

The Epistemology of Fiction and the Question of Invariant Norms

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I.

A primary dimension of our engagement with fictional works of art—paradigmatically literary, dramatic, and cinematic narratives—is figuring out what is true in such representations, what the facts are in the fictional world. These facts (or states of affairs) include not only those that ground any genuine understanding of a story—say, that it was his own father whom Oedipus killed—but also those that may be missed in even a largely competent reading, say, that Emma Bovary’s desires and dissatisfactions are fed by reading romance novels.

How we uncover fictional truth parallels how we decide what is true in the real world. When forming beliefs, as well as revising, transitioning among, and relinquishing beliefs, we rely on standard sources of evidence such as testimony, perception, memory, the results of inductive and deductive inferences, and our affective responses. When all goes well, these sources provide the right sorts of reasons for our beliefs: reasons that justify or serve as warrants for what we believe. Analogous operations supply and justify what we imagine to be true in a given fiction.

Sometimes we rely on the testimony of a narrator who is largely transparent to the text. In these cases we treat what is said as true by stipulation: reading, ‘it was a dark and stormy night...,’ we don’t typically need to look for other confirming evidence to be justified in believing that the description captures how things are in the fiction. In other cases where narrators or those in the text whom we rely on for information seem to be fully-realized individuals, we may discount what they convey to us according to the degree of reliability we attribute to them, as we do with Henry James’ Maisie, who sees things with only partial comprehension through a child’s eyes. Such discounting is of course what we do as good epistemic agents in response to testimony in real life. We also often infer what is true in a story, when it is not explicitly stated, from what is directly asserted to be true: I conclude that Charles Bovary (not a fully qualified physician but only an *officier de santé*) must have botched the surgery

44 he performed on the young groom's clubfoot because the boy's leg
45 develops gangrene. Other things I imagine to be true are not de-
46 scribed by a text, nor inferred from those descriptions, but are im-
47 ported into a fiction from my beliefs about the real world—insofar,
48 that is, as I see the fictional world as similar in relevant respects to
49 our own. Hence, unless otherwise specified, we tend to assume in
50 reading a realistic narrative that the human beings it represents are
51 mortal and that the laws of physics hold.

52 Furthermore, just as I may be mistaken in my beliefs about the real
53 world, so my imagining what is true in a fiction can be faulty—say, if I
54 thought that the brawny peasant on a donkey that Don Quixote en-
55 counters really is the beautiful princess he hallucinates, or that
56 Goneril's and Regan's professions of filial devotion are sincere, or
57 that Ganymede in *As You Like It* really is a man within the story,
58 and not Rosalind in disguise. In either case, the defect may be in
59 the belief or imagining itself (its failure of correspondence) or in
60 the epistemic means by which the belief or imagining is arrived at,
61 such as when they arise out of practices that are not truth-apt, such
62 as 'wishful thinking.'

63 Philosophers and psychologists have worked out a substantial
64 picture of the kinds of normative constraints that are constitutive of
65 epistemic rationality when applied to beliefs—what normative con-
66 straints govern a person's formation, maintenance, transitions
67 among, and relinquishing of her beliefs. My question is whether
68 such norms governing our beliefs about what is true in the real
69 world apply *invariantly* to our imaginings of what is true in fictions.¹
70 Taking *P* to be a proposition expressing some fact, is it rational to
71 imagine *P* is true in a given fictional world if and only if it would
72 rational to believe *P* is true for the same kinds of reasons in real
73 life? In short, is make-believing rational in the same sense as
74 believing?

75 Let me describe two opposed answers. On the one side are those
76 who see imagining in response to a fiction as rational according to

77
78 ¹ Related questions concern the degree of commonalities in the way
79 beliefs and imaginings are attributed to agents; whether imaginative states
80 bear the same relations (inferential, causal, supervening, etc.) among them-
81 selves as belief states do; and what systematic relations exist between
82 imaginative states and belief states. For discussion of these and other com-
83 parisons between beliefs and imaginings, see Tamar Gendler, 'On the
84 Relation Between Pretense and Belief,' in Matthew Kieran and Dominic
85 McIver Lopes, eds. *Imagination, Philosophy, and the Arts*. Routledge,
86 2003, p.125–141; and Shaun Nichols, Introduction to *The Architecture of
the Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

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87 the same norms that govern whether a belief is rational. The norms of
88 believing and imagining are invariant across the real and fictional
89 divide. We can call this a commitment to invariance or *continuity*.
90 On the other side, proponents of *discontinuity* see the standards of
91 rationality for forming beliefs about the real world as in tension
92 with, if not collectively inconsistent with, the standards that govern
93 imaginings of what is true in a fictional world.²

94 On the side of continuity is the intuition that our epistemic behav-
95 ior in relation to the contents of fictions is very much like that in rela-
96 tion to states of affairs in the real world—indeed, it isn't clear how
97 authors could expect us to understand their fictions correctly, to
98 import what needs to be imported, to infer what needs to be inferred,
99 for the fiction to make sense, were they not able to rely on our rational
100 processes for discovery of facts about the world being taken 'offline'
101 and directed to the stories they create.

102 The discontinuity view, however, relies on the intuition that
103 imagining exhibits a freedom that seems to distinguish it from
104 many other representational states of the mind. It seems, for instance,
105 that I can successfully imagine *at will* that almost any facts hold, but
106 this cannot be said, both conceptually and practically, of remember-
107 ing, desiring, perceiving, or believing, which seem more greatly con-
108 strained by the circumstances I find myself in, and the other
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111
112 ² Whether or not a given theory of fiction-directed imagining commits
113 to or denies invariance tends to be only implicit. Some of the more salient
114 expressions of continuity can be found in: Byrne, R. M. J. *The Rational*
115 *Imagination: How People Create Alternatives to Reality*. (Cambridge, MA:
116 MIT Press, 2005); Nichols, Shaun and Stephen Stich. 'A Cognitive
117 Theory of Pretense', *Cognition* 74 (2000), 115–147; and, Gregory Currie
118 and Ian Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds: Imagination In Philosophy And*
119 *Psychology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Discontinuity is a
120 tenet of Romantic theories of the imagination, as in Coleridge's
121 *Biographia Literaria* (1817), and existentialist and phenomenological treat-
122 ments of fiction, such as, respectively, Jean-Paul Sartre's *What is Literature?*
123 and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "Indirect Language and the Voices of
124 Silence." Among contemporary theorists, Kendall Walton endorses what
125 appears to be a qualified thesis of discontinuity in stressing the absence of
126 any "simple set of principles" governing the generation of fictional truths
127 (*Mimesis as Make-believe: on the Foundations of the Representational Arts*,
128 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990], p.185). My aim in
129 this paper, however, is not to offer critical exegesis of the views of theorists
of fictions but to expose a significant conflict between two positions in which
they cannot avoid taking a side.

130 memories, desires, perceptions and beliefs that I already have and will
131 not relinquish.

132 No doubt, much recent work in cognitive psychology, neurosci-
133 ence, and philosophy of the imagination supports the idea that
134 there are several forms of *descriptive* continuity to be observed
135 across the stances of believing and imagining.³ The psychological me-
136 chanisms that process believing that *P* appear to operate in ways par-
137 allel to, and employ much of the same cognitive architecture, as those
138 that process pretending or imagining that *P*. However, my question is
139 about the *norms* associated with those propositional attitudes:
140 whether the criteria governing their epistemic justification hold in-
141 variantly across our beliefs about the real world and our imaginings
142 of what is true in fictional works of art.⁴

143 In what follows I introduce and assess some considerations in favor
144 of these two theses of continuity and discontinuity, both of which
145 have a prima facie plausibility. Ultimately, I defend a version of the
146 discontinuity thesis: for readers and audiences of fictions, there are
147 epistemic reasons to attribute facts to a fictional world that would
148 not count as epistemic reasons to identify analogous facts in the real
149 world. More generally, the norms in light of which our imaginings
150 can be epistemically warranted are not, as a whole, consistent with
151 those in light of which our beliefs are epistemically warranted.

152 A few caveats are in order:

- 153 (1) There is no doubt that the concept of rationality when applied
154 to either beliefs or imaginings requires careful qualification.
155 There is no consensus over what theoretical rationality con-
156 sists of, hence no easy way to ask whether the norms of
157 belief are altogether invariant over believing and imagining.⁵
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160 ³ Representative studies are: Byrne, R. M. J. *The Rational Imagination: How People Create Alternatives to Reality*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Harris, P. L. *The Work of the Imagination*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000); Nichols Shaun and Stephen Stich. 'A Cognitive Theory of Pretense', *Cognition* 74 (2000), 115–147; and Timothy Schroeder and Carl Matheson 'Imagination and Emotion' in *The Architecture of the Imagination*, ed. Shaun Nichols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19–40.

167 ⁴ For the debate between theories of continuity and discontinuity over
168 the norms governing our emotional responses to fictions and the actual
169 world, see Jonathan Gilmore, 'Aptness of Emotions for Fictions and
170 Imaginings', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 92.4 (2011), 468–489.

171 ⁵ In this discussion I treat theoretical and epistemic rationality as largely
172 identical capacities. In other philosophical contexts, however, the two may

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173 In what follows I appeal to the putative invariance of only
174 some of the most familiar and relatively uncontroversial
175 norms identified with theoretical rationality, not to exotic
176 norms that only a perfectly rational person, say an android
177 decision theorist possessed of unlimited working memory,
178 might be guided by. I will also not enter into the debate as
179 to whether such normativity applies in the first instance to
180 beliefs and only derivatively to believers, or to the converse
181 (as in some theories of virtue epistemology). I assume that
182 anything I say about the rational grounds for a belief can be
183 translated into an attribute of someone's epistemic disposition
184 to rely only on such rational grounds.

(2) Nothing I say here is meant to address the metaphysics of fic-
185 tional worlds, or more mundanely, what makes something
186 true, part of a story, make-believe, and such, in a fictional
187 world. My only relevant commitment is to the idea that
188 there is criterion of representational correctness in what we
189 imagine when we submit our imaginative activity to the
190 objective constraints of a work of fiction, allowing that most
191 fictions underdetermine what we may imagine of them con-
192 sistent with correct comprehension.

(3) Finally, I am not addressing norms that govern the correctness
195 or aptness of beliefs or imaginings, *all things considered*, but
196 only those that govern their intentional, or more specifically,
197 *representational* correctness and the putatively justifying
198 means by which such correctness is achieved. There may be
199 practical, prudential, aesthetic, moral and other norms in
200 virtue of which one has a reason to believe or imagine some-
201 thing, or, more specifically, to put oneself in a position in
202 which one will *come to* believe or imagine it. Sometimes an
203 instrumental reason (e.g., it would be too distressing) might
204 trump an epistemic reason to believe something or to
205 imagine it to be true. But even if practical, moral, aesthetic,
206 and other kinds of reasons can trump epistemic reasons,
207 they do not silence epistemic reasons, in the sense of making
208 them wholly inapplicable. My concern is only with the
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211 be distinguished, particularly in how the former but not the latter requires
212 that one be sensitive to certain kinds of instrumental reasons pertaining to
213 the achievement of one's cognitive goals. See Thomas Kelly, 'Epistemic
214 Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: a Critique,' *Philosophy and
215 Phenomenological Research* 66.3 (2003), 612–640.

216 invariance or otherwise of epistemic norms governing how our
217 beliefs and imaginings present their contents—as, respective-
218 ly, true of the world, or true of a fiction. Do the same standards
219 of epistemic rationality apply to beliefs and fiction-guided
220 imaginings? Not: Do the same standards of rationality, *in*
221 *toto*, apply to the two domains?⁶
222

223
224 **II.**
225

226 A continuity proponent might suggest that our abiding by the same
227 rational standards for belief formation and transition is what creators
228 of works of fiction rely on to let us know what is true in a fiction.⁷ If
229 the astronaut crew crash-lands on a primitive planet ruled by apes but
230 then comes upon the charred fragments of the Statue of Liberty,
231 audiences can be expected to infer that the strange planet is actually
232 Earth (!) in a post-apocalyptic future. If we are directed to imagine
233 that a fictional world is much like our own, we are entitled to
234 assume that a character in the fiction who is in London in the
235 morning and New York later the same day has traveled there by
236 air.⁸ If our epistemic norms were not continuous, such identifications
237 of the facts in a fiction would not be so predictable.
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239 ⁶ There is a narrow sense in which pragmatic factors may plausibly be
240 counted as providing epistemic reasons relevant to acquiring a belief, as
241 when the degree of importance associated with being correct in some
242 claim affects what one counts as a sufficient level of evidence to believe it.
243 Whether or not such pragmatic reasons count in epistemic justification
244 need not be addressed here as my question is only whether the kinds of
245 reasons, whatever they may be, that justify beliefs apply invariantly to the
246 justification of imaginings.

247 ⁷ Defenders of the descriptive continuity of believing and imagining or
248 pretending stress what Nichols calls ‘inferential orderliness’: that individ-
249 uals working out what is true in a given pretense often make inferences
250 that mirror those that they would employ if the pretense were in fact real.
251 See Nichols, Shaun (2006). ‘Introduction’, in Shaun Nichols, ed., *The*
252 *Architecture of the Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006),
1–18.

253 ⁸ Currie and Ravenscroft write: ‘It is this capacity of imaginings to
254 mirror the inferential patterns of belief that makes fictional storytelling pos-
255 sible. ... If imaginings were not inferentially commensurate with beliefs, we
256 could not draw on our beliefs to fill out what the story tells us.’ Gregory
257 Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds: Imagination In Philosophy*
258 *And Psychology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13–14. Such
preservation of inference in imagining is also demonstrated in studies of

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259 Of course, one norm that a commitment to invariance should not
260 require the observance of is that a person imagine something to be
261 true only when she has good grounds to believe it to be true. But
262 once we index the *grounds for imagining* some fictional or make-
263 believe fact to the *fictional* world that the imagining is about, we
264 can say that the same constraints that govern the epistemic behavior
265 of any agent with respect to his beliefs govern his epistemic behavior
266 with respect to his fiction-directed imagining. His beliefs present
267 certain facts as holding in the real world and his imaginings present
268 certain facts as holding in a fictional one.

269 It certainly seems part of the phenomenology of our engagement
270 with fictions that we perform many of the same epistemic operations
271 in imagining what is true in a fiction as we do in coming to believe
272 what is true outside of it. We infer via deduction and induction
273 from what is explicitly described as being the case to other facts of
274 the fiction that are not so described. Through our affective and emo-
275 tional reactions we imaginatively assign values to things represented
276 in fictions just as we impute values to things in real life. We try to
277 monitor the consistency among our imaginings in response to a
278 fiction just as we monitor such consistency among our beliefs, some-
279 times giving up what we initially held to be true as a story unfolds. We
280 think it is no more theoretically reasonable to base one's imaginings in
281 response to a fiction on how we desire events to transpire than we do
282 in connection with our beliefs. That I want Anna Karenina to
283 survive, is, I recognize as a reader, no epistemic reason to justify
284 imagining that in Tolstoy's narrative she somehow continues to
285 live. There are, of course, stories that seek to satisfy such desires, as
286 in 'fan fictions' that continue and sometimes revise a narrative
287 without the sanction of the original creator. And there are interesting
288 cases such as when the pseudonymous Alonso Fernández de
289 Avellaneda determined that Don Quixote was in fact more pious
290 than Cervantes posited, and wrote a narrative featuring the character
291 after Cervantes composed the first part of his novel, but before he had
292 finished the second. However these imaginings are not epistemically
293 justified by reasons internal to the original fictions, although they
294 may be justified on aesthetic, moral, or other terms. Indeed, writers
295 sometimes try to redeem characters from others' novels, say,
296 because they see those characters or actual people like them as
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300 child psychology; see, e.g., Alan Leslie, 'Pretending and Believing: Issues in
301 the Theory of ToMM', *Cognition* 50 (1987) 211–38.

302 deserving of different attributes or experiences than those with which
303 they were originally endowed.⁹

304 It should also be noted that audiences for fictions regularly discuss
305 fictional characters and events *as if* they were real, debating the fine
306 points of what a protagonist's motivations are on the basis of her
307 behavior. This is evidence that we cite when we are called upon to
308 justify what we imagine to be true in those fictions—as when we
309 debate what really happened at the end of the film *Inception* (was it
310 still a dream?). That is, we appeal to reasons in an inferentially
311 norm-governed way that is continuous with how we appropriately
312 justify what we believe to be true in real life.

313 Finally, in discovering truths about the actual world we rely on
314 various forms of counterfactual imagining akin to our imagining
315 what is true in a fiction. These include thought experiments, predict-
316 ing the future, simulating another person's point of view, apportion-
317 ing legal responsibility for some event, and appealing to scientific
318 models featuring, e.g., frictionless planes. The epistemic value of
319 these imaginings is sometimes controversial, whether as a source of
320 useful moral intuitions or as a guide to metaphysical possibility.
321 However, a proponent of continuity might contend that the very possi-
322 bility of counterfactual imagining serving as a source of knowledge
323 about the real world depends on our abiding by the same rational con-
324 straints in imagining as we do in forming beliefs. Of course, some
325 might embrace that point, not as an intuitive support for continuity,
326 but as a *reductio* showing that some of the products of such imagining,
327 e.g., intuitions drawn from fictions involving trolley problems or
328 dopplegängers exiting from teletransporters, are not a good source of
329 knowledge about morals and metaphysics in this world where the cir-
330 cumstances the fictions prescribe us to imagine don't typically arise.¹⁰

331 Still, one might object to the continuity view that there is an essen-
332 tial dimension of the process by which we discover what to imagine as
333 true in a fiction that has no obvious analog in the process by which we
334 form beliefs about the real world. That is where we take an *external*
335 approach to the fiction as an ordinary artifact in our world and
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338 ⁹ As in Jean Rhys' *Wild Sargasso Sea* (1966), an alternative imagining of
339 the life and mind of the "madwoman in the attic" of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane*
340 *Eyre* before her arranged marriage to Rochester and relocation from the
341 Caribbean to England.

342 ¹⁰ That we form intuitions from thought experiments according to
343 the same principles by which we discover truth in fiction is defended
344 in Jonathan Ichikawa and Benjamin Jarvis, "Thought-Experiment
Intuitions and Truth in Fiction," *Philosophical Studies* (2009) 142: 221–246.

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345 appeal to its style, tradition, function, genre, author, technique, and
346 so on, in forming beliefs about its content—what is true from the
347 *internal* perspective.¹¹ In adopting such an external stance on a
348 work of fiction we refer to properties it has as a vehicle of representa-
349 tion but not (directly) to its represented content. By contrast, in
350 adopting an internal stance, we refer to that content as if it were
351 real or were a story being recounted by a real narrator. Othello's
352 speech is rough from the internal stance ('rude am I in my speech')
353 but eloquent from the external, in the poetic language Shakespeare
354 uses. Mark Antony's funeral oration is eloquent from both the internal
355 perspective—although he claims not to be an orator—and the external,
356 in the phrasing Shakespeare employs. External features of a
357 narrative do not lie within the scope of the operator 'it is fictional
358 that' or 'it is part of the content that,' however, they can cause us
359 to form propositional attitudes—beliefs, imaginings, emotions,
360 desires—toward what is. For example, P.G. Wodehouse's novels
361 often feature an earl or lord raising an older child in the absence of
362 her mother, who has died before the period of the story begins. We
363 assume that the characters don't dwell much over that loss (even
364 though it would be natural to import that assumption from real
365 life) because we know that would be foreign to Wodehouse's comic
366 aims. Similarly, we are usually correct in inferring that the party
367 who appears guilty of the murder in the first few pages of a traditional
368 mystery story is not genuinely the villain, for paradigm mystery
369 novels don't give up the game that early. Finally, a viewer of the
370 film *Clueless* about a group of American high-school kids can make
371 reliable assumptions about the significance of various turns in the
372 plot if he's familiar with its acknowledged model, Austen's *Emma*.

373 However, those appeals to what is true *of*, but not *in*, a work of
374 fiction do not count against continuity. In principle, if we had
375 access to such an external source of understanding our world—say,
376 through reliable beliefs about Providence, Fate, or Karma—we
377 would use it to infer what is true in our world. No such more-than-
378 human-knowledge is available, but in principle it would serve as a
379 source of beliefs about what is true in our world as much as external
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381 ¹¹ For discussions of internal and external stances on a fiction, see Peter
382 Lamarque, *Fictional Points of View* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press,
383 1996), chapters 2 and 8; and, Gregory Currie, 'Two Ways of Looking at a
384 Narrative.' In *Narratives and Narrators: a Philosophy of Stories*, (Oxford
385 and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 49–64. An analogous dis-
386 tinction is noted by Kendall Walton, 'How Remote are Fictional Worlds
387 from the Real World?' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1978–9) 21.

388 features of a story serve as a source of what to imagine as true about its
389 world. This scenario, of course, is sometimes explored thematically
390 within works of art, as in *The Truman Show*—about a character
391 whose life is orchestrated for the sake of a television series—and *The*
392 *Comforters*, a short novel by Muriel Spark in which Caroline dis-
393 covers that she is only a character in a fiction (she continually hears
394 typing on a keyboard) and resolves to frustrate her author’s plans.
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396
397 **III.**
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399 Let me now turn to the discontinuity view, which also seems prima
400 facie plausible. This is the view, recall, that the rational norms that
401 govern the formation of imaginings with respect to what is true in a
402 fiction can be inconsistent with the rational norms that govern the
403 formation of our beliefs. Sometimes, as in Shelley’s Romantic
404 primer, *Defense of Poetry* (1821), this is construed as the denial that
405 reason has any role in the activities of the imagination.¹² In other for-
406 mulations, imagination is reason-governed but perhaps—this is the
407 question—not subject to the same norms of reasoning as believing. I
408 want to first address, and suggest we reject, the most familiar point
409 appealed to in favor of the thesis of discontinuity—one that pertains
410 to the unconstrained contents of fictions. In its place, I introduce a
411 defense of discontinuity that I think better survives philosophical
412 scrutiny.

413 The most familiar point made in favor of discontinuity is that it is a
414 highly salient feature of our engagement with fictions that they call
415 for us to imagine things as true that are not, and sometimes could
416 not be, true in our world. Fictional worlds can present fantasies as
417 reality, featuring radical departures from standard laws of physics
418 and states of affairs that are internally inconsistent. And while our
419 real world, like all possible worlds, exhibits logical closure—any
420 genuine proposition is either true of our world or false of our
421 world—fictional worlds are typically incomplete: some propositions,
422 such as that Emma Bovary has blue eyes, are neither true nor false in
423 the world of Flaubert’s novel, there being nothing in the narrative
424 that gives us a reason to accept or deny that claim. If fictions call
425 on us to imagine such fantastical states of affairs, so different, phys-
426 ically and metaphysically, from the actual world, they must rely on our
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428 ¹² In *English Essays: From Sir Philip Sidney to Macaulay. With*
429 *Introductions and Notes*, edited by Charles W. Eliot, (New York: P.F.
430 Collier and Son, 1909).

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431 acceptance of epistemic norms that govern imagining that are distinct
432 from those that govern believing.

433 But that observation based on the contents of fictions does not
434 succeed as a challenge to continuity. For a proponent of continuity
435 can plausibly propose that what is embedded in those fictions is a
436 kind of metaphysical or physical principle in light of which it
437 would be rational to infer or make-believe the truth of those other
438 fantastical parts of the fiction. If we accept that it is true in the state
439 of affairs of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* that human beings *can* wake up
440 as insects, or as other creatures, then we don't in any straightforward
441 way depart from ordinary rational judgment if we imagine on the
442 basis of the narrator's description that Gregor Samsa *has* indeed
443 woken up as a bug. This is just as when Alice concludes from
444 matters being so queer in general in Wonderland—she's been
445 shrunk and is swimming in a pool of her own tears—that it isn't that
446 odd that the mouse she encounters is able to speak French. The ques-
447 tion is whether we would be rational in coming to imagine such fan-
448 tastical states of affairs without there being such a principle of
449 generation internal to the fiction that serves to license such an
450 imagining.¹³

451 I suggest that if we were to encounter a fictional world in which
452 such fantastic things occur but where there is no implicit (fictionally
453 true) physical or metaphysical principle that licenses such departures
454 from ordinary reality, we would be just as warranted in assuming that
455 we are reading a story recounted by a *deluded narrator*—one who only
456 imagines all that she or he describes to be true—as we would be in
457 assuming that French-speaking mice really do exist in the fictional
458 world. But in most cases there is very little pressure or apparent
459 motivation to assume the presence of such a narrator out of touch
460 with that fictional world. Instead, we assume that the facts of the fic-
461 tional world really are as they are described because we can readily
462 assume that it is a fact in the fiction that such bizarre, non-naturalistic
463 events can occur—the nature of that world permits it. This experi-
464 ence, of course, should be contrasted with cases in which in a story
465 presents reasons that motivate us to wonder about the narrator's reli-
466 ability, as in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, where we try to piece together what
467 is true about the events leading to the death of the poet John Shade
468 through an obviously delusional commentary on the source and
469 meanings of his accompanying poem.

471 ¹³ On principles of generation, see Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-*
472 *believe: on the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, (Cambridge, MA:
473 Harvard University Press, 1990), 138–40.

474 I suggest that a better argument for discontinuity can be found not
475 in the sundry contents of fictions but in some of the myriad ways they
476 succeed in eliciting our imagining of what is true. My proposal is that
477 certain kinds of experiences generated by a fiction do serve as grounds
478 for the imagination of certain associated facts holding in the fiction
479 when those experiences are reliable indicators of those facts. More
480 formally, when an experience E in reading a fiction is a reliable indi-
481 cator that *P* is the case in the fiction, E is a (pro tanto) reason for
482 imagining that *P*. At a general level, this structure of justification
483 holds as well in relation to beliefs: an experience E can serve as a
484 reason for a belief that *P* if E is a reliable indicator that *P*.¹⁴
485 However, at a lower level of description, a fiction can provide an
486 experience that justifies imagining something being true in the
487 fiction while analogous experiences in the actual world may not
488 justify an analogous belief.

489 It is true that in *Oliver Twist* Fagin is filthy and physically grotesque,
490 as we learn from Dickens' or from the attention paid by the
491 narrator to his greasy clothes and matted hair. Yet, we imagine him
492 as morally corrupt as well via the text's exploitation of our well-
493 studied irrational tendency to conflate feelings of mere physical
494 disgust with justified moral opprobrium. No doubt, other facts
495 internal to the fiction also explain and serve as reasons for this
496 imagining just as they would in an analogous case of belief—such as
497 that he exploits children. But those facts do not exhaust the pro
498 tanto reasons warranting that moral judgment.¹⁵ For in engaging
499 with such a work, we implicitly accept a norm under which such
500 physical disgust is a reliable indicator of such moral facts. No such
501 reliable relation, hence no norm sanctioning an epistemic reliance
502 on it, holds in the actual world. A feeling of disgust prompted by
503 someone's filth in the real world would not offer a reason for
504 judging him immoral. This suggests that we can have some imagin-
505 ings on account of—warranted by—being caused to have other imagin-
506 ings where an analogous justificatory relation between one set of facts

509
510 ¹⁴ I appeal here to a “reliabilist” notion of epistemic justification that
511 does not preclude other grounds of justification. For a defense of an epistem-
512 ic reliabilism as an exclusive account of justification, see Alvin Goldman
513 (1979), ‘What Is Justified Belief?’ In A. Goldman, *Liasons: Philosophy*
514 *Meets the Cognitive and Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (1992).

515 ¹⁵ See SchnallSimone, Jonathan Haidt, Gerald L. Clore, and Alexander
516 H. Jordan, ‘Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment’, *Personality and Social*
Psychology Bulletin (2008), 1096–1109.

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517 and another would not hold outside of our engagement with the
518 fiction.

519 There are other kinds of cases in which works of art exploit auto-
520 matic or subdoxastic tendencies to cause us to imagine as true what
521 we would not have reason in analogous contexts to believe in real
522 life. From these arise two claims. First, such phenomena serve as evi-
523 dence of a descriptive discontinuity in what can serve as the bases of
524 imaginings and epistemically-rational beliefs. Second, more contro-
525 versially, these cases reflect normative discontinuity as well. They
526 show how the causes of what we imagine to be true in a fiction can
527 be epistemic reasons for those imaginings even if they would not be
528 such for analogous beliefs about the actual world.

529 For example, in some genres of art we are induced through physical
530 descriptions of characters—their beauty or ugliness, stereotypical
531 racial or ethnic features of appearance, deportment, size, and so
532 on—to conclude (correctly in relation to the story) that they have
533 certain virtues or vices of character and certain kinds of capacities.
534 Ugliness is often employed to provoke a judgment of nefariousness
535 even though, of course, that would not be a proper inference
536 between such a perception and belief. Many studies of human
537 beauty—through what is sometimes termed the ‘Halo Effect’—
538 show that it can elicit not only an attribution of moral goodness but
539 also intelligence: a psychological explanation of the historical idea
540 of psyche and body mirroring each-other in ‘beauty of soul.’¹⁶ We
541 are often solicited to construe the literal qualities of the media of
542 some types of visual works of art as literal or figurative properties
543 of whatever content the works depict, evoking a judgment about a re-
544 presented person or state of affairs that is not grounded in the prop-
545 erties of that person or situation considered independently of the
546 medium of representation. A film may cause us to think of the lives
547 it depicts as happy through presenting them in warm tones and soft
548 focus or a state of affairs as menacing through the use of cold blues
549 and greys.¹⁷ The names of characters, such as Roger Chillingworth,
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551 ¹⁶ One representative study is Karen Dion, Ellen Berscheid, Elaine
552 Walster. ‘What is Beautiful is Good’. *Journal of Personality and Social*
553 *Psychology* **3** (1972): 285–290; See also, NisbettRichard E.;
554 WilsonTimothy D., ‘The halo effect: Evidence for unconscious alteration
555 of judgments’. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **35** (1987),
556 250–256. On the idea of ‘beauty of soul’ see NortonR. E. *The Beautiful*
557 *Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell
558 University Press, 1995).

559 ¹⁷ Compare the metaphorical transfer exhibited in recent experiments
that address the processing of tactile information: in one, volunteers asked

560 the cerebral husband of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* and
561 Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, induce us to attribute qualities to those
562 characters that the mere possession of a name, in real life, would
563 not indicate.

564 Furthermore, we often exhibit highly irrational forms of in-group/
565 out-group bias in favoring even arbitrarily individuated communities
566 in which we are primed to recognize our membership, but that bias is
567 easily exploited in having us favor and judge as merited or objectively
568 valuable the ends of the characters in a fiction with whom we are made
569 intimate—say through having us simulate their perspective—even if
570 independent of the fiction we wouldn't believe that those are good
571 ends to have.¹⁸ We value, for example, the elegant thief's finely cali-
572 brated heist even if means a loss to others with whom we don't iden-
573 tify. Indeed, the devices employed to prime our identification with a
574 character can lead us to appraise the facts in the story as that fictional
575 individual does even if a description of such facts outside of a fiction
576 would be unlikely to garner that evaluation.¹⁹ We worry with Tony
577 Soprano as he frets over threats to his mob dominion and we feel a
578 thrill implicitly approving of the ends of the hired killer in the film
579 version of *Day of the Jackal* as he ingeniously pursues his mission
580 to assassinate the fictional Charles de Gaulle. It is controversial to
581 claim that all affective responses entail concomitant judgments
582 about their objects; but in these cases our emotions do seem to
583 evince certain context-conditioned judgments about the evaluative
584 dimensions of their objects: e.g., "loss of control over his criminal
585 organization would be a bad thing," or "succeeding in the assassination
586 is the right goal to pursue."

587 Our tendency to see actual events as having a narrative-like struc-
588 ture that goes beyond mere causal and explanatory connectedness
589 can be relied on by authors to supply the kind of closure and unity

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592 to assess the quality of candidates for an alleged job tended to rate those ap-
593 plicants whose resumes were attached to heavier clipboards as being, them-
594 selves, more serious (i.e., 'weighty'). Ackerman Joshua M., Christopher C.
595 Nocera, and John A. Bargh, 'Incidental Haptic Sensations Influence
596 Social Judgments and Decisions', *Science* **328**.5986 (2010): 1712–1715.

597 ¹⁸ See the suggestion that mere (arbitrary) categorization of individuals
598 serving as research subjects generated in-group bias in Otten S., and G. B.
599 Moskowitz, 'Evidence for Implicit Evaluative In-group Bias: Affect-
600 biased Spontaneous Trait Inference in a Minimal Group Paradigm',
601 *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* **36** (2000), 77–89.

602 ¹⁹ See M. Gernsbacher, et al, 'Do readers mentally represent characters'
emotional states?' *Cognition & Emotion* **6.2**, (1992): 89–111.

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603 among fictional events that traditional plots require. It could only be
604 figuratively true of a person's life, or of a romance, that it had an organically
605 structured and internally related beginning, climax, and denouement,
606 but it can be literally true in a fictional world that such is the
607 case. As both prosecutors and con artists know, embedding facts and
608 explanations within an aesthetically satisfying narrative is more convincing
609 than merely stating the facts and explanation outright. A successful narrative
610 can gloss over major explanatory and causal gaps in what we are to imagine
611 as true, without thereby having any less claim on us to evoke that imagining.
612 The narrator of Proust's novel tells us, from a first-person perspective, of his
613 life and emergence as a writer. But certain sequences, particularly those in
614 the sections recounting the relationship between Swann and Odette, could not
615 have been witnessed by the young Marcel, yet are recounted—and we as readers
616 go along imagining those facts—as if he were there. The seamless nature of
617 the narrative gives us reasons to imagine certain states of affairs as obtaining
618 in the fiction even though other facts in the fiction would make those states
619 of affairs impossible.

620
621 In his remarks about the nature of moral demands, Nietzsche portrayed
622 our psychological need to attribute a meaning to suffering as resulting in
623 unjustified beliefs about its redemptive significance: that it is a test of character,
624 a divine punishment, a curse.²⁰ But works of fiction regularly rely on that
625 tendency to endow objects and events with a significance that is then treated
626 as objectively and independently possessed by them. In, for example, *It's a
627 Wonderful Life*, the character played by Jimmy Stewart undergoes various
628 travails that, satisfyingly, come to appear to have existed *for the sake of*
629 his eventual enlightenment.

630
631 We also readily accede to a biased understanding—the fundamental attribution
632 error or correspondence bias—of people's motivations, in seeing their actions
633 as explained by stable character traits and deep psychological dispositions
634 or motivations, rather than much more powerfully explanatory contextual
635 or situational factors.²¹ This

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638 ²⁰ One of the themes of his 'On the Genealogy of Morals', in *On the Genealogy of
639 Morality' and Other Writings*, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson, translated by Carol
640 Diethe., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

641
642 ²¹ On the explanatory limits to relying on a notion of character see Doris, J.,
643 *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior*, (New York: Cambridge University
644 Press, 2002); and, Wilson, T., *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive
645 Unconscious*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002).

646 tendency distorts our beliefs about why individuals act as they do, but
647 it is often relied on by traditional fictional narratives, (perhaps it is
648 essential to certain genres) in systematically eliciting from us
649 insight into why characters in the fiction behave as they do.

650 I've appealed to the ways in general that fictions draw on our auto-
651 matic and subdoxastic tendencies, including biases and heuristics, to
652 elicit our imaginings of what is true in those fictions. A more specific
653 account of such devices might show how particular kinds of biases
654 may be indexed to the successful functioning of, respectively, par-
655 ticular categories or genres of fictions. For example, there is the
656 bias of the 'hot hand' in which we unjustifiably tend to believe that
657 gamblers or ball players can enjoy streaks, that they can be 'on a
658 roll,' or 'in the zone' where these aren't merely short runs in a
659 random process.²² This may be the result of a confirmation bias,
660 but whatever the psychological explanation, it seems tailor made
661 for every film about an underdog team trying to make it to the
662 championships.

663 There are studies of what has been called the 'Rhyme-as-Reason
664 Effect' in which statements that rhyme are taken to be more truthful
665 or insightful than those that don't even when the meaning is the
666 same.²³ This may be an instance of a more general phenomenon in
667 which a statement's truth is unwittingly evaluated on aesthetic
668 terms.²⁴ In any case, that seems a cognitive bias made for pop, rock
669 and hip-hop songs where in the midst of absorption we exhibit cog-
670 nitive, affective, and behavioral cues that suggest we imaginatively
671 endorse, say, a singer's genre-typical promise that love is eternal
672 and unconditional or that violence and mayhem are the only answer
673 to society's ills, even though we would not endorse such claims if
674 we subjected them to scrutiny as candidates for belief. One might
675 worry whether, in being largely constituted by an emotional
676 response, such imaginative endorsement of the lyrics of such songs
677 exhibits any cognitive content. However, if the operative emotions
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679
680 ²² Tversky, Amos; Daniel Kahneman, 'Belief in the law of small
681 numbers', *Psychological Bulletin* 76.2 (1971), 105–110.

682 ²³ Compare Nietzsche's remark: '[E]ven the wisest of us occasionally
683 becomes a fool for rhythm, if only insofar as he *feels* a thought to be *truer*
684 when it has a metric form and presents itself with a divine hop, skip, and
685 jump.' *The Gay Science*, edited by Bernard Williams, translated by
686 Josefine Nauckhoff, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 85–6.

687 ²⁴ See McGlone, M. S., and J. Tofighbakhsh, 'The Keats Heuristic:
688 Rhyme as Reason in Aphorism Interpretation', *Poetics* 26.4 (1999),
235–244.

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689 impute descriptive or evaluative facts to their objects, as I suggest
690 they do, they should count as instantiating judgments.

691 In many of these cases we implicitly ascribe the facts to a fictional
692 world that would rationalize our irrational responses. But this ration-
693 alizing, if adopted in relation to our beliefs, would be only of a spuri-
694 ous sort. For in the cases I've described we do not discover genuine
695 real-world evidence of what we imagine to be true, but, rather, are
696 caused to impute that evidence to a fiction and treat it as existing
697 there independent of our imagining. In this respect, our tendency
698 to interpret what we perceive in a way that preserves our rational-
699 ity—treating, e.g., our physically-caused “moral” disgust for a char-
700 acter as a correct recognition of vices that would genuinely warrant
701 moral disgust—exemplifies the widely studied phenomenon of cogni-
702 tive dissonance: people are systematically motivated to reduce the dis-
703 sonance among their cognitions, even when doing so isn't rationally
704 warranted by their sources. Employing spurious rationalization
705 aimed at reducing cognitive dissonance is not a truth-conducive
706 manner of forming beliefs. However, when provoked by a work of
707 fiction, such rationalizing can be a reliable truth-in-fiction-conducive
708 cognitive process.

709 Artists may exploit not only our tendencies to think in these ways to
710 make certain things true in their fictions but also to create unexpected
711 or ironic discoveries, such as that a character has qualities that run
712 counter to what our automatic responses would impute to him.

713 It runs counter, for example, to our implicit assumptions about evil
714 to find that Milton's Satan is attractive and charismatic—he is de-
715 scribed in topoi more fitting of a heroic figure like Achilles or
716 Aeneas—and has none of the appearance of a foul fiend.²⁵ Yet,
717 Satan is diminished as an object of fascination as Milton's epic
718 comes to enlighten us of his real nature. Compare the obverse phe-
719 nomenon in Alexander Nehamas's account of how the initial visual
720 repulsiveness of John Merrick, the title character in *The Elephant*
721 *Man* (1980), is diminished as we come to empathize with him. His
722 appearance is enhanced as we come to better recognize his dignity.

723 The epistemic errors and departures from rationality exemplified
724 in the activation of these tendencies are importantly, for my purposes,
725 *systematic*. If we were not systematically biased or irrational in certain
726 ways in forming our beliefs, creators of works of art could not *predict-*
727 *ably* exploit such tendencies and rely on them to direct our imagining
728

729 ²⁵ Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: the Place of*
730 *Beauty in a World of Art*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,
731 2007), 59.

of what is true in a work. Our imagining from such tendencies would not be truth-in-fiction tracking. An author wouldn't know that—or wouldn't write in such a way that reflects an implicit awareness that—she could elicit the desired response, the desired emotion or imagining, unless it was likely that her readers would have such biases. Furthermore, while many of the cases I describe illustrate how a work can prime us to attribute certain truths to the fiction, such priming is not just an *arational* causing to which the application of epistemic norms would be irrelevant, i.e., a category mistake. Rather, like the exploitation of various irrational tendencies, such priming employed by fictions can be systematically directed at particular ends. Specifically, unlike the cases in psychology experiments in which a subject may be differentially primed to adopt one of a plurality of different perspectives on some essentially ambiguous state of affairs, the priming performed by a fiction is usually systemically directed at the discovery of what is true in it, what sorts of things it is *correct* to imagine.²⁶

IV.

One way for a defender of continuity to respond to the examples arrayed above would be to say that while they illustrate how the epistemic norms that govern our beliefs don't always govern our imaginings in accord with a fiction, this only shows that such imaginings are often epistemically unjustified or irrational. Authors exploit some of our irrational tendencies to cause us to imagine certain things to be true in a fiction that we would not, on the basis of like causes in real life, be justified in believing. There is no discontinuity in epistemic norms if the illustrations above confirm only that we are by and large epistemically rational in what we believe but epistemically irrational in some of what we imagine.

The problem with this way of describing such cases is that we need to preserve a distinction between instances in which our responses to a fiction are epistemically rational and others in which they are, indeed, irrational. In some cases, that is, fictions are designed to exploit our subdoxastic tendencies to reliably cause us to recognize what is true in a story. What we imagine is the output of a reliable process by which we discover what is true in the fiction. In other cases, those

²⁶ See Bargh, John A., and Tanya L. Chartrand. "The mind in the middle." *A Practical Guide to Priming and Automaticity Research*. S (2000): 253–285.

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775 tendencies lead us to misunderstand a story, to attribute facts to it that
776 do not hold, as when because of one's own irrational racial prejudices
777 one fails to recognize that it is true in a story that a character has
778 certain virtues. If a defender of continuity holds that all (otherwise
779 unsupported) imaginings we form due to the activation of such ten-
780 dencies are epistemically irrational, we lose the ability to identify
781 those *distinctively* irrational responses to a fiction that do not result
782 from a systematic means of discovering what is true in it.

783 Another approach for a defender of continuity might be to say that
784 the examples above do not show that we are epistemically irrational in
785 what we imagine in responding to a fictions; rather, they demonstrate
786 how, we are epistemically rational in inferring what is true in a fiction
787 from recognizing how the fiction is designed to affect us. One might
788 suggest, for example, that in the illustrations above, we rely on external
789 factors of the work to imagine what is fictionally true in the same
790 epistemically warranted way in which we form ordinary beliefs: I
791 come to infer that something is true in a fiction from my recognition
792 that the author or artist has designed it in such a way as to make my
793 discovery of that truth possible. But not all such elicitations to
794 imagine function this way. For there are two kinds of cases here:
795 one that poses no threat to continuity is represented by the case,
796 where, for example, characters are named so as to give us reason to
797 believe something about their qualities. There, our imagining that
798 the character has that quality follows from an ordinary rational
799 process of relying on the stipulation of the author or testimony of
800 the reliable narrator. The nouveau-riche Veneerings, in Dicken's
801 story *Our Mutual Friend*, really do live a life of superficial gloss,
802 Daffy Duck really is a daffy duck, and Thwackum, the tutor in
803 Fielding's *Tom Jones*, does have a penchant for the cane. In the
804 second kind of case, however, the names of characters would not
805 give us reason to believe something about their qualities, but,
806 instead, are designed to cause us to attribute those qualities to those
807 characters, through, e.g., activating stereotypes or implicit associa-
808 tions. The fiction presents a character or state of affairs as having
809 certain features and our response to those features causes us to cor-
810 rectly imagine the presence of other features too.

811 Finally, a defender of continuity might say: if it's true in the fiction
812 that Fagin is morally corrupt, the beautiful person is intelligent and
813 honest, the mobster's ends are merited, and so on, then that justifies
814 imagining such things as true. *Whatever* the means might happen to
815 be that such fictional truths are conveyed to us, they are fictional
816 truths and therefore we are justified in imagining them as such, just
817 as we are justified in believing whatever is true. But that does not

818 employ an adequate concept of justification. A belief that *P* is not just-
819 ified on the basis of ‘*P*’ being true if having the belief does not come
820 about in the right way. It must not be, e.g., an accident, a knock on the
821 head, or a deviant causal chain that explains why one believes that *P* if
822 that belief is to be justified. Speaking of a fiction from the internal
823 perspective, one does not have direct access to any non-stipulated
824 facts; the only internal evidence one has for imagining what is true
825 within a fiction is what else one imagines to be true in the fiction.
826 The important point is that rational norms governing beliefs do not
827 speak directly to their contents in isolation, but rather to the
828 reasons in favor of the formation or retirement of those beliefs, and
829 to their relations – such as their consistency—while they are held.
830

831
832 **V.**
833

834 Although in making the case for discontinuity I’ve referred to the
835 various tendencies exploited by fictions as irrational dispositions
836 and the like, it is a mistake to assume that they are always defects,
837 or flaws, or evidence of improper functioning in our reasoning.
838 There may have been evolutionary trade-offs that produced these
839 forms of cognition and behavior so as to allow other beneficial
840 forms. They may, say, reflect evolutionary history not being able to
841 pass over a fitness valley required to attain a more optimal state.
842 And they may reflect asymmetries in the cost of making an error in
843 judgment and the benefit of getting it right (‘better safe than sorry’
844 is a low-cost/high-benefit policy when deciding whether a snake in
845 the wild is dangerous).

846 My interest is in how the suboptimal aspect of these tendencies
847 means we *try* to correct for them when we can—when it would be
848 irrational not to—in theoretical reasoning with our beliefs. But we
849 do not recognize an epistemic norm calling for us to engage in such
850 correction in response to fictions, when, that is, such ways of thinking
851 are exploited by the fiction in order to reveal what in the fiction is true.

852 That our epistemic norms for believing and imagining are discon-
853 tinuous stems, I think, from how the kinds of reasons we countenance
854 as justifications for our cognitive representations depend on the *func-*
855 *tions* of the practices in which those representations are formed.

856 Thus, as we have seen, beliefs are typically directed at accurately re-
857 presenting things as they are.²⁷ Accordingly, the only reasons that
858

859 ²⁷ Exceptions may be found in the sort of motivated believing and rea-
860 soning involved in thinking of oneself as a better athlete than one is in order

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861 count in favor of a belief in its representational dimension are eviden-
862 tial reasons, those that speak to its truth and to the reliable means by
863 which that truth is obtained.

864 Analogously, in some cases one's imaginative activity has an epi-
865 stemic or practical role analogous to that of belief and perception,
866 where the function is to aid in discovering some truth about the
867 actual world, as when we need to plan for the future. That purpose
868 is better realized if one's imaginings are based on reasons that speak
869 to the objective qualities of, and relations among, what they represent.

870 Many fiction-directed imaginings, however, are generated in activ-
871 ities with ends—such as pleasure, entertainment, and absorption—in
872 virtue of which they can be epistemically warranted on grounds that
873 would not count as justifications for analogous beliefs. One may
874 decide that a character in a film is trustworthy because she has a,
875 so-to-speak, honest face (notice the familiarity of that expression).
876 Even if that judgment is not justified by an inference from any
877 facts imagined to hold in the fiction, it may be still be justified if it
878 is part of the design of the work that it induces audiences to see
879 that character as having that property.

880 It should be clear that in speaking of the rational norms governing
881 fiction-directed imagining my aim has not been to address the canonical
882 philosophical question of whether fictional works of literature are a
883 good source of insight or understanding vis-à-vis the real world.
884 However, I do think that my defense of discontinuity poses certain pro-
885 blems for those who attempt to treat our responses to fictional scenarios
886 as a source of evidence for how we respond to like situations in real life.

887 I will describe only one such problem here, which concerns the
888 widespread practice in the psychological study of cognition to use fic-
889 tional narratives and films to ascertain the nature of such things as
890 memory, the emotions, inferences, and perceptions.²⁸ The problem
891 is that if individuals in those studies have internalized different
892

893
894 to perform better than one would in light of a wholly accurate appraisal, or in
895 the various paradoxes of rationality in which one is motivated to adopt an
896 attitude of believe what one does not believe. However, it is plausibly a con-
897 ceptual constraint on the identification of a given attitude toward some
898 content as constituting a belief that it is governed in some sense by a norm
899 of truth. Cf. Nishi Shah and David Velleman, "Doxastic Deliberation,"
900 *Philosophical Review*, 114:4, 2005, 497–534

901 ²⁸ See, as an example, GrossJames, and Robert W. Levenson, 'Emotion
902 Elicitation Using Films', *Cognition and Emotion* 9 (1995), 87–108. For a
903 favorable discussion of this method see Keith Oatley, et al., 'The
Psychology of Fiction: Present and Future,' in I. Jaén and J. Simon, eds.,

904 criteria of warrant or justification—different norms—for their imagin-
905 ing what is true in the fiction and their believing what is true outside
906 of it, their responses to the scenarios may differ according to whether
907 they construe the events as real, or as merely the content of a fictional
908 artistic representation.

909 A subject, for example, may allow herself to be affected by formal and
910 stylistic aspects of a description—and not put the brakes on her auto-
911 matic and usually distorting responses—when she approaches it as a fic-
912 tional work of art but may try limit those effects on her responses insofar
913 as she believes the description is intended to be a representation of the
914 real world. It's been shown that people often do this: unwittingly adjust
915 their truth-governed mental representations to take account of the
916 effects of distorting forces if they've been primed to be aware of those
917 effects. Individuals, for example, who were asked about their current
918 level of happiness gave less negative responses when they were
919 primed to be aware of the day's bad weather (and its presumed effect,
920 without any explicit connection being made, on that judgment).²⁹

921 Of course, if we do generally respond to fictions in a way that gives
922 free rein to our biases and automatic subdoxastic tendencies, this does
923 not mean that, in all cases, we ought to. I denied earlier that reasons
924 that speak to the moral, aesthetic, or instrumental aspects of an
925 imagining can serve as warrants for the *representational correctness*
926 of that imagining. But, of course, non-epistemic reasons may be
927 built into a theory of the proper ends as a whole that we should
928 have in engaging with fictions. Perhaps we should not allow ourselves
929 to have our irrational tendencies exploited by a fiction when, for
930 example, it is designed to trigger our highly fallible in-group biases
931 and implicit associations in shaping our judgments about a character
932 with stereotypical racial or ethnic characteristics. Likewise, we may
933 have reasons of self-respect not to succumb to the overly sentimental
934 or sure-fire causes of imagining relied on by kitsch. However, it is the
935 insidious power of art that our better judgment doesn't always con-
936 strain what we may be elicited to imagine.

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942 *Cognitive Literary Studies* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012),
943 235–249.

944 ²⁹ SchwarzNorbert, and Gerald L. Clore. 'Mood, misattribution, and
945 judgments of well-being: Informative and directive functions of affective
946 states.' *Journal of personality and social psychology* 45.3 (1983), 513.