

## SYMPOSIUM: IMAGINATION AND EMOTION

Imagine being in a hammock surrounded by birch branches shaken by the wind, imagine being stuck in a traffic jam, imagine that one of your beloved ones had a serious accident climbing in the mountain. All these imaginative exercises seem to have the power of triggering emotional responses. In imagining being in a hammock surrounded by birch branches shaken by the wind, one can sample the delights of being relaxed in a peaceful ambience. By contrast, if one imagines being stuck in a traffic jam, she can feel the tension and get nervous. When imagining that one of her beloved ones had a serious accident climbing in the mountain, she can feel anxiety and sorrow.

The connection between imagination and emotions is well known and finds, for example, an important place in Hume's philosophical analysis. He stressed that "it is remarkable, that the imagination and affections have close union together, and that nothing, which affects the former, can be entirely indifferent to the latter" (Hume 1739, II, III, vi).

Imagination, however, is not a unitary phenomenon and the literature distinguishes between different varieties of the imagination. Many varieties have been invoked in order to explain the capacity of imagination to evoke emotions: cognitive imagination (Weinberg & Meskin 2006), perception-like imagination (Lamarque 1996; Currie 2014; Van Leeuwen 2016) and possibly imagination linked to remembered life experiences (Levinson 1990), desire-like imagination (Currie & Ravenscroft 2002; Doggett & Egan 2007), and emotion-like imagination (Dorsch 2011).

The emotionality of imagination is closely related to another aspect of the imagination, namely its perspectival nature – that is, the fact that imagination somehow involves a self or "point of view". Perspectivity can even be seen as what grounds emotionality: it would be through a specific involvement of the self that imagination shows privileged access to our emotions. This has been called "the argument from affective response" (Stock 2013) and different versions can be found in the literature (Walton 1990; Levinson 1993).

Moreover, fiction is usually considered a highly conducive field for exploration of the emotionality of imagination. Our interactions with all kinds of fiction have been explained using the notion of imagination (see Walton 1990; Schaeffer 1999; Stock 2017). Fiction would be an invitation to imagine. In other words, our imagination would be at work when we watch a play or look at a painting, read a novel or engage in pretence. Emotions very similar to those we feel in real life can be generated in fictional contexts. Reading (or watching) 'Little Women', a reader (a viewer) can get angry against Amy, when she burns Jo's unfinished novel, or feel joy, when finally Jo rejoins her loved one. Emotional responses may be present when what we imagine is not only fictional, but

also utterly unrealistic. Some kind of joy may arise when, reading *The Master and Margarita*, we imagine Margarita overwhelmed by freedom and lightness when she is endowed with supernatural powers; or some kind of irritation may be triggered by Tinker Bell's trickery against Wendy. It should be stressed that fiction adds a paradoxical element concerning the emotions themselves: What is the nature of sadness or joy that is not linked to a real loss or a genuine satisfaction?

Despite being widely acknowledged that imagination and emotion are strongly tied, several issues remain to be clarified, as that of knowing whether a specific variety explains such a link, whether there is something peculiar to this link that can be revealed by fiction, and whether emotionality is necessarily tied to the perspectivity of imagination. The present symposium aims at investigating different aspects of these open questions by gathering together scholars from different fields. It is organised around two main areas of concern. On the one hand, two talks take a general stance towards the relationship between imagination and emotion. More precisely, while Cain Todd explores the phenomenal character of these mental phenomena and the role that imagination plays in emotions themselves, Margherita Arcangeli and Jérôme Dokic deal with the perspectivity of imagination and the role played by different types of emotional perspectives in a variety of imagination-based mental phenomena. On the other hand, three talks focus on emotions in the context of fiction. Both Julia Langkau and Stéphane Lemaire question our concerns for fictional characters: the former by claiming that reasons outside the fictional world drive our caring about fictional characters, the latter by holding that fictional characters and situations are appraised by affective mechanisms as states of affairs with whom we cannot interact. Finally, Agnes Moors goes deep into the cognitive architecture of emotions and puts forward a novel dual process model, which reframes what counts as an emotional behaviour and remaps the role of fictional, as well as aesthetic, stimuli in eliciting emotions.

### **Emotion, imagination, and transparency**

*Cain Todd (Lancaster University)*

This paper examines some significant, but under-explored, connections between emotion and imagination, focussing on the relative lack of phenomenological transparency in each. Roughly, a phenomenal state is transparent to the degree that introspection primarily reveals the intentional objects – or representational content – of that state, but few or no features of the state itself. Visual perception is often held to be paradigmatically transparent in this way. I will argue that emotions are fundamentally opaque (i.e. non-transparent) in part because of the essential role that imagination plays in them. Emotions, conceived as evaluative construals, are unlike judgements or perceptions in so far as they are partly subject to voluntary control, and in so far as this figures (or can figure) in their phenomenology. I will then argue that this 'apparent voluntariness' (as I shall call it) is inherited from the role of imagination in emotion, for emotional construals essentially involve adopting varying perspectives on states of affairs. I will further contend that both emotion and imagination share a partly non-attributive phenomenology in virtue of the role that attention plays in them, and I will finish by exploring one important implication of this: both emotion and imagination can distort temporal experience in interesting ways.

## **Affective imagination: a multi-layered account**

*Margherita Arcangeli (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) & Jérôme Dokic (EHESS-IJN)*

Drawing from the conception of imaginings as mental narratives, we argue that three levels of mental perspective should be distinguished: the perspective of the represented subject (the character, if there is one), the perspective of the representing subject (the author), and the intermediary perspective of the narrator. In many cases, the narrator remains virtual; what is at stake is only a specific way of representing the situation. For instance, different narratives can truly represent the same situation in different emotional ways. Once the three-way perspectival character of imaginings is acknowledged, several mental phenomena can be described in terms of dependence relations between perspectives. Focusing on cases involving emotional perspectives, we will consider four mental phenomena (i.e., strong and weak immersion, emotional contagion and imaginative resistance), and point out two types of dependence relations between perspectives, namely *alignment* and *constraintment*. The discussion will lead to distinguish between two forms of imagination: free and constrained imagination, where only the latter is defined in terms of a constraintment dependence relation between the narrator and the author perspectives. We argue that epistemic uses of the imagination involve constrained imagination. Both episodic memory and episodic anticipation are understood as uses of memory-based imagination to form beliefs either about one's own past experience or about one's probable future. Indeed, as we will show, constrained imaginings are crucially involved in both episodic memory and anticipation. Moreover, our view shed new light on a controversial type of memories, that is, "affective memories". Our suggestion is that affective memories are genuine cases of imagination-based memory and cannot be reduced to either memories about past emotions or memories causing present emotions.

## **Feeling for fictional characters**

*Julia Langkau (University of Fribourg)*

It's uncontroversial that we can be and frequently are moved by fiction. The question I address in this paper is how we can explain the relation between what we care for, or our concerns, and our emotions towards fictional characters. While we might sometimes develop concerns with respect to fictional characters, this is an implausible explanation in other cases, for instance when we sympathise with a character at the very beginning of a novel where we don't 'know' the character yet and cannot possibly have developed a concern. I will argue that in these cases, our concern is either rooted in our non-fictional life or in some aesthetic features of the fiction. A theory of emotions which can nicely explain the connection between concerns rooted in real life and emotions towards fictional characters is Robert C. Robert's quasi-perceptual theory of emotions, according to which emotions are a kind of construal: they are mental events or states in which one thing is grasped in terms of something else. A construal is a three-place relation: a subject 'perceives' (more or less literally) something in terms of something else. The 'in terms of' relation can have as its terms a perception, a thought, an image, or a concept. Emotions are a specific kind of construal: they are concern-based, i.e. we have to have a concern about the construed situation. My thesis is that in some cases of emotions towards a fictional character, our concern is about something in our

non-fictional life rather than about something in the world of the fiction, while the emotion is still directed towards the fictional character.

### **Face à la fiction, des émotions irresponsables**

*Stéphane Lemaire (Université de Rennes)*

Selon l'Hypothèse du code unique (Nichols 2004), qu'un contenu soit l'objet d'une croyance ou qu'il soit imaginé, ce contenu est traité de la même manière par le système émotionnel. Je voudrais montrer toutefois que dans certaines circonstances que je vais préciser, il peut y avoir une différence systématique des émotions face à la fiction par rapport aux émotions face aux mêmes situations considérées comme réelles.

Certes, il est plausible que la mort d'un citoyen romain par la volonté de l'empereur produise la même réponse d'indignation que ce soit dans le cadre d'un récit historique ou dans une narration fictionnelle si ces récits nous sont contés avec les mêmes mots. Par contre, nos réactions émotionnelles seront différentes si nous apprenons la mort réelle de migrants en méditerranée en 2018 ou si ces morts adviennent dans le cadre d'une fiction. La raison évidente semble être que nous pouvons nous sentir coupables face à la situation réelle mais pas vis-à-vis de la situation imaginée, (et bien sûr, tant que cette dernière n'évoque pas la réalité correspondante). C'est d'ailleurs un point souligné à l'âge classique et dont Rousseau se fait l'écho dans sa critique du théâtre dans *La Lettre à D'Alembert* : la fiction ne nous met pas en situation de responsabilité.

Comment expliquer cette différence ? L'hypothèse que je suggère est tout simplement que l'évaluation d'un contenu fictionnel par le système émotionnel traite ce dernier comme un ensemble de faits avec lesquels aucune interaction n'est possible. De ce fait, il n'y a rien à craindre pour ce qui nous importe de la fiction et inversement, nous ne pouvons pas intervenir en tant que participants dans la fiction.

Je discute pour finir la question de savoir si cette hypothèse est incompatible avec l'hypothèse du code unique. Ma réponse est qu'il n'y a pas d'incompatibilité mais que la prise en compte du phénomène que je décris nous oblige à préciser les règles de certains processus de mise en quarantaine propre à cette hypothèse. On peut donc voir le phénomène que je décris comme l'occasion d'un approfondissement de l'hypothèse du code unique.

### **A skeptical account of emotions caused by fictional and aesthetic stimuli**

*Agnes Moors (University of Louvain)*

There is fair agreement that fictional and aesthetic stimuli can elicit emotions (of the garden-variety type) by hijacking the mechanism that is put into place to elicit real-life emotions. The problem is that there is no consensus about what this mechanism should be. The psychological emotion is characterized by a controversy between classic emotion theories and skeptical theories.

Classic emotion theories typically think of emotions as episodes comprised of components such as information processing, action tendencies, physiological responses, facial expressions, full-body behavior, and feelings. As an example of a classic emotion theory, take basic emotion theory, which proposes that there is a limited set of basic emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness, for which

there is an innate neural circuit. When the right situation occurs, the neural circuit gets activated and produces all the components of the emotion.

Skeptical theories argue that the components in emotional episodes are real, but that there is no solid basis to group them into basic emotions. Some even argue that the set of emotions is not a scientific set, but merely a descriptive set. According to one brand of skeptical theory, the components in so-called emotional episodes cluster because they are all involved in the preparation and/or execution of a specific behavior. So-called emotional episodes are seen as a kind of behavior episode.

Contemporary behavior theories are dual process theories in that they propose two types of mechanisms: a stimulus-driven mechanism producing habitual behavior and a goal-directed mechanism producing instrumental behavior. The mechanism that basic (and other classic) emotion theories propose for the elicitation of emotional (and other components of the emotional episode) fits the format of a stimulus-driven mechanism. The mechanism that they propose for emotion regulation fits the format of a goal-directed mechanism.

These theories, moreover, propose a default-interventivist architecture with regard to the interplay between both mechanisms, with stimulus-driven mechanisms portrayed as automatic and therefore the default mechanism and goal-directed mechanisms as non-automatic and therefore able to intervene and regulate the stimulus-driven mechanism under special conditions (when there is ample time, attention, and motivation). Fictional/aesthetic stimuli are supposed to hijack the stimulus-driven mechanism and in this way to elicit emotions, that can be regulated by a goal-directed mechanism if need be.

I propose an alternative dual process model, in which both stimulus-driven and goal-directed processes can be involved in the causation of emotional and non-emotional behavior. Given that the alternative model no longer presupposes a dedicated mechanism for emotional behavior, it can be argued that the distinction between emotional and non-emotional behavior is not scientific but descriptive and a matter of degree, related to the goal relevance of the events and/ or the intensity of felt action tendencies.

In addition, I propose a parallel-competitive architecture in which both stimulus-driven and goal-directed mechanisms operate in parallel so that they enter into competition, and in which the goal-directed process often wins this competition. This implies that the lion share of emotional and non-emotional behavior should be caused by a goal-directed mechanism. Fictional and aesthetic stimuli can also hijack the goal-directed mechanism, and via this route elicit components of action episodes, such as action tendencies, some of which will be considered as more emotional and others as less emotional based on their intensity.

Action tendencies translate into overt actions unless they are outcompeted by other action tendencies (to do something else or to remain passive). Given that the content of fictional and aesthetic emotions is typically not directly relevant for our concerns and that there is no strict need to act, there is a risk that art will not survive other forces.

There seem to be at least two strategies that designers of fictional stimuli (for experiments) and artists use to compensate for this, and that allow for fictional/aesthetic stimuli to elicit even strong emotions. First fictional/aesthetic stimuli are presented in environments such as laboratories, museums, and theaters that help shut us off from daily hassles. Second, fictional/aesthetic stimuli are often stronger, more outspoken than stimuli in daily life, so-called super-stimuli.