employ emotion-terms (Currie 1997). Putting his point in the terminology adopted here, whether one uses emotion-terms so that an emotion requires a belief and a motivated action to exist, or a mere imagining and a desire, is a matter of an essentially verbal choice. However, even this reconciliationist approach is ruled out by the account defended above: for Currie's proposal would make it merely an essentially verbal choice whether I say that I really pity Anne Boleyn, or Fred really fears Fido, yet as we have seen, there are good reasons to hold that both are genuine emotions.

The rationality of fiction-directed emotions

There is a related problem for realism, which is at least as pressing as that considered above. Suppose that the anti-judgmentalist is right about the nature of emotions, and that beliefs are not required for emotions to exist. Nevertheless, it looks plausible to hold that appropriate beliefs are required for emotions to be *rational*. Even if I can fear Fido without believing that he really is dangerous, it seems that for my fear of him to be rational, I must believe that he is dangerous. (I may have an irrational belief that he is dangerous, but if so, this is a case of theoretical irrationality, and the emotion itself is derivatively irrational by virtue of this theoretical irrationality.) If I say "I'm afraid of Fido, though he's perfectly harmless" this may describe a possible state, but it also seems to be a self-conviction of irrationality. Yet, in the case of fiction-directed emotions, we do not believe that fictional entities exist, or are suffering, or are dangerous; and that seems to render these emotions irrational. For anyone who believes that our emotional engagement with fictions is valuable, this is not a welcome result. Moreover, though we argued against irrealist accounts, if it transpired that the cost of rejecting them were that spectators were systematically irrational, then a principle of charity in interpretation would come to bear. If we had to conclude that emotional responses to fictions were irrational, there would be a strong reason, given the pervasive nature and importance of such responses, to reinterpret them so that they were only imagined emotions, and hence to preserve the rationality of spectators' responses to fictions. This would put pressure on the arguments of the last section, and it might be better to conclude that fiction-directed emotions are make-believe.

We need first to say a little about what rationality is. In its most general characterization, rationality is a matter of sensitivity to reasons; specifically, it is a matter of being able to recognize reasons and respond appropriately to them. It covers reasons to believe (theoretical rationality), reasons for action (practical rationality), and reasons to feel (affective rationality), the latter being our

particular concern. There is a distinction between two standards of demandingness of rationality. Sometimes when we wonder what rational persons would believe, do, or feel, we wonder what they have *most reason* to believe, do, or feel. This requires the deliberator to bring to bear all relevant reasons in the appropriate domain, and this can be a very demanding task, far beyond the capacity of an ordinary person. If one wonders what one has most reason to believe about the truth of a particular mathematical proposition, one may have to engage in mathematical reasoning of a complexity that few can follow. Call this notion *maximal rationality*. When we call someone irrational, on the other hand, the accusation cannot be of failing to be maximally rational, for this would be an extremely demanding standard, given all of the reasons that are potentially relevant in any particular domain, and most people on most occasions might well be judged to be irrational by this standard. Rather, we must be adopting a lower standard in making this accusation: the irrational person is a person who fails to achieve some *minimal* standard of rationality. The reasons that he or she fails to recognize or to respond to appropriately would be those, which are readily graspable, being clear and evident. How to specify this notion more exactly is a moot issue, but for our present purposes, we need not attempt to do so. The main point is to distinguish these two standards of irrationality, and relatedly to note that not all failures to grasp reasons are instances of irrationality.

Irrationalism

How is the realist to respond to the claim that fiction-directed emotions are irrational? The most straightforward realist position is simply to embrace the objection, and to be an *irrationalist* about fiction-directed emotions. Emotional responses towards fictions are irrational, and charity should not lead us to deny that they occur. There are, after all, natural responses that are irrational: people tend to be systematically more optimistic about how well their lives will go than is epistemically warranted. And love, as Proust and Stendhal have made us well aware, can have many irrational aspects to it, involving projections of one's hopes and fantasies onto the loved one, which may have little foundation in reality. But that is simply how love is, and it would be wrong to try to interpret away these features of our lives in the interest of ascribing greater rationality to ourselves. Similarly, perhaps we have a natural tendency to respond to fictions with real emotions, but this is nevertheless irrational.

Something like this seems to have been Plato's view in the *Ion*. Socrates says of the recitor of verses:

> There he is, at a sacrifice or festival, got up in holiday attire, adorned with golden chaplets, and he weeps, though he has lost nothing of his finery. Or he recoils with fear, standing in the presence of more than twenty thousand friendly people, though nobody is stripping him or doing him damage. Shall we say that the man is in his senses? *Ion:* Never, Socrates, upon my

> word. That is strictly true. *Socrates:* Now, then, are you aware that you produce the same effects in most of the spectators too? *Ion:* Yes, indeed, I know it very well. As I look down at them from the stage above, I see them, every time, weeping, casting terrible glances, stricken with amazement at the deeds recounted.
>
> (Plato 1961:535 d-e)

Socrates, then, does not doubt the reality of fear and sorrow in these cases: he simply thinks that they are irrational. Radford's preferred response to the problem also seems to be a version of irrationalism (Radford 1975).

The emotional realist can hold that fiction-directed emotions are real, but irrational, and fall into a class of other real but frequently irrational emotions or attitudes. However, this response is not very plausible. First, the claim is extremely counterintuitive, since all instances of emotions directed toward fiction would have to be held to be irrational, since we always lack the requisite evaluative and existential beliefs about fictions. It is not that the responses *sometimes* err in being irrational (as is the case with optimism and love); they *always* so err. And these responses are a core part of our general response to fictions, so that it is likely that almost every response to fiction would be tainted by irrationality. This is hard to accept.

Second, the objection from the principle of charity cannot be easily evaded. For emotional irrealism, as we have seen, has a story to tell about how imagined emotions have affective features that explain why we confuse them with real emotions; the account provides an error theory of why a spectator might falsely conclude that he really is afraid. And since that error theory is not wildly implausible, a principle of charity points toward the conclusion that emotional irrealism is correct. In contrast, it is much more implausible to interpret away the irrational aspects of optimism and love—wild optimists are not experiencing quasi-optimism, and people irrationally in love are not experiencing merely quasi-love. The pressure exerted by charity in favor of reinterpretation is much greater in the fiction case, so irrationalism should not seek shelter in the occurrence of irrational responses in real life.

A final problem with the irrationalist line is that claiming that fiction-directed emotions are irrational leaves us with the difficulty of making some of the discriminations required in assessing viewers's responses to works. Suppose you fear some dreadful monster in a horror film, but Bertie fears an innocent victim in that film; Bertie's fear is irrational, in a way that your fear is not. But if all emotions directed toward fictions were irrational, we could not make this sort of discrimination. Yet, we clearly can, do and ought to make such discriminations, so we are not and ought not to be irrationalists.