

Imagination, Fiction, Narrative

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1 Course Description

This seminar is dedicated to a close and critical reading of important recent work about imagination, pretense, and narrative. The work we will discuss is in the analytic tradition and pays close attention to recent empirical results.

The plan: We begin the semester by asking what is fiction and what makes something a narrative. We then move to a series of "paradoxes" or mysteries about our engagement with fiction that shed light on the way our imagination behaves: the paradox of fictional emotions ("why do we pity a person who doesn't exist?"); puzzle of imaginative resistance ("why do we have trouble imagining worlds that are morally different?"); paradox of suspense ("why do we enjoy watching thrillers more than once?"); paradox of tragedy ("why do morally upright individuals enjoy reading about the suffering of others?").

The last part of the journey will consist of trying to assess the extent to which the discussion of narrative, fiction, and imagination has bearing on understanding historical explanations and evolutionary explanations (that are typically narrative) and what if anything people learn by engaging with fictions (for example, from reading stories). Alternatively, we may explore more deeply the connection between the topics of the seminar and emotions and morality. The choice will largely depend on the group.

Readings are mainly from the philosophical literature, but we will also discuss scientific works that inform the philosophical discussion.

Note: In the reading list (R) means recommend reading (not mandatory); (R-) means recommended, but less critical, etc.

2 Course outline

2.1 (Week 1) Introduction

2.2 (Week 2) What is Fiction; Fiction and Pretense

2.2.1 Walton, Kendall. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Harvard University Press. (Chp. 1)

2.2.2 Gendler, Tamar. 2010 (2003). On the Relation between Pretense and Belief. In: Gendler. 2010. *Intuition, Imagination, & Philosophical Methodology*. Oxford.

First published as: Gendler. 2003. Quarantining and contagion, mirroring and disparity: On the relation between pretense and belief. In: *Imagination, Philosophy, and the Arts*. London: Routledge. 2003.

2.2.3 Goldman, Alvin. 2006. Imagination and Simulation in Audience Responses to Fiction. In: Nichols 2006. (R+)

2.3 (Weeks 3-4) What is Narrative: Three answers.

2.3.1 Velleman, J. David 2003. Narrative Explanation. *Philosophical Review* 112: 1-25.

2.3.2 Currie, Gregory. 2006. Narrative Representation of Causes. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64: 309-316.

Currie, Gregory. 2007. Both Sides of the Story: Explaining Events in a Narrative. *Philosophical Studies* 135: 49-63.

2.3.3 Carroll, Noel. 2007. Narrative Closure. *Philosophical Studies* 135: 1-15.

Carroll. 2001 (2000). On the Narrative Connection. In *Beyond aesthetics: Philosophical essays* (pp. 118-132). New York: Cambridge University Press. (R+)

2.4 (Weeks 5-7) Paradox of Fictional Emotions

- 2.4.1 Walton. 1978. Fearing Fictions. *The Journal of Philosophy* 75(1): 5-27.
- 2.4.2 Walton. 1997. Spelunking, simulation, and slime: On being moved by fiction. In: Hjort and Laver (eds.) *Emotion and the Arts*, 37-49.
- 2.4.3 Currie. 1997. The Paradox of Caring: Fiction and the Philosophy of Mind. In: Hjort and Laver 1997, 63-77.
- 2.4.4 Stecker, R. 2011. Should We Still Care about the Paradox of Fiction? *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 51 (3): 295–308.
- 2.4.5 Tullmann, K. and Buckwalter, W. 2013. Does the Paradox of Fiction Exist? *Erkenntnis* 79 (4): 779–96.
- 2.4.6 Cova, F. and Teroni, F. 2016. Is the Paradox of Fiction Soluble in Psychology? *Philosophical Psychology* 29 (6): 930–42.
- 2.4.7 Gendler. "Alief and Belief" (2008) and "Alief in Action (and Reaction)" (2008). Both in: Gendler 2010.

The beginning of the first article in Gendler (2010) suggests what to read from each article, if you are short on time.

1. Supplementary:

- (a) Moran, Richard (1994) The Expression of Feeling in Imagination. *Philosophical Review*, 103, 75-106 cf. discussion in Walton (1990, 1997).
- (b) Gendler and Karson Kovakovich. 2005. Genuine Rational Fictional Emotions. (In Gendler 2010) (R-) Gendler (2010) calls it "weak". Largely superseded by "Alief and Belief" and "Alief in Action (and Reaction)"
- (c) Davies, S. 2009. Responding Emotionally to Fictions. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 67(3):269-284.

2.5 (Weeks 8-9) Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance

- 2.5.1 Walton. 1994. *Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 68:27-66
- 2.5.2 Walton. 2006. On the (so-called) puzzle of imaginative resistance. In: Nichols (2006).
- 2.5.3 Gendler. 2000. The Puzzle of Imaginative resistance. In: Gendler (2010).
- 2.5.4 Gendler. 2006. Imaginative resistance revisited. In: Gendler (2010).
- 2.5.5 Weatherson, Brian 2004: *Morality, fiction and possibility. Philosopher's Imprint Vol. 4. No. 3.*
- 2.5.6 Jonathan Weinberg and Aaron Meskin: *Puzzling Over the Imagination: Philosophical Problems, Architectural Solutions* (section 4)

also discusses emotions and fiction

1. Supplementary:

- (a) Matravers, Derek (2003) *Fictional Assent and the (So-Called) "Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance"*
- (b) Brock. 2012. *The Puzzle of Imaginative Failure*. (R+)
- (c) Yablo, Stephen (2002) *Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda* (section 21) (R-)

2.6 (Weeks 10) Paradox of suspense; paradox of tragedy (time permitting)

2.6.1 Carroll. (1996) 2010. Paradox of Suspense.In: Carroll (2010).

2.6.2 Smuts. 2009. Art and Negative Affect. *Philosophy Compass*, 4(1): 39-55.

2.6.3 Menninghaus, W. et al. 2017. The Distancing-Embracing Model of the Enjoyment of Negative Emotions in Art Reception. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

2.7 (Weeks 11-13) Applications

2.7.1 (11) Narrativity of Evolutionary Explanation

1. Beatty, J. 2006. Replaying life's tape. *The Journal of philosophy*, 103(7):336-362.
2. Beatty, John. 2016. "What Are Narratives Good For?" *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*.

2.7.2 (12) Narrativity of Historical Explanation

1. Carroll. (1990) 2010. Interpretation, History, and Narrative. In: Carroll (2010).
2. Stueber. 2012. Understanding Versus Explanation. *Inquiry*, 55:1, 17-32.

2.7.3 (13) Personal Identity, Emotions

1. Strawson G. 2004. Against narrativity. *Ratio*, 17(4):428-452.
2. Strawson, G. 2007. Episodic Ethics. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 60 (March): 85–115.
3. Gendler. (2008) 2010. Self-Deception as Pretense. In: Gendler (2010).
4. Currie. 1996. Simulation-theory, theory-theory and the evidence from autism. In: Carruthers & Smith (eds.) *Theories of theories of mind* (128 THE Sourasky Central Library). (R?)

5. Hardt, R. 2017. Storytelling Agents: Why Narrative Rather than Mental Time Travel Is Fundamental. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

2.8 (Weeks 14) Conclusion

2.8.1 Currie. 2011. Literature and the psychology lab. TLS.

<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article765921.ece>

2.8.2 Evolution of narrativity. Is it a good question?

3 Recommended supplementary texts

3.1 General and scientific discussions of imagination

- 3.1.1 Nichols, S. 2004. Imagining and believing: The promise of a single code. *The Journal of aesthetics and art criticism* 62(2):129-139.
- 3.1.2 Nichols, S. 2006. Just the imagination: Why imagining doesn't behave like believing. *Mind & language* 21(4):459-474.
- 3.1.3 Nichols, S. 2003. Imagination and the puzzles of iteration. *Analysis* 63(279):182-187.
- 3.1.4 Rozin P, Millman L, Nemeroff C. 1986. Operation of the laws of sympathetic magic in disgust and other domains. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50(4):703.
- 3.1.5 Harris, PL & Kavanaugh, RD. 1993. Young children's understanding of pretense. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*.
- 3.1.6 and many many more.

3.2 Books you should check

- 3.2.1 Nichols, S. 2006. *The architecture of the imagination: New essays on pretence, possibility, and fiction*. (128.3 ARC Sourasky Central Library)
- 3.2.2 Gendler, T. 2010. *Intuition, Imagination, and Philosophical Methodology*. (128.3 GEN Sourasky Central Library)
- 3.2.3 Currie, G. 2004. *Arts and Minds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (111.85 CUR Sourasky Central Library)
- 3.2.4 Carroll, N. 2010. *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge UP. (111.85 CAR Sourasky Central Library)
- 3.2.5 Currie, G. and Ravenscroft, I. 2002. *Recreative minds : imagination in philosophy and psychology*. Oxford : Clarendon Press . (128.3 CUR Sourasky Central Library)
- 3.2.6 Carroll, N. and Gibson, J. (eds.) 2011. *Narrative, emotion, and insight*. Pennsylvania State University Press. (808.3 NAR Sourasky Central Library)

4 Credit

To receive credit for the seminar you must:

- Prepare two referats. At least one of them must be presented in class.
- If you want to write a seminar paper, you need to prepare a proposal and get it approved (see 5), in *addition* to presenting *one* referat in class.

5 Policies

- Communication: If you need to communicate with me, set up a meeting etc. **please use email**. My email is ehud.lamm@gmail.com . **Do not contact me through the moodle messaging system** - I will not get these messages and will not respond. Likewise trying to call me at the office.
- Attendance: to receive credit you must attend at least 2/3 of the meetings of the seminar (i.e., you can miss at most four meetings). Attendance means being present for the entire meeting.
- You are expected to read the reading materials, think about them, and prepare notes/questions for discussion before class. Evidence that you failed to do this will be considered when determining final grades.
- Participation in class discussions will be considered when determining final grades.
- Presentation in class: for your presentation to count toward credit for the seminar, your written referat (based on template on course website) *plus* whatever presentation you use (powerpoint etc.) must be submitted to Ehud at least **two full days (48 hours)** prior class presentation. It is recommended you discuss your presentation earlier with Ehud so you can incorporate feedback on your plan. After being approved by Ehud, and prior to class, you must upload your presentation materials to the course website.
- Up to four days after your presentation you must submit to Ehud the final version of your referat.
- If you wish to write a seminar paper, your topic + outline + initial bibliography must be approved **by the end of the semester**. Seminar papers that were not thus approved will not be checked.

- Coming in late to class or leaving before the meeting ends is rude to students who are presenting and affects their ability to concentrate. Please do your best to minimize this.