

Literary Fiction and Rationality

30–31 May 2013, University of Tampere, Finland

* * *

Fiction, Belief, Imagining and Cognitive Value

KATHLEEN STOCK

There is an apparent tension amongst two views, each held in the philosophy of literature. According to the first, fiction is that which, necessarily, invites imagining; this in effect precludes it from being a useful source of true belief about the world. According to the second, fiction can contain many non-accidentally true propositions and so can be a useful source of true belief about the world; but for this reason should not be understood as necessarily inviting imagining. In my paper, I will seek to resolve this tension by offering an account of imagining in response to fiction which alleviates it.

Understanding Fiction: Concepts, Character and Coherence

ELISABETH SCHELLEKENS

In the last 15–20 years or so, several convincing arguments have been presented to support the view that art can be a source of knowledge: art, we are told, can help us understand various moral concepts, the psychology of others, the outcome of hypothetical events and behaviours, and more. The imagination tends to be described as central to the acquisition of such knowledge and the literary arts are placed in a privileged position especially with regards to more sophisticated or complex forms of understanding. Whilst I am broadly sympathetic to this Cognitivist position, I will begin by highlighting some of the less frequently discussed weaknesses of this general

approach, including what it might mean to “come to know” something in this context and the relative vagueness surrounding what sets out imagination in motion, so to speak. I will then turn to a recent theory about how serious engagement with art has the potential to enhance our understanding of our own emotional character. For Peter Goldie, experiences of art can offer the opportunity to gain a better grasp on the motivations driving our own behavioural patterns or thought-processes and thereby allow us to unpack a certain kind of narrative about ourselves. In this sense, insights to be gained from protracted experiences of art can be transferred to our everyday lives in ways that, for Goldie, tie together our analyses of the emotions, moral psychology, kinds of aesthetic experience, virtue theory and individual character. Goldie’s efforts in this area move beyond the gaining of knowledge in its traditional forms toward the question of how imposing a certain narrative structure in order to make sense of actions and thoughts past and present can be used to project the kind of person we hope to become. In that sense at least, art can enable us to imagine – and perhaps even plan – the moral characters we aspire to have in the future. My aim will be to flesh out some of Goldie’s ideas in this area and to see whether the resulting conception remains compatible with classic versions of Cognitivism and, if so, whether the resulting broader Cognitivist profile might be better equipped to cope with the full range of aesthetic experience.

Warranted Emotional Responses to Artworks and the Problem of Moral Education through the Arts

MARÍA JOSÉ ALCARAZ LEÓN

One of the major arguments against the possibility of emotional learning through our engagement with fiction appeals to the well-known fact that some emotional responses towards fictional scenarios are different – or even contrary to – the emotional responses that would be warranted in real situations. Thus, for example, in appreciating a fictional piece of work, admiration might be warranted towards characters that we might be unwilling to admire in real life; or, to give another example, enjoyment might be appropriate in scenes that can be frightening or difficult to contemplate in actual scenarios. This asymmetry in the emotional response has been taken to undermine the possibility of transferring our emotional responses to real-life scenarios and, therefore, the possible continuity between fiction and non-fiction with respect to emotional upbringing.

In this paper I would like, first, to address the problem of the discontinuity of emotional responses to works of art and real-life situations. I would like to assess to what extent the accounts

available successfully explain why this discontinuity takes place. In this section I aim at showing that some accounts fail to provide a satisfactory answer to this puzzling phenomenon partly because they tend to describe the paradigmatic examples in a way that simply undermines the conditions necessary for this phenomenon to arise.

Secondly, I will argue that asymmetrical responses are not exclusively obtained while engaging with fictional works. There might be non-fictional representations that elicit emotional responses that are discontinuous with those we can take as paradigmatic in real-life contexts. The reason why this is so is because some of the features responsible for the emotional response are not so much related to the fact that the viewer is confronting a fictional representation, but rather that the non-representational aspects of any sort of representation might have a role in provoking the alleged emotional response. In this sense, if asymmetry is regarded as a threat to emotional upbringing, then, we should extend our concern to many other forms of representation, some of them clearly non-fictional.

Thirdly, I would like to defend the view that that the phenomenon of discontinuity needs not be taken as undermining the possibility of emotional upbringing through engagement with fiction. Warranted emotional responses towards fictional characters and situations, even if discontinuous with emotions towards real scenarios, can be taken as reasons for adopting new perspectives or for realizing that a particular point of view is worth considering. If this is so, we can transfer at least some of our emotional reactions towards fictional works onto non-fictional or non-artistic contexts without fearing that those emotions will be misleading or inappropriate.

Finally, I would like to explore the consequences of the claim defending a view of the value of emotional engagement with artworks and fictional representations. Although the defenders of fiction's positive effect upon our emotional and moral life are countless, there has been some reluctance to concede that some unusual emotional reactions towards fictional contexts may have a central role within this view. In fact, many defenders of the idea that emotional responses towards fiction can be transferred to real-life contexts have often treated these cases in a particular way. However, I think that taking seriously the issue of moral and emotional upbringing through our engagement with artworks and fictional representations demands that we are at least in principle open to the possibility that these striking responses can have as much a central role as other more easily transferable emotions.

The Interpretation of Fictional Narrative and Rationality

ALEXANDER BAREIS

The interpretation of fictional narrative can be thought of as related to the principles of generation of fictional truths in a theoretical framework of fiction as representation such as Kendall Walton's make-believe theory – even though there obviously are fundamental differences as well. The aim of my presentation is to consider the relation of interpretation (in a wide sense) and truth-generation, based on seemingly rational operations. The principles of generation in question are the reality principle and the principle of minimal departure, as well as additional principles such as the principle of genre convention. Are there any extrinsic, rational standards of interpretation that are independent from truth-generation within a game of make-believe? How does the epistemology of what is true in fiction differ from the epistemology of a rational standard of interpretation?

Emotion and Imagination in the Rationality of Fiction

STEPHEN CHAMBERLAIN

Throughout the course of Western thought the concept of rationality has been dominated by abstract philosophical and later scientific conceptions and methodologies. In fact, only recently has reason been liberated from the limits which these disciplines mandated; such limits, though often legitimate within their own domains, nonetheless remain prejudicial insofar as they reduce rationality, and in turn reality, to the knowledge and truth disclosed within these domains. With the dawn of the so-called postmodern period, however, philosophers have been reexamining the notions of knowledge and truth by broadening the concept of rationality to include the more contextual, emotional, and imaginative aspects of literary thought and in particular fiction.

In American philosophy one of the strongest voices to make the argument that rationality and in turn philosophy need to be reconceived according to the truths revealed by fiction has been Martha Nussbaum. Over the past thirty years she has persistently and coherently argued that the novel is an indispensable source of moral philosophy. For the novel, at its core, accesses resources unattainable by abstract scientific thought. Moreover, her reconceiving of rationality is less of an innovation of new ideas or techniques as it is a rehabilitation of the Aristotelian conception of rationality, which in Nussbaum's interpretation provides the foundational principles by which to

conceive the rationality of fiction and in turn the specific quality of perception that is a critical component of practical reason as such.

While Nussbaum emphasizes a number of essential aspects of Aristotelian rationality that have been eclipsed, if not outright denied, by many modern theories of moral reason (such as the non-commensurability of valuable things and the priority of the particular), this paper focuses upon the extent to which emotion and imagination are constitutive features of contextual reason and in turn practical judgment. I argue that far from distorting the objectivity of reason, a typical critique of not only the Platonic but also the Utilitarian and Kantian models, emotion and imagination are essential to the perception of the salient though often subtle features of a concrete situation in which practical reason operates. Moreover, I show how fiction is an indispensable means by which to access the concrete complexities of life that remain inaccessible to abstract, scientific methodologies. Finally, I introduce an aspect not discussed by Nussbaum that further supports and develops contextual reason and judgment as employed by the fiction writer. Here I appeal to the Gadamerian, hermeneutic notion of play (*Spiel*) that grounds the closed (and intensified) world of fiction that is, in Proust's words, "the optical instrument" that magnifies those deep and elusive aspects of life that otherwise remain hidden. Furthermore, I specify reason as *techne* insofar as it is ordered toward fictional creation, rather than external action, and so unfolds in a world of make-believe. This world of make-believe far from distorting reality, however, raises reality up into a structure in which the stylistic and formal features of the work are indissolubly united to its content. While Nussbaum often appeals to the work of Henry James, I offer examples from Dostoyevsky that not only illustrate the rationality of fiction, but also expose the limits and even dangers of abstract, scientific thinking, specifically as such thinking is embodied in some of Dostoyevsky's more memorable characters.

Aristotle on the Nature of Our Affective Responses to Literature

ANGELA CURRAN

The problem that has come to be known as the "paradox of fiction" raises the question of whether there is something fundamentally irrational about our response to fiction. For it seems that we accept that we are genuinely moved by fiction, on the one hand, but that we also believe, on the other, that we can only be genuinely moved by what we believe is actual. Although Aristotle does not formulate the paradox of fiction, his works provide a satisfactory solution to it. In the first part of the paper, I argue that on Aristotle's view, the emotions we experience in response to literary fictional characters are not the same in kind as the emotions we experience in response to really

existing objects. Instead, we experience emotions in a play form, for we do not believe the propositions that describe the situations of the fictional characters.

The question I examine in the second part of the paper is whether Aristotle's view is closer to two central solutions to the paradox: 1) the pretense theory, held by Kendall Walton, which holds that the emotions we feel for fictional characters are not genuine, but rather "quasi-emotions"; 2) the Thought theory, which argues that we can have justified emotions as a result of propositions merely entertained, but not believed. It has been argued that Aristotle's view is closer to the Thought Theory (Sarah Worth, "Aristotle, Thought, and Mimesis: On Our Responses to Fiction" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58 (4): 333–339 (2000)). Of these two theories, the Thought Theory has come to have a wide level of acceptance. However, I will argue that with some important differences, Aristotle's theory is closer to Kendall Walton's theory. For reasons I will explain, Aristotle would not say that the emotions we feel are make-believe or pretend emotions. But he would agree with Walton, and the view proposed by Greg Currie (*The Nature of Fiction*), that there are qualitative differences between the emotions we feel towards fictional characters and those we feel towards real individuals and situations.

Not only do we have strong textual grounds for thinking Aristotle would reject the contemporary Thought Theory solution, in the final section of my paper I argue that Aristotle is on stronger philosophical ground if he were to reject this solution. Thought Theory solves the paradox of fiction by arguing that what is required for a genuine emotion is not a really existing object, but instead is just a thought about a potentially fictional situation that is entertained but not believed. Here the thought becomes the intentional object of the cognitive content of the emotion. I argue that the Thought Theory confuses the *cause* of our emotional responses to fiction with the *object* of the responses. Aristotle is therefore on stronger philosophical ground if we attribute to him, with certain qualifications, a position that is closer to the make-believe response to the paradox of fiction.

**Form is an Expression of Content:
John Coetzee against Substitution Ethical Thought**

ANA FALCATO

It is no less common to find critical self-assessments in literary texts (especially in novels working out some of the main features of modernism in the novel) than in philosophical treatises. Literary texts may thus embody a conscious reflection on themselves and their subjects and even upon subtleties of their own literary techniques and styles (*vide* John Coetzee 2007). Such techniques of

self-assessment can work as ways of preventing the transmission of *substitution ethical thought*, instead of genuine ethical thought – by the text being strongly aware of the very possibility that this should happen. A text would convey substitution ethical thought if it abstractly discusses an ethical issue without displaying the vivid features of such an issue in its very texture.

Some philosophers have argued (*vide* Jonathan Lear 2010) that it is easier for a well-trained writer to notice and prevent such deviations than for a philosopher – trained as the latter is both in compacting philosophical questions within abstractive and strictly deductive systems of reasoning and in dealing with essayistic styles or strongly sectioned approaches to philosophical issues.

In this talk I'll be discussing how one of Martha Nussbaum's central claims in *Love's Knowledge* fits one specific work of contemporary literature. Nussbaum's main claim is that style or form of writing are not redundant in conveying meaning in general and ethical thought specifically, both in philosophical and in literary texts. Through a deep analysis of John Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*, which itself embodies a peculiar style of writing by dividing the page into three sections, each one corresponding to a different narrative voice with different sorts of ethical approaches to given issues, the present paper ends up showing how the formal construction of Coetzee's (literary) text performs two interrelated tasks. On the one hand the article displays the question of whether it is possible for a work of literature to convey ethical thought without slipping into some form of *Ersatz* ethical thought; on the other hand it defends the idea that it is through that very questioning – in the work under analysis allowed for by the dividing of the page – that Coetzee found an unusual way of conveying genuine ethical thought, thus confirming Nussbaum's claim that the form of writing is by no means redundant in conveying ethical content.

**Teachings of Density and Distance:
Remarks on the Philosophical Significance of Novels beyond the Presence of
“Philosophy”**

NIKLAS FORSBERG

Philosophical debates about the philosophical significance of novels tend to focus on two related themes. One is to investigate what the presence of more or less overtly “philosophical views” in novels contributes to our understanding of these views (or theories). What happens when a philosophical view is brought to life in a literary setting? Can literature illustrate or exemplify what that philosophy amounts to in a way that philosophical writing and argumentation cannot do? What is it then that the literary illustration of exemplification *adds* to philosophy? And if we are

prone to say that philosophy does something more than merely illustrate or exemplify philosophy, what is it that literature manages to do (and say) that philosophy cannot do (or say)?

The other theme is more directly linked to moral philosophy, and centers around the idea that literature enables us to, on the one hand, see a moral action, or stance, in the context of a human life – which supposedly helps us see its real sense more clearly. On the other hand, we may also use the experiences that fictional characters go through as “exemplary for conduct” (as e.g. Nussbaum does).

In this paper, it will be argued that these two approaches share one common but not unproblematic feature: “the philosophy” – what it is and what it amounts to – is a question which is settled before literature is brought into consideration. And so, literature becomes, at best, a testing ground for view already established. Although these two approaches may be fruitful and useful, they both leave little, if any, room for the thought that literature may have a philosophical significance of its own – that is, due to it *being* literature and therefore standing outside philosophy as we know it, and do something *else* than philosophy does.

With the aid of two philosophers – Iris Murdoch and Stanley Cavell – I aim to show that there is a deeper philosophical significance of literature that is not dependent upon the presence of “philosophy” in the novels under discussion. Literature, so it will be argued, has the ability to teach us two crucial “lessons.” The first concerns a sense of density, or weight, of words and concepts in a human life. How our lives as a whole and human rationality take shape and are organized can here be studied at a more profound level than looking at specific actions, judgments or statements (as is common in philosophy). The second concerns a reawakening of a specific sense of distance – literature forces us to learn to see that words come to us from a distance. These two lessons, it will be argued, may enable us to get a better understanding of how philosophical problems arise and are aggravated by means of philosophical abstractions and intellectualizations.

Cora Diamond, Alice Crary and an Extended Conception of Rationality

NORA HÄMÄLÄINEN

Cora Diamond has, in a number of papers on the role of literature in moral philosophy, criticized the conception of rationality predominant in analytic moral philosophy as overly narrow. It is, in her view, a conception which privileges explicit argument as *the* vehicle of rational persuasion, and considers rational persuasion as the only acceptable form of persuasion in moral philosophy, thus excluding literary texts from the range of texts that may be seen as “doing” moral philosophy.

Although Diamond's argumentation is impeccably clear, she has a way of writing which flouts some conventions of analytic philosophy, and is thus often found difficult by professional analytic philosophers and students alike. Alice Crary, much influenced by Diamond, has made sustained attempts to formulate a Diamondian perspective on rationality in a form that is more easily digestible for a predominantly analytic audience. She has argued for a "broadened conception of rationality" where human rationality includes the kinds of capacities that we call sensibilities.

In this paper I will discuss the transition from Diamond's critical discussion to Crary's position, and the gains and losses involved. Crary certainly increases the chances of bringing the message home to the kinds of analytic philosophers that are targeted, but her way of pursuing the issue also runs the risk of reinforcing the rationality – irrationality dichotomy which Diamond does a great deal to deconstruct. Diamond works to show how the kind of rationality championed by some analytic philosophers in practice appears as a kind of stupidity, incapacity to think, that is, to use one's intelligence in a rich and variegated way. The natural conclusion, which Crary draws – essentially faithful to Diamond – is that any rationality worth the name must include a broader range of capacities of the mind. Yet, by championing a new definition of rationality she alters the focus of the controversy, making it turn on the concept of "rationality"; a notion central for the analytic philosophers but not necessarily for philosophers like Diamond. This move is rhetorically vulnerable in the sense that the game is now played on the analytic opponent's terms. It is also substantially problematic in the way it draws attention from the variety of words that are at play in Diamond's discussion: "rationality", but also "thinking", "thought", "intelligence". Diamond's case does not turn on the notion of rationality, but rather on what thinking is, and what it means to be a thinking, inquiring, intelligent being in the world.

Philosophical Lessons from Dickens

RIKU JUTI

Although Charles Dickens was not a philosophical writer, valuable philosophical lessons can be learnt from his art and career. Philosophy did play a role in the formation of his literary talent and philosophical considerations are important both in the critical interpretation of his stories and in order to understand his ethical message.

In particular, Dickens gives two different, mutually interlinked types of philosophical lesson. The first is about a revolution in philosophy that took place in his time and was far more important though consequently much less publicized than Kant's Copernican revolution a few

decades earlier. The second lesson is about the importance of *Lebenswelt* in ethics and metaphysics.

The socio-political background and the intellectual confrontation between the utilitarians and the interventionists are a well-trodden path in the Dickens scholarship. The details of the *de facto* influence of these external conditions on Dickens's art are well known. I shall instead focus on the ideological roots of the populist philosophies of early Victorian England. I aim to show that the antipathy that Dickens felt towards these grand overall theories of society and moral life was well justified by their shaky foundations. By being sceptical of these movements Dickens teaches us an important lesson in the history of philosophy and in the difficult but indispensable task of demarcating philosophy from popular thought.

I end my paper with thoughts on Dickens's ethics of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and its influence on his fiction.

On Literary Fiction, Science Fiction and Thought Experiments in Practical Philosophy

ARTO LAITINEN

Paul Ricoeur usefully distinguishes between literary fiction and science fiction and their use in philosophy. This paper will defend the relevance of both. Literary fiction can broaden our understanding concerning human "variables" while presupposing certain constants in the human being-in-the-world. The task for anyone accepting that there are both variables and constants is to tell which is which; Charles Taylor has called this the hardest problem. Many great novels add to our understanding of this. Perhaps, in the end, the only thing that all human persons share is that they are historically shaped via socialization and experience, or perhaps there's more.

Science fiction, in the service of practical philosophy, typically does not aim at articulating real variation, but revealing some human constants. Derek Parfit is one of the most ingenious users of science fiction in practical philosophy. There has been a debate about the worth of such thought experiments (e.g. Kathleen Wilkes, Allen Wood in Parfit's *On What Matters*), and this paper defends the principled use of also wild thought experiments.

Cavell and Projective Imagination in Philosophy and Literature: Clarification, Mystification, and the Logic of Narration

INGEBORG LÖFGREN

The American philosopher Stanley Cavell is famous for often involving literature in his philosophizing, and for stressing the significance of literature to, and for, philosophy. Stories, and the telling of stories, play an important role in Cavell's work. Not only because he presents staggering philosophical readings of literary classics – as when he lets Shakespearian tragedies illuminate the meaning of skepticism – he also creates short fictive episodes of his own in order to elucidate the logics of different phenomena under investigation. In both reading and creating stories the capacity to use what Cavell calls “projective imagination” is crucial. Projective imagination is furthermore essential to the logic and validity of what Cavell calls “arguments from the ordinary”. Thus projective imagination seems to be not only equally vital for the understanding of literature as for the understanding of philosophy, but also one senses that this mutual dependence on projective imagination signals an important site of contact between the two.

However, while imaginative stories may have a clarifying capacity, Cavell also warns us that imagination, and imagined scenarios, may lead us astray – into mystification and the mere *illusion* of sense. In this light, literature and fiction seem to approach philosophy Janus-faced. On the one hand, fictive, literary cases may shed light on our logical grammar and on our philosophical confusions. On the other hand they may obscure the logical grammar we are trying to unravel. How do we know when, and in what way, a made-up story holds for *our* world, *our* logic, *our* problems, and when it instead draws a distorted picture which rather fictionalizes our predicament, turning it into a fantasy? While the matter at first blush may seem to pose a question about Realism vs. Science Fiction or Fantasy (as literary genres), and while some passages in Cavell's fourth part of *Claim of Reason* (1979) might indicate this as well, I would rather advocate that we turn to Narratology for guidance here. The role of Realism vs. different kinds of “Non-Realism” (in a *literary* sense) may to some extent play into the problematic, although, of greater importance for the matter at hand is *the manner in which the stories are told*.

By comparing a piece of Cavellian philosophical story-telling with a typical sci-fi short-story by Isaac Asimov, focusing on the narrator's relation to what is narrated, I suggest we can get a clearer picture of how and when imaginative fiction can both illuminate and cloud our philosophical efforts.

Literature, Ethics and a Sense of History

HANNA MERETOJA

In my paper, I will address the question of the way in which literature may contribute to our rational understanding of the world by reflecting on the value of literature in dealing with past worlds. I am interested in the sense in which literature can be a source of historical knowledge that also has ethical relevance. I will suggest that novels dealing with certain historical worlds not only take part in shaping our view of these past worlds but may also cultivate a specific kind of a sense of history that has ethical value, particularly through its potential to transform our ways of experiencing and understanding. I will elaborate this view in relation to Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics, which sees literary interpretation as a matter of engaging in a dialogue with the text and letting it transform us – a view that appeared rather outdated for quite some time but which has found its way back into literary studies and now appears as highly relevant. In my paper, I wish to draw on and further develop a hermeneutic conception of literature by suggesting that an important aspect of the potential of literature to contribute to our rational understanding of the world stems from its capacity to provide us with experiential understanding of history and to enlarge the space of possible experience that is available for us. Here I make use of Reinhart Koselleck's concept of "space of experience", which refers to the way in which our past experiences and how we interpret history define what it is possible for us to think and experience in the present historical world. My paper will analyse how "historiographical novels" that deal with past worlds take part in shaping our spaces of experience in the present – and what cognitive and ethical value this may have.

Literary Experience, Reason, and Philosophical Insight

JUKKA MIKKONEN

A common line of thought in literary aesthetics is that literary works may contribute to their readers' moral understanding in a significant way. Proponents of the view maintain that literary works may, for instance, provide their readers experiential knowledge, that is, knowledge of what it is like to be in a certain situation or a certain kind of person, or enhance or modify readers' understanding of fundamental concepts of human life. Although popular, this view is also highly contested. The sceptics have presented a nice variety of arguments for not attempting to derive experiential knowledge from literary experiences or counting such experiences as reasons. For

example, it has been claimed that literary experiences are simply too complex to give rise to any single experience of ‘what it is like’. In this presentation, I shall suggest a slight reorientation to this debate. I shall argue that in focusing on the end product of literary interpretation understood in terms of knowledge or enriched concepts, philosophers have not fully understood the significance of the philosophical (or more generally cognitive) value of ambiguity and indeterminacy in literature and the reader’s interpretive bewilderment or uncertainty. Furthermore, I shall propose that literary works may prompt readers to reassess their reasons not by giving them answers but by confusing them.

Ernst Bloch and Literature

OLLI-PEKKA MOISIO

In the 1960 lecture “The Form of Detective Stories and Philosophy” Ernst Bloch, one of the most perplexing of the Marxist philosophers of the 20th century wrote:

“Before the first word of the first chapter something happened, but no one knows what, apparently not even the narrator. A dim focal point exists, as yet unrecognised, whither and thither the entire truckload of ensuing events is mobilized – a crime, usually murder, precedes the beginning. In all other narrative forms both deeds and misdeeds develop before the omnipresent reader. Here, on the contrary, the reader is absent when the misdeed occurs, a misdeed that, though conveniently home-delivered, shuns the light of day and lingers in the background of the story. It must be brought to light and this process itself is the exclusive theme.” (p. 249)

In this paper I will discuss the pre-narrative event that Bloch is describing the previous quote. I will connect specific analyses of literature that Bloch develops to his general philosophy of anticipation and hope. Bloch's reading of the detective novels is grounded in his view of the human as being always beyond itself, as anticipating itself and never positively there. This thrust beyond the horizon of positivity expresses itself in wishes, hopes, fantasies, dreams, imaginative creations, and utopian projects. Bloch’s attention is always, and in the most diverse gestures, works, and productions, alert to the energies of political transcendence.

The Rationality of Poetry

KAREN SIMECEK

Bernard Harrison argues that literature can make a significant contribution to philosophical inquiry by offering insights into the meaning of the language we use, which reflects the reality of human life: 'It is possible to have an art of this kind, an art that is made simply by arranging words on a page, and yet that, at its occasional best, addresses realities, because the realities in question are accessible via the assessment of language for meaning, rather than truth. They are accessible by this route because the meaning of words are determined by the relationships in which words stand to the practices that in part constitute the realities of a given human world' (Harrison 2009, p. 24).

In this paper, I will draw on Harrison's argument in order to argue that poetry can help us to come to see our everyday concepts as value-laden, embedding forms of human interpretation and evaluation of the world. I will bring out my positive argument by discussing Peter Lamarque's recent paper 'Poetry and Abstract Thought', where he argues that reading poetry cannot offer a mode of philosophising. I will argue that Lamarque's discussion of poetry neglects the thinking involved in interpreting and appreciating the poem, a type of thinking activity which I take to be a crucial part of philosophical inquiry into aspects of human life (such as, those things we value as human beings). Such philosophical inquiry demands reflection and evaluation on the concepts we make use of in our everyday lives to make sense of the world in which we live. I will argue that poetry allows us to consider the structure and meaning of our everyday concepts with reference to the human subject.

Lamarque gives two main reasons why poetry cannot be said to be truly philosophical. He argues that poems do not support general content (a poem's themes) in the way general content (a work's conclusions) is supported in philosophy. He attacks the perspectival nature of the poem, making the point that general content of philosophy is essentially a-perspectival. I will argue that it is precisely the perspectival aspect of poetry that makes it well placed to deal with philosophical questions regarding aspects of human life.

Poetry can make a significant and valuable contribution to philosophical inquiry by facilitating active, self-critically aware and rational thinking about the concepts we use to capture aspects of human life. The experience of reading is able to achieve this philosophical thinking because the reader is encouraged to adopt a human perspective. A human perspective is: 'the standpoint from which we are best able to bring to light the range of values, desires, frustrations, experiences, and practices that define the human situation' (Gibson 2009, p. 1). The experience of reading poetry is unique in the way it implicates the reader, revealing the values *we* have embedded in such concepts, which could not have been established using valid arguments.

Reasoning with Literature: Poetic and Prosodic Irrationality

BRIDGET VINCENT

My paper addresses the conference's theme of 'Literary Fiction and Rationality' from the perspective of the differences between rationality in prose fiction and lyric poetry. The contrast between fictive and poetic rationality is of particular relevance to this conference's remit because discussions (both ancient and modern) of literature and philosophy often position poetry *in opposition* to rationality – it is seen as irrational, non-rational, or even anti-rational. While this positioning has its origins in Plato's ancient quarrel, it continues to make itself felt in modern philosophical and critical work. For example, philosophers who propose that philosophical argumentation is enhanced by the inclusion of literary writing, such as Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty, often base this claim on the assumption that literature provides something different from – something beyond – rationality. This opposition between the rational and the literary takes on a new dimension when the literature concerned is poetry, as poetry has a unique history of association with the non-rational. The paper's specific contribution will be to consider the difference between poetic and prosodic irrationality in relation to moral judgements, particularly negative ones (criticism, scepticism, condemnation). If it is useful to set literary works as non-rational counterpoints to philosophical argument (particularly moral argument), how do the respective irrational dimensions of poetry and prose help determine this utility? How, that is, are the different kinds of moral judgements enabled by (say) a realist novel and a sonnet, related to the different forms of irrationality operative in these texts?

The paper will ground these questions in the specific cases of novelist J.M. Coetzee and poet Geoffrey Hill. Through detailed literary-critical readings of Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Geoffrey Hill's late poetry, I will explore how the non-rational judgments emerging from these works are shaped by formal resources specific to fiction and to the lyric. Particular attention will be paid to the concept of self-condemnation. *Disgrace* and much of Hill's poetry evince a shared preoccupation with self-accusation. Various figures in both writers' works are engaged in moral deliberation and judgement of their own wrongdoings, but as these are literary texts rather than discursive arguments, the judgements do not proceed by rational argument alone (or indeed, at all). In this case, one of the key differences between poetry and the novel involves the location of voice: where *Disgrace* contains both the voice of its main character and that of its narrator, the voice in Hill's poetry is that of the single lyric speaker, which, while sometimes presenting different views and even personae, is unified in a way that Coetzee's narrator and character are not. This difference gives rise to very different possibilities for moral judgement, and for self-accusation in particular. Thus, I will try to show that the forms of non-rational judgements literary texts can present are in part determined by the

respective contours of poetic and prosodic expression (such as, in this case, their respective divisions of voice.) Through these detailed readings, the paper aims to contribute not only to discussions of rationality and irrationality in literature, but also to larger debates about the function of literary works in philosophical, and particularly moral-philosophical, discourse.

A Novel as an Argument: Dostojevsky on Crime

TIMO VUORIO

Philosophers who view morality more as a matter of “sentiment” than that of “reason” tend to emphasize the significance of the human imagination as a source of moral guidance. The idea is that to develop and strengthen our moral sense, that is, for example, our sentiments of compassion or solidarity towards other people, it is to widen up the horizons of our thinking and thereby, causally affect to the desires and motives of our action. A great vehicle in serving these goals in question, many of these philosophers think, is art, and especially literature. However, the idea of morality as a matter of sentiment has certain drawbacks. It threatens the idea that morality can be scrutinized by a theoretical discourse. The issue is whether the moral dilemmas – the ability to distinguish the right actions from the wrong ones – is within the realm of reason, that is – to use the phrase of Robert Brandom – within the “game of giving and asking for reasons”. If not, the realm of ethics bounds to be “irrational”; the guidance in our moral actions is not open for a rational argument. To use an old philosophical metaphor; ethics has no “ground”; it is, as Richard Rorty has famously stated, “without principles”. I don’t think these accusations hold court. What I will do on my paper is, via Rortian means, to “re-describe” the reason/sentiment distinction by spelling out further the naturalist and pragmatist stance in ethics which takes the specific nature of rationality in literature at face value. I suggest that the issue between these rivalling views on morality – based either on reason or on sentiment – can be re-stated by seeing it as a choice between different discursive strategies: that of between making an “argument” or an “story”; whether we think that morality is a matter of thinking there is a rational, non-circular way to justify our moral actions/decisions or whether we think the job can be done by offering a suitable narrative to inspire our fancy. The distinction, respectively, reflects the realms of philosophy and literature: while ‘good’ philosophy provides us good arguments, ‘good’ literature gives us good stories. Sometimes philosophers, surely, are to call their efforts “stories”, but very rarely good novels are thought to present an “argument”, unless the term is used rather loosely way. According to a pragmatist stance, a good story can be seen as a way of a good argument. As an example of this procedure, I will discuss one masterpiece in literature, *Crime and Punishment* by Fjodor

Dostojevsky. I claim that the argumentative strategy Dostojevsky applies in his novel offers us a great insight to the problematic reason/sentiment distinction in ethics, and more, as the author having such an impressive and distinguished talent, it helps us to see the power of good literature as a vehicle of our moral guidance.

Imaginary and Imagined Worlds in Narrative Fiction

LARS-OLOF ÅHLBERG

“Reading fiction is an exercise in supplementing what is explicitly ‘given’” (Peter Lamarque, 2009).

Following with your eyes and mind more or less consciously the tiny black marks on a page a world replete with characters, actions and events emerges. The fictional literary text is in one respect akin to a musical score. In a musical score the notes uniquely determine a performance, which, however, is underdetermined by the instructions and annotations in the score. The score is thus only partly an exact blueprint for the performance. The descriptions of characters and events in a work of narrative fiction are to a greater or lesser degree incomplete, the imaginary world presented to the reader appeals to our imagination and demands supplementation, the author’s imaginary world presented in a work is realized as it were in the world imagined by the reader. No doubt the reader’s imagined world is, or, rather should to a certain extent be determined by the descriptions in the fictional world of the work, otherwise the work would function simply as a prop for arbitrary flights of fancy. Composing a narrative work of fiction in words is a way of world-making, a wholly or partly fictional world is presented to the reader, a world the reader is invited to enter in order to ponder over and appreciate the ongoings in the fictional world. Fictional worlds interact with and impinge on the actual world in various ways. In most, perhaps all, realistic novels (and not only in them) the fictional world interacts in a straightforward sense with the actual world (within the narrative) when fictional characters and events are as it were inserted in the actual world, or, perhaps we should say that aspects of the actual world invade the fictional world. Dickens’s London, Musil’s Vienna and Joyce’s Dublin were and are real cities, in which the fictional beings David Copperfield, Ulrich and Leopold Bloom went about their business, and there are Dantesque and Kafkaesque situations and experiences in real life and Lodgesque at the University. Although most of the characters and events described in a narrative work of fiction do not enjoy spatio-temporal existence there are thus many complex relations between the fictional characters and events in a literary work and real-life persons and events. I want to explore by means of a few

examples how descriptions in a work of literary fiction is supplemented in our imagination and how fictional characters and events interact with real life persons and events.

Conference Participants

María José Alcaraz León, University of Murcia, Spain, mariajo@um.es
Hanne Appelqvist, University of Tampere, Finland, hanne.appelqvist@helsinki.fi
Alexander Bareis, Lund University, Sweden, alexander.bareis@tyska.lu.se
Stephen Chamberlain, Rockhurst University, USA, stephen.chamberlain@rockhurst.edu
Angela Curran, Carleton College, USA, acurran@carleton.edu
Ana Falcato, New University of Lisbon, Portugal, aniusca@hotmail.com
Niklas Forsberg, Uppsala University, Sweden, niklas.forsberg@filosofi.uu.se
Leila Haaparanta, University of Tampere, Finland, leila.haaparanta@uta.fi
Nora Hämäläinen, University of Helsinki, Finland, nora.hamalainen@helsinki.fi
Riku Juti, University of Helsinki, Finland, riku.juti@gmail.com
Arto Laitinen, University of Tampere, Finland, arto.m.laitinen@jyu.fi
Ingeborg Löfgren, Uppsala University, Sweden, ingeborg.lofgren@littvet.uu.se
Hanna Meretoja, University of Tampere, Finland, hanna.meretoja@uta.fi
Jukka Mikkonen, University of Tampere, Finland, jmikkon@me.com
Olli-Pekka Moisio, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, ollipekka.moisio@jyu.fi
Elisabeth Schellekens, Durham University, UK, elisabeth.schellekens@durham.ac.uk
Karen Simecek, University of Warwick, UK, k.d.simecek@warwick.ac.uk
Kathleen Stock, University of Sussex, UK, k.m.stock@sussex.ac.uk
Jenni Tyynelä, University of Tampere, Finland, jenni.tyynela@uta.fi
Bridget Vincent, University of Melbourne, Australia, bcv20@cam.ac.uk
Timo Vuorio, University of Tampere, Finland, timo.vuorio@uta.fi
Lars-Olof Åhlberg, Uppsala University, Sweden, lars-olof.aahlberg@estetik.uu.se