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# Fictional Emotions: Genuineness of Emotions in Fictions

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**Fictional Emotions: Genuineness of Emotions in Fictions**

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## Introduction

Everyday many different people read books, see movies, and view works of art. After these experiences they may be moved to feel a wide array of different emotions. If we were to approach someone as they left a viewing of Titanic with tears streaming down their face and tell them the sadness that they are feeling at the moment is not truly genuine, then these people would respond to us with confusion or perhaps even laughter. Perhaps instead, we could inform them, that their feelings are merely quasi-emotions. Although I do not think this would serve to allay their confusion. The thought that those emotions are not genuine is so foreign to what they are feeling that at least initially it cannot be taken seriously. However, the concept of quasi-emotions in regards to fictions has become the commonplace position in philosophical circles as of late. This surge in the popularity of the quasi-emotional view is due to the so called *Paradox of Fiction*. This paradox relies on some case studies in which our emotional responses to fiction do not parallel our responses in the real world. Philosophers have used these specific cases in order to motivate the change from accepting emotions in regards to fictions to their current position. However, in considering such a small set of fictions and examples I believe a key component to these fictional emotions has been overlooked. By reexamining this issue I believe the original woes can be assuaged. Specifically, through an examination of emotions originating in video game fictions we can see how the participants in imaginings may have genuine emotions within the context of the fiction. This solution may bear weight in the argument of whether or not our emotions in regards to fictions are in fact genuine. In this paper I will investigate the emotional phenomenon

and philosophy's break from the intuitive position of accepting these emotions as genuine. I begin, in my first chapter, by explaining the cases that originally motivated the position that philosophers have now adopted. Then in chapter two I will advocate for J. David Velleman's theory of how we interact with video games through our avatar. In addition, I will define our specific relationship with these avatars. Finally, I will show how using these avatars we can see how our emotions in video games are genuine because of their special relation to us. This case study of video games will show how we might relate to other fictional works and why in all cases our emotions are genuine. Overall my task will protect the intuitive position and show why the original cases can be better and more intuitively explained with genuine emotions.

# The Paradox of Fiction

As you read Shakespeare's Othello you read of Desdemona being smothered by our tragic protagonist Othello. You seemingly feel a number of emotions: sadness at her death, hatred at Iago for his treachery, and pity for Othello because of what he has been tricked into doing. These emotions seem natural to us; they arise without our willing them or even wanting them to do so.  When something scares us our heart races in anticipation of what might happen. We feel what it is like to be afraid. We may even go as far to say that people who do not feel these emotions are being "cold" or "do not understand the depths of the story." The phenomenon of experiencing emotions with regards to compelling fictions is so ubiquitous that we consider it odd to not engage with fictions in these ways. However, there is something very unique about these emotions; they do not seem to originate in anything similar to what their real world counterparts do. When I am afraid of a tiger there is something to be afraid of in a real sense, but being scared while watching *The Ring* does not seem to track the real world in the same way. In one case you have survival at stake and in the other nothing at all.  In describing what makes emotions genuine and rational philosophers have appealed to the idea that the target of our emotional state must be a real one. Therefore, these philosophers argue that our emotional states as they relate to fictions cannot be genuine emotions. Rather they are referred to by names like quasi-emotions or imagined emotions in order to show their non-genuine status. This issue has been described as the *Paradox of Fiction* where we have these emotions originating in fictions, but at the same time they seem to be substantially different from our normal everyday emotional responses.

The original motivating force behind the paradox is based in the break of connection between emotions and cognition in the case of fictions. The argument comes in two different cases. The first argues from a position of reasonable responses, and the second relies on the persistence of emotions tracking the reality of their targets. Let us first consider Othello as presented above. We feel many complex emotions but we do not feel the motivations that we would if this happened in real life. In the context of the play we do not feel the urge to rush on stage and prevent Desdemona's death, nor do we attempt to catch Iago for his horrible actions. Kendall L. Walton makes use of a similar example in his book *Mimesis as Make-Believe.* He recounts the scene of watching a scary movie in a dark room when a monster comes onto the screen. You, the viewer, feel very afraid, but you don't call the police or flee the room for fear of the monster.[1] These two examples demonstrate how our motivations in regards to certain fictional emotions[2] differ significantly from their real life correlates. The argument claims that if these emotional states are the same as the ones we feel in everyday life they should lead to the same kinds of actions. Because they do not lead to these actions; therefore the fictional emotions must differ from real emotions in some significant way.

Colin Radford in his work, "How Can we be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" introduced another case demonstrating an interesting difference between fictional emotions and real emotions. In this case Radford asks us to imagine an old man in a bar: the man describes the worrying state of his child who has undergone some terrible strife. As you are caught up by the story you pity the man and his child for the

[1] Walton *Mimesis as Make Believe* P. 246
[2] I will follow Gendler and Kovakovich in referring to our emotions about fictions as "fictional emotions." This term does not mean emotions of the fiction itself unless otherwise noted.

sorrow that has befallen them. Shortly thereafter the man laughs and says that he has no child and it is all just a fiction. Suddenly, we are no longer pitying the man and his child rather we may become angry at the man for lying to us.  We feel duped and may go as far to yell at this man who we feel has cheated us. As soon as the target of our pity was known to be a fictional our emotions dissipate.  This example falls even closer to home when considering the scandal involving the work *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson. The story recounts a harrowing tale of Mortenson's travels through Pakistan and Afghanistan and building schools for girls there. It was a book that moved many people to the plight of young women in the Middle East and was originally advertised with the line "Greg Mortenson represents the best of America. He's my hero. And after you read *Three Cups of Tea*, he'll be your hero, too."[3] However, after several years an investigation concluded that many of the claims and stories Mortenson told in the original work were false. Sympathy for Mortenson and the specific characters of his work turned to hatred overnight. That is to say, upon learning that the target of our emotions was not real we immediately discounted or lost our emotional state. However in the case of fictions we know that the target is not real from the beginning.  How then, the argument asks, can we have genuine emotions in relation to fictional targets? Through this argument we can see that the paradox of fiction can only be solved for accounting why some non-real targets allow for emotions while others do not.

A formal formulation of this paradox was created by Gendler and Kovakovich, who attempt to protect the genuineness of our emotions in regards to fictions. They boil it down to an inconsistent triad:

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[3] U.S. Representative Mary Bono (R-Calif.)

"1 We have genuine and rational emotional responses towards F;

2 We believe that F is purely fictional;

3 In order for us to have genuine and rational emotional responses towards a character (or situation), we must not believe that the character (or situation) is purely fictional"[4]

These three positions cannot be simultaneously maintained. Philosophers continue to claim that there is a dissonance between cognitive knowledge and emotional response that we do not normally observe.[5] The position of many philosophers at the moment is to drop the first proposition. This position is held by Kendall Walton who argues that our emotions in relation to fictions are merely quasi emotions, or Colin Radford who argues that the emotions are irrational. A potential second but unpopular position would be to reject the second proposition. This would work around the idea that we do not really know fictions are entirely fictional. Finally, it is possible to reject the third and attempt to account for the cases that originally motivated by the paradox. However, we must first understand the requirements of the third position. What it means to be rational in this context is that the emotions can be a part of a system that works towards an end goal. That is to say a system that involves emotions must be able to act towards a final future target which has value to the actor. This will be a working and simple definition of rationality for the context of this paper. Simply, put rationality means the actor is successfully employing an ends:means relationship between their actions and their desires.

Walton motivates his rejection of the first proposition by arguing that our emotions in relation to fictions are merely quasi emotions. Specifically he argues that to

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[4] Gendler and Kovakovich P. 242
[5] Gendler and Kovakovich P. 245

experience emotions we must have two specific conditions met.  We must experience the

phenomenological components of the emotion, and we must know or believe that we are

having an emotion towards a real and appropriate target.[6] Walton accepts that fictions

and our involvement therein are sufficient to create the phenomenological states involved

with the relevant emotions. However, because we have sufficient knowledge that the

targets of such states are not real the emotions themselves do not meet the second

condition of having a real or genuine target.[7] Walton also argues that we understand that

we are not in fact feeling the emotions in a true sense; rather he contends that we are

aware that our emotions are not fully what we would expect of them in other

circumstances. He uses these factors as evidence that the emotions themselves are not full

emotions but rather a kind of quasi emotion.

Walton himself provides a defense of why quasi-emotions are rational in these

situations however.  He argues that, in so far as these quasi-emotions motivate us towards

safer actions or are used in calculating the best option in a scenario, the emotions

themselves are required as a part of our evaluative judgments. Then, these quasi emotions

could be useful in evaluating hypothetical scenarios that we might use to do prior

calculations. Therefore, Walton argues that the emotions are rational as they fit into the

ends:means framework of rationality.[8] For example when I am in the jungle trying to

survive it would be beneficial to my survival if, while in the safety of camp, I could

consider a situation where a tiger is attacking me. If in this hypothetical situation

however I cannot experience fear, then I may make the sub optimal calculation of my

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[6] Walton *Mimesis as Make-Believe* P. 244
[7] Walton *Fearing Fictions* P. 7
[8] Walton *Mimesis as Make-Believe* P. 245

available options.  In this way having a quasi-emotion motivates me in the appropriately optimal way such that when I am in the situation I need not go through all of the calculations, and I can rely on remembering the previously optimal choice.  Through this argumentation Walton has simply argued that the issues with fictional emotions cause them to be non-genuine but preserves their ability to serve a rational purpose.

A popular option when non-philosophers are faced with this problem is to assert that we get lost in the moment. In fact Radford brings up this concept of us falling into the fiction and forgetting that the targets of our emotions are really fictional. This more intuitive approach I believe would work something like the following example. Before we read a book we understand that its contents are fictional but then as we read it we forget that the book itself is not a true account. Then as we read we begin to feel real emotions in regards to these characters that we would not feel if we were not "lost" in the book forgetting that these characters are not real. As soon as we realize that we are in fact reading a fiction those emotions should dissipate entirely. However, this theory seems odd as it does not solve the problem of why we respond so differently to these fictional emotions. One would think that if we really thought that the protagonist of a fictional story about a shooting in our neighborhood was true we would take different responses like trying to catch the killer or at least calling the police to inform them of the details. Of course, once we put the book down and realized that it was in fact a fiction these motivations may also dissipate but I do not believe that we ever feel those motivations in the first place. Rather, we think something like I'm terrified of what is going on in this book.

Gendler and Kovakovich reject the third proposition, which they refer to as the coordination condition. They argue that the significant similarities between fictional emotions and regular emotions justify us considering them in the same camp. In other words, the differences between fictional emotions and real emotions are not significantly large to damage our perception of fictional emotions to this degree. They cite recent scientific evidence that found emotions serve a necessary purpose in decision making. They use this evidence in order to promote the rationality of emotions along Walton's theoretical argumentation. Therefore, in hypothetical situations the ability to feel things exactly akin to those things that we would feel in the real world is a necessary component of their rationality. They also believe that this scientific evidence offers a need for these hypothetical emotions to mirror our normal emotions as precisely as possible. This they believe is good enough reason to believe that our fictional emotions are as genuine as our real emotions. This argument relies on us believing that simply because our hypothetical judgments would be improved by the similarity of fictional emotions to real emotions that they are indistinguishable. However, Gendler and Kovakovich lack a compelling philosophical argument against the third proposition. Rather they attempt to show that other rejections are inappropriate and cite some scientific evidence as a compelling reason to push us to thinking that the third condition is the one that should be dropped from the triad.

In response to Walton's worry about the reference of genuine emotional targets Gendler and Kovakovich argue that we feel emotions for other similar non-existential targets. Primarily they argue that we feel real emotions in regards to targets that are

temporally offset from our current position.[9] For example, we may feel pity for the

people who have to live in a world affected by global warming. In this case we are having

seemingly real emotions for imagined people.  That is to say we do feel pity for those

people.  In fact these emotions may even go as far to motivate us to change our actions in

the current time. Although this argument seems sturdy against the argument of

rationality, I do not think it will convince Walton to change his position. These people are

in fact imagined and we have no proof of even their existence therefore what we feel are

the same quasi-emotions as before. They are still separate in Walton's important sense

from our current reality.

Derek Matravers critiques some of this position in his paper "The Challenge of

Irrationalism, and How Not to Meet It". He argues two separate arguments one against

individual circumstances of emotions and the other against protecting the system as a

whole. First he argues, that if we protect the rationality of emotions through a defense of

the entire emotional system, as Walton, Gendler and Kovakovich do, we fall prey to

making any such emotion rational. Because in making a blanket defense for any

emotional state may bring in too many different emotions as rational. His argument finds

that if we call fictional emotions rational just because they are a result of a system that is

sometimes useful we include too much. That is to say by appealing to this kind of

argument we make every possible emotion rational as it is the result of a rationally based

system.  This obviously seems incorrect as we should certainly want to say being afraid

of drinking water without some very odd circumstances is an irrational fear, for example.

Second, Matraver's goes about making an argument against protecting individual

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9 Gendler and Kovakovich P. 249

instances of fictional emotions by claiming that defending rationality in this way commits one to the following, "If a person performs action Φ, believing that Ψ will likely result – and no other agency is involved – then, if Ψ does result, that person is deemed not merely responsible for Ψ, but to have performed action Ψ."[10] This means that in reading a book which may allow us to enter into a wide variety of hypothetical scenarios, which we use to prepare for the real world, we subsequently protect the results of imagining these scenarios (Eg. fictional emotions). However, as Matravers argues these would have to be predictable and useful hypothetical situations. Unfortunately, as he also points out, many of the fictions we engage in lack in any real similarity to our own lives, nor do they provide us with overarching moral lessons that we may use in the future. Matravers claims that we may have protected the rationality of some fictional emotions, ones that are specifically useful to us, but a whole host of them remain irrational. For example, if we are reading a book about knights in shining armor saving damsels in distress, then, Matravers argues, that this would only be rational in the case that I had something to gain from what I could learn in the tale. Matravers then continues that a weakening of the principle to include any subjective reasons that the agent may have is a viable option; however, because it is not necessarily reality tracking he does not find it compelling. This is a concerning point if it were true because it would be a large cost to our theory if we were required to call all possible emotional responses rational.

Walton, Gendler and Kovakovich deal with Matravers' worry by protecting the system of emotions by way of requiring their use in various hypothetical judgments and citing them as a result of pleasure seeking desires. In doing this they allow these kinds of

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[10] Matravers 259

situations to be separated into two categories appropriate and inappropriate emotional responses. Let us return to the fear of water in a hypothetical scenario. Here the fact that the target is drinking water alone would not classify it as an appropriate emotion. Rather we would need either more information about the clown, for instance his status as a murderer, or more information about the person, namely having been assaulted by a number of clowns. In the pursuit of fictions we subjectively desire to place ourselves as a part of a fictional world. Therefore, we are seeking to be as like ourselves acting in the real world in these fictional worlds. In so far as this is the case experiencing emotions is a requirement of experiencing those worlds properly and achieving our goal of pleasure. Either way we have escaped the irrationality of the base case itself and shown how appealing to the beneficial effect of these emotions can protect us in appropriate circumstances with regards to fictions as well.

My worry is that the examples used and relied upon in all of these cases are rather limited in a fictional sense. In addition I believe that a consideration of a broader variety of examples will enable us to pinpoint exactly why the third condition should be dropped from the triad. They rely on sharp contrast between the fiction and the consumer of fiction but surely that does not constitute the entirety of fictions. Walton touches upon this briefly in his consideration of how someone can convey in a fictional game that their character is feeling a certain way. Walton states that:

"The fact that fictionally Charles believes himself endangered by the slime and has a normal desire not to be harmed implies that fictionally his behavior is subject to the

relevant motivational pressure, that fictionally he is inclined to try to escape the slime, even though he is not actually so inclined."[11]

Here we see the limits of considering such a small set of examples. In this fiction Charles himself is not a character and therefore fictionally he cannot take any such actions. It is unclear whether Charles does not feel inclined because the emotion is non-genuine or rather because the situation is entirely out of his control. The absoluteness of the paradox of fiction comes from the limitedness of the examples considered. Even Colin Radford belies an interesting point near the end of his paper saying, "perhaps we are and can be moved by the death of Mercutio only to the extent that, at the time of the performance, we are 'caught up' in the play."[12] At certain moments we become part of the play. We are so involved with what is happening on stage we seem to become a passive observer inside the fiction itself. This happens much more so in a play where the third person position is maintained, while being harder in literature where we see exactly as the author wants us to. Therefore, I believe a consideration of a broader selection of fictions will prove to show how the paradox of fiction is indeed a limited one. This broader selection will focus specifically on investigating video games as fictions. These will allow us to delve into how exactly the consumer of the fiction interacts with the imaginative world and why it is that our emotions are genuine.

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[11] Walton *Mimesis as Make-Believe* P. 246
[12] Radford P. 78

A woman canoes down a river at night time passing by several river homes and a beach.  There does not seem to be anyone around at the outset; simply a woman traveling on the water. Suddenly, a menu pops up and the woman begins to fly up from the canoe to travel over the beach town she is near. What originally seems like a normal everyday scene has become something fantastic.  The player, sitting in her chair at the computer, has been narrating the actions during the duration talking about what "she" is doing in the game Second Life. She is taking a trip and looking around this new area that she has discovered. But how does this player relate to her medium, the canoeing woman, within the fictional world? J. David Velleman, a professor of philosophy at NYU, has developed his own view of this player:avatar relationship. His view attempts to account for the intuitions and actions of video game players.

Velleman proposes his view about our relationship to our avatars in his paper *Bodies, Selves*. Velleman argues that our avatars act as extensions of our true selves within the virtual fiction. He argues for this by citing the tendency for players to refer to their actions as their own, the difference between purely imaginative fictions and the game fiction, and the similarity between intention-action relationship in both the virtual and real worlds. Velleman also attempts to address two of the common objections to his view. To properly consider Velleman's view we must first ascertain what features a successful theory of fictional emotions must have. I will argue that there are two necessary requirements: an ability to account for the 'I' terminology we use and to explain the player character action structure. I will then consider an array of positions and

display why they fail under these requirements. As we will see, Velleman's view is a very attractive and defensible position overall.

The games that Velleman is talking about have some specific features: a persistent world, many characters involved, persistent player characters, and a high degree of player customization. Some examples of games like this would be Second Life, World of Warcraft, or Skyrim.  Perhaps most important is the ability for the players to dictate most of the crucial features of their character.  In these games the player has the ability to change all of the ways that their character looks and acts as they move throughout the world. They can name their characters, decide their gender, and imagine their background.  Many of these games had their origin in Dungeons and Dragons styled tabletop games which themselves originated in online roleplaying chat rooms, wherein people could dictate every facet of their character. This customizability was a crucial component to the game, as players could be exactly who they wanted to be and do whatever they pleased. These games involve the player's character being the same character every time they play. They may be offline for a long period of time but when the player returns their character will remain the same. The player interacts with a number of other characters in the game that may be controlled either by the game itself or other players. Some events or parts of the world will be controlled by the game. This means that much of the world is dictated by its author rather than the player themselves.

The first condition for a view of the avatar-personal relationship is to explain the way people speak about their avatars.  Specifically, when players talk about their actions in the virtual context they use the 'I' terminology.  Frequently when describing the events

taking place players will say, "I did that." Consider someone sitting down at their computer playing World of Warcraft. When asked what they are doing they may respond: "I am playing WoW" or they may respond "I am killing an evil demon." In this case the player has referred to both their "real world" and virtual actions as their own action. It is the player who is playing World of Warcraft, and it is also that same player who is killing demons within the game. When asked about their usage they do not seem to be using the 'I' terminology in a loose sense either. Players report an ability to play a game "as someone else," but they cite that as a separate and distinct experience from what they do as their avatars. The ability to account for this commonplace reference to the avatar's actions as one's own is crucial to a successful theory attempting to explain the avatar:player relationship.

Beth Coleman presents a possible counter example in her work *Hello Avatar: Rise of the Networked Generation.* Coleman interviews a man named Gy, who in his normal life is a professional writer, translator, and artist. However, in Second Life[1] Gy participates in cannibalism. Gy frequently refers to his character in the game Second Life as a separate 'he' rather than 'I,' in his interviews. However, in his quotes he gives a more thorough look at his relationship to his character. He states, "You're the spectator of *your* life here."[2] Additionally in recounting a story about his playing second life, "It really started when *I* met a girl at the entry to one of these brothels and didn't enter it. She

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[1] A virtual world of the type addressed by Velleman in which players can control all aspects of their character, actions, and surrounding context

[2] Coleman 85 Emphasis Added

proposed *me* to play in a (Second Life) snuff movie."[3] Here a player is referring to the

virtual actions of his avatar as being his own; he goes as far to call it *his* life in the game.

I suspect that Gy seeks to distance himself partially in the interview due to the devious

nature of some of his actions in the virtual world; however, in speaking about his actions

he belies how players reference their avatars actions as their own.

The second requirement for a proper view of the avatar-personal relationship is to

explain the connection between player intentions and virtual actions. Another way of

looking at this issue is to ask what motivates the progression of the avatar. This

relationship can be broken down into two sub components. The first is the nature of

action for the avatar itself. The second is the connection between the wants and desires of

the player and the actions of the avatar. In everyday life it is easy to draw the connection

between an actor's beliefs and desires to his intentions and subsequent actions; however,

in the virtual world this is not so simple. Avatars take actions in the virtual world, but

actions are the result of intentions or being compelled (either by another actor or natural

forces). The avatar itself cannot be said to have beliefs independent of the player, nor can

it have its own independent desires. Let's consider Coleman's case study of Gy again.

His avatar was moving past a brothel and did not enter it, and then another avatar asked

him to be in a snuff movie. In this case both avatars have taken a number of actions but

for simplicity's sake let us solely consider her action of asking him to participate in the

snuff film. This is certainly an action undertaken by an avatar. If we were to re-describe

the case as having happened in real life we would assert that the other player's character

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[3] Coleman 89 Emphasis Added by myself

must have had some reason for asking Gy to be in the snuff film. Therefore, we would say, the woman asking about the snuff film intended to ask him and subsequently did. We could then push this questioning back a step, why did she have such an intention? In this case we are likely to cite her desires and beliefs about the world. In the virtual context however we have no such obvious link for the avatar and her actions. A successful theory must explain how and why actions are performed by the avatar and the specific relationship those actions have to the player.

Finally, Velleman cites the differences between purely imaginative games and game worlds as evidence that our relationship to the game world is not an authorial one. This is an important difference as it relates to the appropriate responses for certain emotional situations. Where in many other fictions the imaginer has absolute knowledge and control about all of the fiction, video games differ significantly. The player is unable to change many features of the world, and more importantly they begin by knowing little to nothing about the world. Rather, the player has to develop his knowledge about the world that he is playing in and imagining. This allows players to have genuine desires about things in the world and pursue them independent of taking a meta-game approach. If the player has no ability to change the world to be a certain way outside of acting through his avatar then we have an important connection between the player, their desires, and the world as mediated by the avatar. The ability for parts of the world to be out of the player's authorial control allows for a genuine emotional response as they may be truly surprised, or feel as though they are loved outside of things they compelled to happen.

One possible view argues that the avatar is entirely independent from the player. In this case the avatar is to be viewed as being entirely independent from the player themselves. The avatar would have its own beliefs and desires independent of the player's. This is not to say that the beliefs and desires would not be affected by the player's but the avatar must be capable of holding these beliefs and desires apart from the player. However, this view has a hard time answering the first two conditions. It is forced to say in the case of the first condition that we are largely speaking loosely when we speak about our avatars. Perhaps we are the ones that created them but they act as their own unique entity separate from us. This position is forced to explain our usage of 'I' by us speaking in a loose sense. Even then though it is hard to see why we would use 'I' at all if our avatars were truly separate from ourselves. It would be similar to the way we speak about ourselves in reference to our cars. When I say, "I had a flat tire this morning" I reference my car using 'I' terminology but not referring to anything that is actually a part of myself. It is interesting to note however, that most of the sentential examples involving these kinds of objects use the concept of having. One would hardly say, "I wouldn't start this morning it was too cold out." So in reference to the avatar it is easy to see that we refer to the avatar as an 'I' doing rather than myself having. This concept works against the idea that avatars are merely vehicles for the player's actions in the world devoid of meaning. They must mean more or bear a special relationship to us as they are not referred to in the same way as everyday objects. This means that the view at least seems to fall at least on its inability to account for why we refer to our avatars in the way that we do. On the second condition the view seems more firm, it has a way to

account for how the player's intentions relate to the avatars own actions besides some kind of control relationship. That is to say the player tells the avatar what to do and they acquiesce by doing the actions as commanded. This is not to say that they have a will of their own but that as an independent object they are pushed to do something in the way that we would push a stone to form a wall. This is a somewhat satisfying position as it takes away from the requirement of the avatar to have much personal content. Finally it deals well with the final condition of limiting the avatars control of the world around it while allowing the player to have a greater degree of meta game interactions. Overall this theory fares okay with the requirements but fails to capture the crucial intuition of how players relate to our avatars on such a personal level.

Apart from the conditions for a successful theory, this view has issues with avatar permanence within the virtual world. In most games that use avatars these characters are not seen as existing in the world without their player. For example in World of Warcraft or Second Life, when the player logs out of the game their character disappears from the world. They cease to take actions or gain knowledge about what is happening within the game world through their avatar. However, the player can continue to take actions within the game world and gain knowledge about the world from other sources than their avatar. Consider a game like World of Warcraft in which a player may have any number of avatars. If the player gains knowledge about the world through any of those avatars it will then be shared to each other avatar. This is because players may have multiple representations of themselves within any given world. These players may control multiple different avatars at different times acting through one of many different avatars.

However, the knowledge of these avatars is not confined to the avatar itself. It would be awkward for the player to say that he knows something that his character does not except when explaining a game that the avatar was not his own. That is to say in the world of games there is no dramatic irony for the player; their knowledge and sentiments are their avatars. Another example of this is player's relationships which are not avatar specific in most instances but player specific. While players interact with each other via avatars their relationship is not bound by those specific avatars. Players will communicate with one another through a variety of avatars maintaining their relationships regardless of how they are interacting with the world. If the avatar is entirely independent of the player then it will be unable to explain the specific nature of knowledge about the world and relationships within the world by citing individual avatars. Rather a view that includes the player will be much better suited to these concerns.

Perhaps a more plausible view involves the avatar acting as a sort of puppet for the player. That is to say within the game the player is masquerading as their avatar. This sort of view would claim that the avatar does not have any of its own features except perceived appearance in the world. Consider the analogous relationship of a puppeteer and their puppet. As they put the puppet on the stage and take up the strings they exert total control of the puppet as it plays across the stage. All of the puppets movements are controlled by the puppeteer and express his will. In the same way the player could extend themselves into a fictional world by exerting absolute control over their puppet in a fictional realm. The question at hand is how we should treat this relationship. I believe

there are two possible characterizations of this relationship which will dictate much of the debate. I wish to consider each extreme of this possible view.

First, we could consider the puppet's characteristics and actions dictated by the fiction itself. This view is something akin to what happens in a play. The actor is given a script and told who they are. The director and actor have some creative license with the role, but they are likely to be considered disingenuous to the original with any major changes from the author's vision. Under these circumstances there is very little of the puppeteer or actor coming through. Consider how we commend actors for their realistic portrayals in their roles. Our commendations may even come in the form, "I entirely forgot that this was not real." What we value here is accurate portrayals of the original work and a lack of the actor coming through.

Although this position is definitely coherent and apt, I do not believe it is the kind of view that Velleman claims to explain. This is because it does not require or cause us to need the same conditions that we had set out earlier. There is hardly a usage of the 'I' in these cases except when used to say 'I, in my capacity as being Othello.' Additionally, we value this kind of actor for a connection between not their own intentions and their actions but the author's intentions or the character's imparted intentions being those that are displayed.

The second extreme involves the actor having total control of their character such as in improvisational works. In these cases the actor is constantly deciding what their role

would or should be doing.[4] The degree to which the actor's feelings and characteristics are imparted to the role are at their own discretion. In this case the actor is conveying much of themselves via their intentions for the role. For example consider an improv scene, wherein the actor is pretending to be a fireman. In this case the actor may or may not have decided to portray a firemen, but he certainly can decide what he does in his capacity as a fireman. However, their interaction with the role will still be one in which they are trying to convey a certain role. That is to say in their role as an actor they are attempting to convey a specific role, and any similarity between the role and their own character is one of circumstance.

The essential problem with this actor: role theory of our avatar relationship is that it cannot handle the first condition and subsequently must fail one the second condition as well. The 'I' that comes through in these acting roles is one constantly cloaked by "in the capacity as being x." For instance the improvisational actor in the example above is likely to say, "I in trying to be a fireman did Y." Or perhaps the actor would claim things like, "my character would want to rescue people from this building." The 'I' in terms of the actor is intentionally suppressed in order to better convey the role. Because of this the second condition must fall as well. The intentions are not the actors rather the actor's intentions take the form 'I want to be perceived like X so I will do Y.' The related desires and knowledge informing these intentions come from wanting to be perceived as X and believing that Xs do Y like things. Players may sometimes do this in games but they do it

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[4] There is a normative distinction here in fictions that will become important later on in relating to video games but I do not think that this is crucial at this point.

in the same capacity that people may do in real life. Players may have their avatar take on

a certain role but this is no different than people do when they take to the stage. However,

I do not think that this relationship of intentions and actions accurately describes the

player: avatar relationship. There are times in video games where the avatar may

undertake an action to its own detriment for the benefit of the player themselves. That is

to say the avatar may trade away their belongings for no gain, but rather for the gain of

the player.  Consider when the avatar gives a newly found sword to another avatar of the

player in order to improve its strength.  This is clearly an action deriving from the

player's own intentions rather than the intentions of the avatar, as it would be impossible

for the avatar to have met the own player's other avatar.

Velleman's view by contrast involves a different position where the actor or player

extends themselves into the fictional realm.  It is the player putting themselves inside of

the fictional world while maintaining the fictional constraints put in place.  For example

when a player is playing World of Warcraft there is a specific world that they must fit

into.  They cannot be James Bond, because the world dictates the time period and what

kinds of things are going on. This is similar to Walton's rules in group imaginings where

there are an agreed upon set of rules for the imagining that all participants must follow. If

a child is playing pirates with all of his friends and then says that he has a light saber and

force powers, then in many ways he is not participating in the group imagining.  In this

case societal pressures may force him to conform or leave the imagining, but in the case

of avatars the world itself will constrain players' ability to perform certain actions. In this

way the player is part participant and part author of the fiction itself.

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There is a small caveat I must make here to this distinction. It is surely possible for certain actor: role relationships to mirror Velleman's view. This would occur when the actor is playing themselves as the role as well. In this case the actor is doing the same as the player does in relation to the fiction itself. However, I do not believe that this constitutes a threat to Velleman's view because the threats to the actor: role view fall away when the role attempted is to be the actor themselves.

Velleman, by arguing that the avatar is an extension of the self in the virtual realm, easily explains the usage of 'I' in reference to the avatar. Velleman presents a thought experiment to bolster his case. Imagine yourself playing a game of tennis. As the ball flies toward you, what do you think? If you are like me I would imagine your thought process goes something like, "I need to hit that ball." Then I hit the ball. Finally, the ball flies away from me. Within this context the 'I' terminology is used for the actions taking place. This is especially the case when "*I* hit the ball," but I personally never touched the ball. In fact the only object that touched the ball was the racket. However, in this case the racket is acting as an extension of my personal intentions and actions. Another way of interpreting this case is to argue that I think something along the lines of the following instead: "I need to move my hand such that the racket hits the ball," "I will move my hand in order to move my racket to this angle at this speed with this much resistance in order to propel the ball," and finally do move my hand in the previous manner. This second view presents a much more objective fact based perspective on what happened. However, I think in many ways it misrepresents the actor as calculating in ways that seem implausible. Another way of posing this issue is to question whether or not we really

calculate how our hand must move in order to affect a racket in such a manner.  I suspect

that any tennis player doing this would find himself far too caught up in the calculations

to play as well as Federer who simply hits the ball.[5] Considering the racket as an

extension of the self is the reason that we feel more comfortable describing the case in the

first manner than the second. Therefore, Velleman argues, we treat our avatars in the

same way as our tennis rackets.  The avatars allow us to extend ourselves into the fiction

itself and treat it as another world in which we exist.

Velleman's strongest point is the intuitive relationship between intentions and

actions within the virtual world.  Similarly to the real world, the action intention

relationship in the fiction is preserved.  The player has intentions stated in the following

manner: "I want to build my house, I want to go over there, etc…" These are no different

than our everyday intentions in regards to our goals and beliefs. In addition, if Velleman's

argument in regards to our usage of first person pronouns is upheld, then these intentions

are directly causing actions as they do in the real world.  Consider Velleman's example

again, the act of a tennis player hitting a ball with his racket.  We think of the tennis

player as thinking: "I will hit the ball with top spin over the net." He then proceeds

through with his intention acting it out in the real world. Of course it is possible that his

actions will not succeed in achieving his intentions at all times, but there is a direct link

between his intention and his action. This relationship is maintained in the virtual world.

The player intends to do something and then does it but this time in the virtual context.

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[5] Surely, Federer may think things like I want the ball to go here in this way so that my opponent cannot
respond; however, this would only further complicate any possible calculations on his part.

His real world intention has been translated to the virtual world. Therefore, this thought experiment defeats the objection that the player must use a medium and therefore does not genuinely interact with the virtual world himself.

Frequently opponents of this view will here object that there are many reported cases of avatars being unlike the player themselves or expressing attitudes that the player themselves would not. For example, an older man could be playing a game in the form of a young girl or someone who is very kind and charitable in the real world will play a sadistic domineering crook in the virtual world. Coleman's example of Gy fits this possible description. Gy explains that he lives a normal everyday boring life which has no real degree of fetishization. However, in Second Life[6] Gy participates in cannibalism. In the game he and his cohorts regularly stew people alive, roast them on spits, and asphyxiate other players. The group then proceeds to virtually gorge themselves on the corpse.[7] Here we are presented with a player who in real life acts one way and in the virtual context seemingly very differently. The opponent asserts, if we are the ones really acting in the world we cannot account for such a large discrepancy between real life and fictional actions. However, this dichotomy though odd is not unique to the fictional environment. Many times we hear reports of perfectly normal charity workers being heavy metal heads rocking out every weekend. When their coworkers hear this they may be shocked but surely we are not inclined to call part of his life non-genuine in a

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[6] A virtual world of the type addressed by Velleman in which players can control all aspects of their character, actions, and surrounding context

[7] Coleman 87

metaphysical sense.  Perhaps we may assert that in every day interactions we may say that he is acting. However, as Velleman asserts, this should cause us no more pause in the virtual space than it does in the real sense. Though we may be put off by someone seeming very duplicitous that does not cause us to think of those actions as not their own. Therefore, although this may seem odd to us it alone does not cause a serious issue for Velleman's view.

Now that I have established the view of how we relate to our avatars in these games we can investigate what implications this will have on the paradox. By having the player's avatar as an extension of the self into the fictional realm we can better account for the original cases presented and see certain other advantages that were not earlier considered in the debate.

## Video Games and Our Emotional Responses

Now that we have considered the background of how we interact with our avatars let us return to the paradox of fiction. The paradox looms large behind the players of various games. If readers feel threatened by their emotions being called non-genuine when they've spent a few days reading a novel, then imagine how impacted players feel after pouring months of time and emotional energy into their virtual lives. However, considering Velleman's argument for our relation to our avatars should these readers and players really feel threatened? I think not, rather Velleman offers us an explanation of how the targets of our emotions are real within the context of the game. In this chapter I will argue that some previous solutions to the paradox are unfulfilling in many ways. Namely I will address both Walton's attack on the genuineness of our fictional emotions and Radford's attack on their rationality. I will then show that because of our relationship to our avatars being of the manner that Velleman describes we can reject the idea that for our emotions to be genuine they must have a real thing as their target. I will do this by looking at the way we interact with these emotional targets and show that their interactions track with Velleman's theory. This will allow me to first show that at least in regards to video games the paradox falls away. I will then argue that the solution as it applies to video games can be generalized across all fictions when using the same contextual involvement.

I want to begin by introducing a concept that I will be relying on of the "level" of a fiction. In many ways our involvement with fictions becomes a hierarchal relationship. Our everyday life exists on $f_0$ where we are not involved in any kind of fictional world. However, when we are consuming a fiction be it a book, play or video game we place an

extension of ourselves into that fiction. This leaves us existing on both $f_1$ and $f_0$, where

my extension holds my place in the sub fiction.  There is no reason that this could not go

on infinitely although I think cases of it extending past $f_2$ seem rather rare and incoherent.

By examining this hierarchy we can consider how we are interacting within each level of

fictionality and see what is true fictionally on those given levels.

Walton's argument for the fictional emotions being non-genuine or quasi

emotions falls because it fails to consider ways in which the observer could have real

targets for their emotions in a fiction.  To briefly rehash his argument he claims that for

an emotion to be genuine it requires two components: the phenomenological features of

that emotion and a target that is appropriate for that emotional state. He argues that in the

case of fictions our targets are always inappropriate as they do not constitute any serious

relationship to us on our level.  However, in this argument Walton only uses two primary

examples, both of which assume that the consumer of fiction is a passive and uninvolved

observer. In these cases it becomes very hard to see what exactly the observer is doing or

where they are involved in the fictional world. Walton's troubling position for the player

however points us to one interesting and helpful characteristic of Velleman's theory in

prescribing rules for the imagining.

If we consider video games as a case study it becomes much easier to see how the

observer may become a part of this fictional universe and assuage Walton's worries. All

consumers of fictions participate in those fictions by imagining in the ways that Walton

argues in his work *Mimesis as Make-Believe*.  Walton describes this participation in terms

of group imaginings. He claims that in group imaginings we, the players, collude on a set

of rules about what particularly is to be imagined by the group. These rules ensure that everyone is having the same kind of imagining in the important respects. In Walton's terms, video games simply provide these imaginary boundaries through lore and what is shown on screen. Therefore, everyone that is playing the game at that moment is being prescribed the same rules for the group imagining. An essential part of these rules for all fictions is the degree to which the consumer of the fiction is allowed to interact with the world. For example, in video games the player is usually limited to the powers of their avatar. This provides us with an answer to why when scared the player does not flee the area or when witnessing a murder does not call the police. The game, which the player has extended themselves into, has rules against these kinds of actions.  For example, if we are playing a game in which an evil demon bursts from the ground threatening to kill all of humanity. When this happens in the real world we would expect people to feel an immense amount of fear and turn to run. In the game however this fear motivates the character to draw his weapon and attack.  How then do we account for the radical break in the motivating force of these actions? Simple, to take the first set of actions would not be to play the game the player is governed by the rules of the fiction. They are not a normal person but a hero in charge of saving the world. This difference accounts for the difference in the motivating element of their emotions.  Taking note of how these fictional rules will influence possible motivations is crucial to my theory. The rules of a fiction can and should be expected to change the way we respond to a number of situations.

In a similar way the consumer of fiction actually becomes a part of the imagining along parallel ways as we observe in video games. Let us return to the first example of

the paradox where we are witnessing the death of Desdemona. The challenge asks us why we do not rush the stage and attempt to save her. However, in becoming part of the imagining we have opted out of such actions. To do that would be wrong in the context of the fiction, we were not characters in Shakespeare's work, nor would it be appropriate for the other players in our imaginative game. Walton has provided the way for the target of our emotions to become genuine to us in the context of our being involved with fiction. We have placed ourselves in a context in which the fictional world itself prevents us from taking certain actions, lest we break the fiction entirely, but this same context enables us to consider the other imaginative characters at the level of our extension. Similar to what Radford said, if you are really involved with the fiction in the appropriate way then you have given yourself appropriate targets for your emotions. Therefore, I do not feel as though Walton's solution for the inconsistent triad holds water, because there are times where our emotions towards a fiction are genuine and rational.

I believe I responded to much of Radford's argument in the first chapter. He argued that our emotions in regards to fictions were inherently irrational because they lack certain motivational features. However, as was previously argued we can protect the rationality of these emotions by making a claim about the utility of the overall emotional system and by appealing to the subjective value of consuming fictions appropriately. Nonetheless, I wish to make one more note on the basis of the relationship to the virtual world that I have just described. There is now a greater appeal to the rationality of these fictional emotions than just trying to defend the fictional emotive system overall. With the player participating as a member of the imagining itself the player now relies on real emotions to motivate actions at that time in place that have ramifications exactly similar

to real life. Consider the involvement of emotions as a component in rational

motivations.[1] If while playing a game that presents me with hypothetical scenarios I am

unable to treat these emotions as genuine rational parts of my motivational structure then

I am left with imperfect actions. At the very least if I am to use irrational emotions then

my choices will themselves be irrational within the fictional context.  However, if these

decisions are exactly parallel to what I would do in real life it seems as though they

should not be irrational.  Consider a situation in which you are playing a game where you

are chased by a murderer down the street.  In this scenario your fear motivates you to run

as fast as possible away from the murderer. Surely I would have the same kind of

response in a fictional scenario.  However, if the base emotion that is motivating this

action is irrational it is hard to see how my final action can be declared rational. This

leaves Radford's argument in an awkward place.  Either he must deny use of emotions in

the rational process entirely, deny that players have any care or intentions relative to the

fiction, or accept that in certain fictional contexts at least emotions are rational.  I think

the first two options bear far too much cost and have too much evidence against their

being true to accept. This leaves Radford's argument defeated.

I want to start with two base cases for the examination of emotions in the game

context. Let us consider a player named Theresa sitting at her computer playing a game.

For the first case: in the game her character is defeating a villain intent on destroying the

world.  In the course of the fight one of Theresa's favorite characters dies for good. At

this time, let us presume for simplicity's sake that this character is not being controlled by

another player as that will serve to complicate the intuitions. At that moment she feels sad

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[1] Castelfranchi

that the character is gone for good. Not only does she lament her own loss but for the character's death in and of itself. Theresa herself feels affected by the death in that moment. For the second case: she (that is her character) is travelling in a dangerous part of the world and gets attacked by a creature much stronger than her that seems intent on killing her. In that moment she feels a strong sense of fear and a rush of adrenaline courses through her veins. She feels compelled to have her character run away as fast as she can. These two cases will provide us with enough content to understand the power of adopting Velleman's position in regards to our avatar.

In the first case Theresa is participating in the fiction itself. She has extended herself into the fictional world. She observes the world through this extension, her character's eyes. As such the death takes place on that extension's level ($f_1$). This extension of her inside of the world is related to the character at the same level that we would be related to the death of anyone in our own world. The avatar itself and all of the things it interacts with are of this level $f_1$. This means that they relatively have a similar level of relationship as we do to $f_0$ like things. Theresa feels these emotions because of this relationship between her avatar, the extension of herself, and the parts of the world affecting her avatar.

One might object here that the level of emotions felt by Theresa would be different from that of the avatar or of us in the avatar's situation. However, there is no need for these emotions to be at the same level of vivacity as we would normally expect of someone in the real world. The avatar may feel the appropriate level of sadness for the loss; however, as it is not entirely constitutive of Theresa the loss may not loom so large

in her life. To require that Theresa feel some absolute level of emotion in relation to the fiction also seems an odd requirement. We do not make such allowances in real emotions, so why should we place one here? If you have witnessed the death of an animal and do not feel more than 10 sadness units about it should we say that you are in fact only quasi-sad? I think this example displays a key point of trying to say that Theresa may not feel the emotion enough to qualify as a real emotion.  It is unclear what happens when Theresa quits the game however. Is she simply remembering the sadness she once felt or persisting in feeling the loss despite her lack of involvement in the fiction? This will surely have to deal with whether or not the extension is persistent or simply momentary. Nevertheless she is certainly made sad by something that is real to her in the context of the game, and as long as that context is persistent she is experiencing something relative to herself in an important and genuine way. This first case deals with the original worry that we do not have appropriate targets for our emotions by showing how we have targets in the same manner as we do in everyday life through our avatar relationships.

The second case proves more interesting, when Theresa is afraid of something attacking her avatar she feels fear. In the context of the game she turns to run, as we would expect of a person in the real life parallel circumstance. Her character is being pursued and under real threat, within its context, of death. Unlike in the quintessential scary movie example the player or partaker of the fiction does take actions appropriate to the emotions that she is feeling. The context of the video game has provided us the ability to see what consumers of fiction would do if they could.  However, we need to account for why they do not do this in all possible circumstances, namely the scary movie or while watching Othello. The answer here was referenced earlier, in interacting with the

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fiction we opt to govern ourselves by the rules of the given fiction. Therefore, it is not that the emotions do not have the appropriate motivational forces when originating in fictions rather it is that we on the $f_0$ level compel ourselves not to act upon them. In certain cases we may even fail to do so. Consider the case of young children or perhaps even ourselves watching a terrifying movie, the watcher may cover their eyes and ears and shut themselves away from the screen. This action is effectively trying to remove their interaction on the $f_1$ level. This compulsion to run may become so bad in certain cases that the consumer of fiction turns of the movie, shuts of the game, or puts down the book. The emotions have served their purpose of contextually motivating her movement away from the threat. As soon as either the threat has been evaded or she stops playing the game then the fear dissipates. But while it did exist the fear had a rational purpose: motivating the protection of the extension of herself within the fictional context. This provides us with a rational use for these emotions in regards to fictions.

Therefore, the paradox of fiction is left in an awkward position. We certainly still have the inconsistent triad but it does not seem that the removal of either 1 or 2 will be effective. This leaves us to think that there is an error in the 3$^{rd}$ option. Perhaps, prong three of the inconsistent triad is simply too broad. It asserts that our fictional emotions are not genuine because of a few specific complex cases. However, when the relationship in the triad is reinvestigated through video games we see that there are at least some cases where our fictional emotions are in fact genuine. Therefore instead of just denying the ability to have genuine and rational emotive responses we have found a way that the participator of a fiction to be genuinely involved. Through the use of their avatar in the video game we can see how part of the player not only exists in the fictional world, but

also how that player participates at the level of the fiction itself. This gives us a revised

version of the third proposition:

> 3 In order for us to have genuine and rational emotional
> responses towards a character (or situation), we must
> interact with that character (or situation) at the same
> fictional level which it resides at.

However, if we look at the restatement we can see that it does not necessarily bind itself

to video games.  Rather it simply requires our activity at a certain fictional level. By

examining certain thought experiments we can construct a position that will generalize

back to other fictions as well by considering our personal interaction with their fictional

worlds. In addition this will allow us to explain our inaction in certain situations and

provide us with genuine targets for our emotional states in all fictional cases.

## **Conclusion: The Case for Generalization**

Simply by showing how the player related to their avatar was able to protect video games from the triad we have opened up the ability to protect all fictions against the paradox. If we were involved in other fictions in a similar fashion to avatars in video games we could explain how these emotions are genuine and rational. This view will involve our avatar like involvement with other fictions as well. It will deal with the original cases that were presented as motivations for the paradox, but it will commit us to an awkward sense of fictional involvement in some cases.

In order to generalize we have to involve the consumer of fiction in a more serious way.  This would look something like the following. The reader of Anna Karenina rather than just being an exterior uninvolved reader of the story the reader becomes a kind of ethereal character in the tale. This leaves them in a fly on the wall perspective that is governed by the rules of the fiction in which they are participating. The most important rule being that they take no actions to influence the story. The reader may feel motivations or desires about what should happen from the perspective of the story; however, they are prevented from acting by the fiction itself.  This in turn tempers our desires. This seems to track well with how we advance in our consumption of fictions. Originally when we are young we have very strong urges for the story to have gone differently.  Then as we consume more and more fictions we understand that the world has to be as the author wrote it for the fiction's own value and because we lack the ability to affect the outcome.

I wish to look into the nature of this possible relationship within the context of certain fictions. The consumer of fiction places themselves inside of the imagination in an observational capacity, but they are prescribed certain rules by the fiction itself as to what they are able to do. In books, depending on the perspective of the narrator, readers can only make judgments and assertions about the world as they normally have access to all other information and little capability to affect the world itself.  Therefore, they undertake the job of imagining the world with the restrictions of the author's words. They then reside as a fly on the wall to these imaginings, wishing perhaps that they could change what was happening.  However, due to the rules of the fiction they are prevented from doing so. It would hardly be Tolstoy's book if I could rewrite the ending. Therefore the conflict as it was originally presented between my emotions and lack of action does not really exist.  It is not that I feel unmotivated to move because my emotions themselves are not genuine but rather because implicitly I have been told regardless of what I do I cannot change what happens. My actions will be fruitless and in a very real sense likely to have a significant social cost. Surely, people watching a play with me would be upset if I rushed on stage to save Romeo. I would have broken the rules of the fiction.

Consider the fiction Ana Karenina in the moments where Levin asks Kitty to marry him and her subsequent refusal. The reader feels wrought with distraught at the moments in which Kitty says no and desires to question her motivations at that moment. However, the reader has been placed by Tolstoy as a passive omniscient third-party observer. Although the reader certainly has motivations: to ask Kitty why and to try and persuade her otherwise, they are prevented from doing so by their inherent role in the fiction. Nonetheless, the characters bear a special relation to their point of view as

someone partaking in an observation of the world. Similar to before when the book is closed the querying stops left to be undertaken at a later date. The fictional world is frozen in time, but so is the reader's observing extension.

However, this position has some rather awkward outcomes. Consider a fiction in which it is central to the world that something was never observed. For example a book in which it is crucial to the plotline that no one who saw some occurrence lived. In this case the consumer of the fiction was there in a capacity sufficient to make his emotions genuine and did live to potentially tell the tale. Therefore, the consumer of the fiction has broken the inherent rules of the fiction, he has disagreed with the author. In this case I believe the view has to appeal to the author speaking loosely in some ways.  However, this seems unsatisfying.

Another potential problem with this theory is the high degree of involvement of the consumer of the fiction. When an especially gruesome murder scene is described in a book this theory would place the reader in the room observing everything.   This may make the reader uncomfortably close to what is happening in the novel. However, I believe this may account for why some readers simply do not continue reading these books. Although this does not track with how close we intuitively feel to these fictions. Many times people consume fiction without putting a high degree of focus or imaginative involvement into the fiction and it is hard to see how they would be captured by this theory.

We are left in a situation where we must deny that for us to have genuine rational emotional responses they may only exist in relation to real targets, at least in regards to

video games.  The original cases for rejecting the first two claims consider too few

examples to fully understand how exactly we are involved with fictions.  When we use

video games to study how our avatars can be the prototypical example of how we involve

with every fiction the worries about our involvement dissipates. This leads us to restate

the third part of the triad in a way that does not seem so inconsistent. Rather it tracks our

feelings about when we are and are not feeling real emotions. And, this is good because

we intuitively seem to have very powerful emotional responses when we interact with

fictions that are important to us. In fact, the aesthetic value of a fiction is usually directly

related to what it makes us feel in response to its world.

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