# EVALUATIVE BELIEFS IN A THOUGHT THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK? A PROPOSAL FOR NON-POSITING EPISTEMIC STATES

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Thought Theory (TT) seems to provide an answer to the paradox of fiction (PoF) which has the ontological merits of current pretence accounts without, however, assuming mere pretence emotions. This article will question whether present formulations of TT live up to what they promise. Whenever its current versions try to include evaluative beliefs in a TT framework in order to comply with a cognitivist account of emotions, they either stop being a genuine *thought* theory or endorse the irrationalism of fictional emotions. This unfortunate outcome can be prevented by shifting the focus to thoughts, and specifically to the genetic dynamics of how we come to think of the objects in question. This is at least what we can learn from Edmund Husserl, who developed a still underestimated account according to which it is possible to have the belief that *x* merits evaluation as appearing emotion-worthy without this belief implying that *x* merits being believed to exist.

## I

Whoever is familiar with the recent debates in analytical aesthetics will inevitably have touched upon a lively debate about the so-called paradox of fiction (PoF), which addresses our apparently philosophically puzzling emotional involvement with fictional entities. PoF hinges on the strong cognitivist assumption that in order to have an emotion towards *x*, one also has to believe that *x* has certain characteristics that allow for this emotional response, which again seems to presuppose that *x* has to exist. Since, after all, we seem to be engaged with fictional characters *in so far as they are merely fictional*, we clearly seem to be devoid of the relevant existential belief. But this seemingly undermines the possibility of the emotional engagement.

In a more precise formulation, PoF centres on three prima facie plausible assumptions:

A1: We have emotions towards fictional entities.

A2: In order to have an emotion towards *x*, one has to have an evaluative belief concerning *x*, which presupposes the belief that *x* exists.

A3: We do not have existential beliefs about fictional objects but are emotionally engaged with them *in so far as* they are fictional.

Clearly, the three assumptions cannot obtain together; if the last two are correct, A1 cannot state a fact. But it seems to be a most obvious fact.

   The three assumptions have proven to provide fertile ground for attempts to resolve the paradox. I will now give a rough sketch of the terrain. Some have worked on A3 by pointing out that fiction lives on the suspension of disbelief[1] and that we, as emotionally engaged, somehow put aside our belief that these objects are merely fictional.[2] Others have worked on A1 by (a) providing substitutionalist answers, for example, by pointing out that our emotional response does not really take the fictional entity as its object, but rather objects *believed to exist that are relevantly similar to the fictional entity;*[3] more influential modifications have pointed out that (b) we do not really have mainline emotions towards fictional entities, but only something like emotions, that is, pretence emotions.[4] Influential rejections of A2 have pointed out that its existential presupposition is far too strong; after all, we can reasonably be emotionally engaged with things that *could* happen in the future. This indicates that our mere *thinking of something* as being thus and so can arouse and justify an emotional response irrespective of whether this something is believed to be presently existing or not.[5] In this vein, Peter Lamarque, among others, has influentially forwarded a TT solution with the claim that 'the best way to reconcile our intuitions and get a clearer perspective on the matter is to shift the focus of discussion away from beliefs to the fictions themselves and correspondingly from

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[1]   As famously pointed out by Coleridge, 'It was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.' Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1817; London: Dent, 1962), 168.

[2]   Implicit in, for example, Bijoy Boruah, *Fiction and Emotion: A Study in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Boruah attempts to establish a TT option.

[3]   See William Charlton, 'Radford and Allen on Being Moved by Fiction: A Rejoinder', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986): 391–94.

[4]   The most influential account is developed in Kendall L. Walton, 'Fearing Fictions', *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978): 5–27. For a comprehensive implementation in a pretence-theoretical theory of representation, see the *locus classicus* Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). I leave it open whether pretence emotions are, in the end, modified emotions or emotive imaginings. Lamarque seems to read them along the latter lines and so do many other scholars.

[5]   I should add that this classification is rather coarse grained. A detailed analysis would show that pretence accounts and TT are not that far apart. I will neglect this fact for the sake of simplicity. For a detailed exposition, see my *Scheinbeziehungen: Von Scheingefühlen und anderen Scheinproblemen der analytischen Ästhetik* (Münster: Mentis, 2013).

the emotions to the objects of the emotions'.[6] According to Lamarque, we thereby come to see that objects *vividly entertained* or *thought of* can be suitable objects of an emotional response without leading to the modification essential for pretence accounts.[7]

In a rather recent publication,[8] Robert Stecker has pointed out that an adherence to a strong cognitivist assumption such as A2 has become rather outdated in the theories of emotions. This might indicate that TT solutions are, in the end, roughly correct. Furthermore, it indicates that our emotional response to fiction only seemed paradoxical to those who had been blinded by the outgrowth of an over-rationalistic theory. Still, it is noteworthy that Stecker appreciates the long debate for at least one of the lessons we can learn from it: minimally, it has helped to develop a sensitivity to the rather peculiar *affective configuration*[9] that suchlike emotions expose – a configuration that, most notably, pretence accounts have been eager to stress by pointing out that the fact that our emotions are 'only' directed at fictional entities *modifies* them in a certain way (concerning, for example, the motivational force of these states).

This, again, suggests that merely alluding to the fact that emotions can concern thoughts is by no means all we can or should say on a theoretical basis. A crucial lesson we ought to learn from the long discussion of PoF is that the distinctive affective configuration of suchlike emotions is a direct echo of the peculiar way *in which these entities come to be thought of when we are engaged with them as fictional characters.* Thus, PoF still ought to direct our attention to the fact that the peculiar *genetic dynamics* of the thought contents matter for how these emotions come to be modified.

With this sensitivity we ought to acknowledge, moreover, that genetic dynamics not only play a crucial role in the affective configuration of our emotional states but also in their determination as *rational* and *appropriate*. This is where current versions of TT still have severe theoretical shortcomings, or so I claim. By too readily abstracting from vital aspects of the genetic dynamics of the thought contents, they still have an excessively unrefined notion of 'vivid imaginative entertainment', which neglects the fact that not just any vivid imaginative entertainment can ground an appropriate rational emotional

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[6]    Peter Lamarque, 'How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions?', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21 (1981): 292.

[7]    'Rather than having us [qua emoters] enter fictional worlds […] it is in the real world that we psychologically interact with [these characters].' Ibid., 292–93.

[8]    Robert Stecker, 'Should We Still Care about the Paradox of Fiction?', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51 (2011): 295–308.

[9]    Stecker prefers to speak of the fact that suchlike emotions differ with respect to their functional role from what he calls *mainline emotional responses*.

response. Rather, an affective response can only be regarded as rational and appropriate if the object *appears such that it really merits that emotional response*. To do so, however, requires that more is at stake here than mere fantasizing, vivid imagining, or thinking of.

To surmount these shortcomings, we should pay attention to an authority that has so far been neglected in the debates: Edmund Husserl. He outlined a highly interesting theory that can provide us with the means for an account that is true to the fact that thoughts can be the proper object of rationally held emotions while being sensitive to the fact that no imaginative entertainment is likewise suitable in this respect. By stressing the idea that *how we come to think of the fictional entity in question* ought to matter, Husserl provides an account that outstrips current thought theoretical solutions in its theoretical potential. Above all, he provides an account that is not forced to pay mere lip service to cognitivism.

II

This article is not the place for a detailed discussion of cognitivist accounts of emotion. I will therefore assume that cognitivism is a plausible account that (a) explains how we individuate emotional states and (b) has advantages in the theory of rational agency. That being said, I will not defend cognitivism. But given that a rejection of cognitivism would facilitate a solution to PoF, spelling out an answer on cognitivist grounds is a more demanding task. My criticism of TT is the following: by alluding to *thoughts* irrespective of the peculiar genetic dynamics of how we come to think of fictional entities, TT can merely pay lip service to cognitivism. Even if nothing else, it seems to have severe problems with including evaluative beliefs in its framework.

Cognitivism holds that emotions are conceptually linked to cognitive elements. According to Kenny, the intentional object of an emotion qualifies as the intentional object of just *this* emotion due to its being an *instance of the formal object with which the emotion type is related*.[10] It is in virtue of some qualities *the object appears to have* that it is an instance of the formal object and, as such, helps to individuate the emotional state. If so, emotions at least *represent* their object as being thus and so; furthermore, *something like* beliefs[11] about the apparent

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[10]   On emotions and their formal objects, see Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (London: Routledge, 1963), 189–202.

[11]   But see Sabine A. Döring, 'Explaining Action by Emotion', *Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 214–30. She worries about contradictory beliefs in such a framework. These worries can be assuaged, but I will not aspire to do so in this article. For the sake of brevity, I will not defend the close connection between *representing something as somehow* and *having the belief that something is somehow* which I presuppose.

qualities of the object seem to be essentially involved in emotions. If we know that we are in an *x*-related emotional state φ and if we know so in virtue of some quality of *x*, we also have *something like* a belief that *x* is such as to qualify as the intentional object of our state φ in virtue of its having this quality.

We shall call the aspect which makes *x* the object of emotion φ its φ-*worthiness*. If I have an emotion regarding *x* and if I individuate my emotion on the basis of *x*, I do so because I represent *x* as an instance of φ-worthiness. *X* is thereby represented as something which *merits*[12] and *justifies* my φ-response.

If something similar to the above is correct, thought theorists might be justified in playing down existential beliefs but not (implicit) beliefs about *x*'s φ-worthiness. We shall call these *evaluative* beliefs.

According to Martha Nussbaum, an evaluative belief must be *sincere* in order to ground an emotion.[13] Lamarque seems to take Nussbaum's side. At least, he holds that – his critical charge against the impact of beliefs notwithstanding – evaluative beliefs may well play a role in the affective dynamics of the emotions under scrutiny:

> If we do not believe that Martians exist, but still claim to find them frightening, then the introduction of thoughts as an intermediary has genuine explanatory value. This value stems partly from the independence of thought and belief. We can be frightened by the thought of something without believing that there is anything real corresponding to the content of the thought. At most we most simply believe that the thought is frightening. But that belief raises no paradox in relation to our beliefs about fiction.[14]

If we follow Nussbaum and if we assume that TT is an answer to PoF on cognitivist grounds, then Lamarque has very good reason for the latter concession. But his generous concession should not blind us to the fact that, as it stands, TT does not really seem to be able to include these evaluative beliefs in its framework. In point of fact, TT so far has given us little reason to assume that we can *sincerely* and *rationally* have evaluative beliefs concerning merely imagined or thought-of objects. Rather, paradigmatic instances of TT either fall short of exposing that *what we show emotions for is indeed the object we believe to be fictional*, or they fall short of explaining *why the evaluative belief in question deserves to be called a rational belief*.

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12   On the notion of *meriting*, see John McDowell, 'Values and Secondary Qualities', in *Morality and Objectivity: A Tribute To J. L. Mackie*, ed. Ted Honderich (London: Routledge, 1985), 110–29.

13   Martha Nussbaum, 'Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance', in *Thinking about Feeling*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 183–99.

14   Lamarque, 'How Can We Fear Fictions?', 294.

Let me, very briefly, develop this critical charge with regard to two influential representatives of TT.[15] If we turn to Noël Carroll's version of TT, we see that it is prone to both problems.

For one thing, Carroll assumes that a belief like 'that object is dangerous to me'[16] (that is, an evaluative belief) is present whenever I fear an object. But Carroll fails to show why such a belief should be rationally held with regard to what I merely think about *while knowing that it is nothing but fiction* (A3). Appealing to our intuitions concerning the possibility of suchlike reactions clearly does not suffice. Judging a mere *thought content* as a possible danger, seems, after all, highly counterintuitive.[17] I may of course rationally believe that the object imagined *would* be dangerous *were it real*. But I cannot rationally believe that it *is* dangerous or *appears* to be so.

Carroll has a hard time including the respective evaluative in the right mode in his account. He has a hard time also in getting the object right. In point of fact, he clandestinely departs from TT and falls into a substitutionalist account when trying to say more about the evaluative belief in question. A careful reading reveals that the object of these evaluative beliefs is not, for example, *the fictional object Dracula* or *Dracula simpliciter* but 'the thought, viz., that Dracula, a threatening and impure being of such and such dimensions, *might exist and do these terrible things*'.[18] Now, if this is the case, Carroll clearly does not endorse a pure version of TT. Rather, he endorses a substitution account of fictional emotions operating on A2 as well as A1: the object of our emotion is no longer the fictional entity *simpliciter*; it is substituted by the *fictional entity deemed to be possible*.[19]

Carroll's difficulties with evaluative beliefs and the objects of these beliefs are a paradigmatic instance that makes Lamarque's thesis that '[b]elief and disbelief do not seem to do justice to the true nature of our attention'[20] attractive. Unlike Carroll, Lamarque stresses that 'I might find the thought of being stranded on a distant planet […] frightening without supposing that this will, or even could, happen to me.'[21] According to Lamarque, *attention and vivid imagining* are what really matters. Thus, as Lamarque has it, 'it is not absurd or irrational, but natural and likely, that I might be frightened here and now by the thought of being

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15    For a detailed survey, see my *Scheinbeziehungen*, chap. 10.
16    Noël Carroll, 'The Nature of Horror', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1987): 54.
17    Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, 203.
18    Carroll, 'Nature of Horror', 56, my emphasis.
19    Boruah's attempt does not survive scrutiny either. It proves to be a camouflaged suspension of disbelief theory including the kind of possibility thoughts we found in Carroll's case. Boruah, *Fiction and Emotion*, 103.
20    Lamarque, 'How Can We Fear Fictions?', 292.
21    Ibid., 295.

mauled by a lion, should I bring to mind snarling teeth, thrashing of claws, searing pain, and so on'.[22]

There is a problem with Lamarque's shift of attention, however. The problem is that it is by no means clear that his intuitions are valid. I, for my part, do not find it 'natural and likely' that, say, my sadness resulting from my imaginative engagement with my fictional brother's death would be regarded as 'not absurd or irrational'. It appears to be somehow wrong to assume that my sadness is *justified*. Entertaining the thought of my own death or the death of a loved one might be a different case. But the thought of a death which no one will die (however vividly entertained) seems to be a highly inappropriate object of a *sincere* and *rational* response of sadness.

The strength of Lamarque's intuition seems to hinge on the example that he presents to the reader. He is certainly right in assuming that, when vividly imagining a lion, it is 'natural and likely' to respond with fear. But it is not really clear that the naturalness and likelihood of this fear truly stems from our vivid imagining only. It seems far more likely that it partly stems from certain background beliefs we have, for example, the background belief that lions exist and are really dangerous. It is even plausible that Lamarque's exemplary imagining is nothing but a *recalling* or a *reviving* of a former fear-response concerning some real lion that the imaginer encountered in the zoo. We should therefore be cautious about accepting the example as the exposition of a natural and even rational emotional response directed at vividly entertained but purely imaginary objects. It is not clear whether it really tells us anything about the rationality of emotions directed at fictional entities.

### III

Lamarque notes that 'when we respond emotionally to fictional characters we are responding to mental representations or thought-contents identifiable through descriptions derived in suitable ways from the propositional contents of fictional sentences'.[23] The additional condition that the information has to be *derived 'in suitable ways'* is critical for a further clarification of and solution to this problem. It is critical in so far as it indicates that we cannot come up with an answer to why we are rational in having evaluative beliefs about that which we merely think of, unless we take into account how we come to think of the objects of which we merely think.

Unfortunately, Lamarque does not really bring these genetic dynamics into the game, at least not in their full impact. According to Lamarque, the foregoing

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[22]   Ibid.
[23]   Ibid., 302.

indicates that 'there must be both a *causal* and a *content-based* connection between the thoughts in our minds and the sentences and descriptions in the fiction'.[24] The former guarantees that we suffer with the right entities in the fiction and no substitutes; the latter accounts for the close conceptual link between the content of the story and the content of our imaginative acts.

These points are certainly vital, but they are not exhaustive. The crucial aspect that is still lacking is the following: it seems evident that our response can only seem rational and justified if the information is derived from something *which is presented in such a way as to appear as a suitable cause and object* of the emotion. If we are willing to focus on this further aspect, we can include a dimension that is, unfortunately, underestimated in Lamarque's account, that is, the *epistemic role* of emotions.

What I call the *epistemic role of emotions* is a direct echo of my concern with evaluative beliefs, which, as you will recall, we still wish to include in a TT framework. A first step to do so is to acknowledge the epistemic dimension of emotions. Qua epistemic, emotions are felt evaluative responses to *how something presents itself – or is presented as being*. They detect information about evaluative properties their objects *appear* to have. But if this is the case, it is clear that emotions can only assume their intrinsic epistemic role when the object is *appropriately displayed*. As the example of the death of my imaginary brother was meant to indicate, not just *any* imagining can display an object in an appropriate way. An active imaginary construal does not seem to be appropriate to displaying an imaginative entity to which we respond epistemically. But the way fictional characters are displayed in fiction seems to make them suitable objects for an epistemic response irrespective of the fact that they are merely imagined.

Let me clarify this: imagining an object actively may represent it as having many properties. It may even arouse feeling states. But granting this does not imply that these reactions are rational. If emotions have an epistemic dimension and are rational for this reason, it seems as if such reactions *cannot* have this dimension. We cannot sensibly speak of being in an epistemic state towards something we *actively construe*. If I imagine the sun's brightness, it is nonsense to claim that I can *learn* that the sun is shining brightly. I 'made' 'it' shine brightly. My claim is that someone who believes that an imaginary ghost is actually 'frightening' and thereby feels justified in his or her fear-response is similar to someone who believes that an imaginary sun really merits to be called 'very bright' and feels justified in feeling blinded or even in starting to sweat. Objects *construed* as being *z* simply do not *appear as being z*. If I know that I privately

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24    Ibid., 300.

construed them as being *z*, then they do not appear as if they *merited* the belief that they really appear *z*-ish.

This said, it is clear that a crucial condition TT ought to acknowledge is that objects or emotions have to exhibit their being instances of φ-worthiness in the right way. Imagining cannot achieve this exhibiting in the right way – no matter how vivid it is – as long as I am aware of my active imaginative and *constructive* engagement. But here we reach what looks like an impasse: since we do not wish to give up A3, we have to acknowledge that being aware of being engaged in an imaginative activity is a vital aspect of our emotional engagement with fictional entities in so far as they are fictional.

There is a way out of this impasse. It takes the form of a conservative modification of TT which accepts as its primary target that it has to spell out what this *exhibiting its being an instance of φ-worthiness in the right way* amounts to. Let me suggest the following: representations present us with certain features that appear to be properties of some *x*. Hence, we believe that *x* appears to merit our emotional response on the basis of believing that the *presenting of the object apparently having these properties* merits our emotional response. This implies that, strictly speaking, we do not believe that, say, Anna Karenina *is* φ-worthy. But this is an advantage, since we thereby omit being forced to assume that we have a *de re* belief about Anna Karenina, which we could not have in the first place. What we experience as meriting our φ-response is only a *presenting* of aspects-of-apparently-Anna-Karenina.[25]

Before developing this sketchy outline in more detail, let me briefly raise, and respond to, two likely objections: (i) we do not pity presentations, but we pity Anna Karenina; (ii) if we cannot rationally believe that thoughts are φ-worthy, we cannot rationally believe that presentations are φ-worthy. Real objects (or events) are φ-worthy.

The first objection suggests that the charge I have brought against some versions of TT – that they are prone to flirt with substitutionalism, thereby responding to the paradox not only by modifying A2 but also A1 – can be directed at my account as well. But, in point of fact, I do not say that, in the end, we pity the *presentation*. What I do say is that experiencing the presentation-of-aspects-of-apparently-Anna-Karenina in terms of φ grounds that what these aspects appear to be of can nominally function as the object of our emotion and appear as φ-worthy. Secondly, I think that we can rationally believe that how-the-dog-appears is what makes it fear-worthy; and this suffices for my purpose.

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[25]  Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out that this version has advantages over talking about aspects apparently-of-Anna-Karenina.

Let me now turn towards a model that allows us to assume that (re)presentational contexts inhibit the immediate transition from appearance-grounded beliefs to genuine *de re* beliefs. The belief *that something is presented as actually appearing to merit our emotional response* thereby replaces the otherwise natural belief *that something actually appears to merit our response.* If we know that *what is only presented as actually appearing to merit our response* does not exist, we form the belief *that something is presented as actually appearing to merit our response* without believing *that there is something of which it is true that it actually merits our response.*

<div align="center">IV</div>

This model draws substantially on ideas Husserl developed in his 1904/5 lecture course on image consciousness. Although Husserl proposed an array of partly conflicting approaches to representations, I will ignore these complexities. My interest is not in exegesis but in understanding the falling apart of evaluative and existential beliefs, which we have been considering. In this respect, one of Husserl's solutions is indeed helpful.

According to Husserl, being aware of depictive/representational contents implies a *felt conflict*. This conflict is linked to the fact that, on the one hand, such contents are based on perceptual data we (passively) receive from the representational source. Since a certain *apperception* of data provided by the representation does take place, we come to *see* this representation *in terms of*, for example, an apple. This is the experiential side; here, we are somehow *objectively appeared to* by features of the representation. On the other hand, representations of apples fall short of being apples, and they usually display further perceptual data on the basis of which we come to realize that *what we see in terms of an apple is not an apple*. For Husserl, these two points are related. It is because I come to see the image *in terms of x* that I start building up *x*-related expectations the object has to fulfil in order to qualify as *x sensu stricto*. Examples of this are its spatiality, its contextuality, and the fact that it displays certain perspectival shifts as I move around. But mere (re)presentations notoriously fall short of fulfilling these expectations and are experienced as images for this reason. Consequently, it is because the appearance *demands* to be seen in terms of an apple that we experience its falling short of being an apple.

In this lecture, Husserl claims that the intentional state having such contents is complex or, as we could say, over-determined. Its over-determination derives from the fact that Husserl, as we have seen, includes what I earlier in this article

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[26]   Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898–1925)*, trans. John B. Brough (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 46.

called the genetic dynamics of how we come to think of the fictional object in question. According to Husserl it is clear that *genetically* the respective state has to be regarded as a perceptual/epistemic state, since it draws from perceptual data and rightfully apperceives them in certain terms; but concerning its *validity*, it cannot be regarded as perceptual. After all, the appearance is experienced as falling short of *being* an apple *within* the 'applish' apperceptive process.

Interestingly, Husserl holds that we do not come to cancel the validity of 'something applish going on here'. Rather, we come to *reassess the reality value*[26] of the apple; instead of meaning it in a positing way, that is, forming an existential belief about it, we come to mean it *modifiedly*. We do not posit the appearance but regard it as an appearance only. Since ordinary perceptual states are by definition positing states, the object cannot be intended perceptually. Husserl assumes that, strictly speaking, the above reassessment turns the apple into a figment.[27] The apple that comes to be intended on perceptual grounds is, strictly speaking, *imagined*.

What is striking about Husserl's approach is that by focusing on the genetic dynamics of how we come to think of the fictional object or, in Husserl's words, the *figment*, he has resources to make room for quite an extraordinary kind of imagination. It is not merely thinking of something that is at stake here; rather, it is a disturbed perceptual apperception which – given certain vicissitudes that, again, are essential to mere *presentations* – comes to be modified into an imaginative apperception of the aspects apparently of an apple as not really being of an apple but only presenting an applish appearance. Thus, we have the most extraordinary case where we do not simply fantasize in a void but rather come to imagine on the basis of perceptual givens, without, however, merely associating freely about them. Rather, our imagining is guided just like our perceptual activity would be guided; yet it is not really perceptive in that a perceptive activity would include an existential belief that is undermined in this case.

It should have become clear why and how far Husserl departs from the allusions to imaginings put forward by current versions of TT. By including the genetic story which is, as we have seen, a perceptual/epistemic story, Husserl can eventually provide us with an answer to the question of how and why certain imaginings can go along with epistemic states. If we follow Husserl, they can go along with epistemic states since they are nothing but a peculiar outgrowth of disturbed and therefore *modified* epistemic states. Thus, Husserl has an answer to how we can hold the belief *that something is presented as really appearing in*

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[27]  Ibid., esp. 61.

*terms of an apple and as meriting to be seen in terms of an apple*[28] without also having the belief *that there is something given to our senses of which it is true that it really deserves to be seen as an apple properly speaking.* He helps us bring experiential and non-positing/imaginative states together.

To come back to my initial problem concerning emotions, let me suggest construing the emotional case accordingly: we simply have to assume that we really experience a presenting of certain aspects and features due to which something appears to merit an emotional response. Our physiological perturbations indicate this. They represent that we are indeed appeared to by an instance of an emotion's formal object. But if our perceptual positing is undermined in the way developed above, it is clear that our appearance-related emotions no longer concern something deserving to be *immediately* posited. Thus, we form the belief *that something is presented as really appearing to merit our response* without believing *that there is something given to our senses of which it is true that it really merits our response.*[29]

Given the fact that mainline emotional responses go along with evaluative-cum-existential beliefs, it is only natural that the peculiar belief dynamics that Husserl takes into account have consequences for the affective configuration of our emotional response. The relevant modifications have been extensively discussed and do not have to be taken up in this article. Suffice it for us to allude to the fact that the fictional setting undermines the direct action link that emotions *simpliciter* tend to expose. Husserl's account seems able to absorb suchlike intuitions quite smoothly.

<div align="center">V</div>

Let me conclude with two clarifications. The first concerns my point of departure from the above formulations of TT. Whereas TT suggests that we should shift our attention from belief to attention, vividness, and the imagined objects, my sketch suggests that we should shift our attention to the genetic dynamics of these imaginings in order thereby to bring evaluative beliefs back into the picture. In order to do so, we should acknowledge that there are truly epistemic states that (i) emerge on the basis of experiential data and experiential information passively

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[28]  Something like Schier's *Convention C* might be added at this point. See Flint Schier, *Deeper into Pictures: An Essay on Pictorial Representation* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 167.

[29]  Admittedly, the notion of *meriting* might be weak in this case. Such states are not directly motivational. Thus, we should note that believing *that something is presented as really appearing to merit our response* without believing *that there is something given to our senses of which it is true that it really merits our response* affects how we engage with this merely presented object. We certainly do not believe that it merits our active engagement.

received from (re)presentations, and therefore (ii) appear to be of objects but, at the same time, (iii) are experienced as falling short of being of ordinary objects due to the above-mentioned conflict. My sketch does not assume that it is merely vivid imaginings that ground or cause our emotional reactions, but that it is perception-grounded-imaginings that can be regarded as informationally overdetermined-states in the sense laid out above. Let me restate my reason for this shift: even if imagining in a void or, in Husserlian terms, mere fantasizing can cause emotional states, it would not be rational to believe that what I spontaneously imagine to be *z merits* my evaluative belief that it really appears to be *z*. A thing only merits an epistemic response if I am passively appeared to by its being *z*.

Secondly, according to the above, the positing of objects (that is, an existential belief) is not undermined by the known *fictionality* of a representational content, but by its being experienced as the content of a representation only. Note that *experienced non-presence*[30] of *x* does not imply the belief that *x* does not exist. It implies the belief that *what appears to present itself* is *not really given to my senses now but only represented*. Experiencing non-presence is neutral[31] with regard to positive or negative existential *de re* beliefs. Negative existential beliefs appear on a level about which I have said nothing so far. For the sake of simplicity, we can allude to background beliefs:[32] if we have the background belief that Hedda Gabler is merely fictional, we form the belief that what does not deserve being posited as a self-given object does not deserve any positing. Representations of David Cameron are different. They actually represent something, even if David Cameron is not posited but imagined as well when one is looking at his depiction. Consequently, emotions concerning things which are merely (re)presented can, of course, be *de re*. Whether they are depends on whether we believe that what is presented is genuinely *re*presented or not. If it is not, our emotional response concerns *thoughts*[33] only.

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[30]  Husserl, *Phantasy*, 180.
[31]  On (doxic) neutrality, see especially Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch; Allgemeine Einführung in die Phänomenologie*, ed. Karl Schuhmann (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), §§ 109–12, pp. 247–53.
[32]  Husserl, *Phantasy*, 475.
[33]  As Husserl observed in 1894: 'The judgement [about fictional entities] is – as far as its objective value is concerned – a judgement about thoughts/presentations [*Vorstellungen*] [...] But we do not make these judgements explicitly [about them]; explicitly, we make judgements about objects; but in these cases, our judgement is "modified", it is an apparent judgement [*Scheinurteil*] about presented objects [*vorgestellte Gegenstände*] whereby we "stand on the ground" of the existence of these objects (imagine ourselves to be on their ground etc.) on which we really do not stand.' Edmund Husserl, 'Intentionale Gegenstände', in *Aufsätze und Rezensionen (1890–1910)* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979), 319.

It goes without saying that there are limitations to this article. For one thing, Husserl's theoretical potential reaches far beyond the rather limited scope of PoF. But, so I hope, the ingenious thoughts that Husserl could add to the long debate should make us curious as to what else he has to offer. For another thing, my reconstruction has focused on perceptual givens and, thereby, shifted the Lamarquian focus which is directed at the written word. It seems clear, however, that a transposition is possible. We simply have to assume that it is not our language-based vivid imaginings per se that nourish our emotional engagement with fictional entities, but rather the fact that I am *made* and *meant* to imagine certain things in a certain way whereby I am passive with regard to these ways. I will leave the exposition of such a transposition for another occasion.

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