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Fiction and the Emotions

Grant Tavinor

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Abstract

Our participation with works of fiction involves the emotions. Just what this involvement amounts to is a question of great interest. I argue that the literature on the involvement of the emotions in fictive practice has usually made several mistakes. Firstly it has assumed that the emotions are better understood than they actually are. I argue that the theory of emotions common to most of the theories of fiction and the emotion is far from controversial. Revising our conception on what emotions are may allow us to revise our conception of the nature of our emotional involvement in fiction. Second, I argue that two forms of problem are often conflated when philosophers discuss fictional and the emotions. There are semantic and ontological problems, and substantive psychological problems. Often these problems are confused for each other. Distinguishing between the two forms of problem will help to clear up the significant disagreements that exist in the literature. My thesis is broadly naturalised in intent, in the hope that this focus will be productive in explaining the role of the emotions in fictive practice.

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