

Introduction

This is the first chapter in my book manuscript, The Things We Feel About the Stories We Tell. Here, I set up the primary focus of the book and go over the topic's history. Please do not cite or refer to the contents of this PDF. Send me an e-mail if you would like to know more about this book project.

If we want to understand the emotional lives of humans, where should we start? We'll have to have some cases, some examples of emotional experiences that we'll use to build our analysis. But which cases should we use? Around what sort of example should we center our analysis?

We could begin with the most ordinary cases of emotional responses. When do we most ordinarily expect one to feel fear? When, say, a bear comes charging at you, or a tiger snarls right in front of you—those are quite obvious examples. When do we most ordinarily expect sorrow or grief? An ordinary and obvious example would be the death of a loved one. When do we most ordinarily expect joy or jubilation? We could use winning the lottery for this. So, one path we could take to understanding our emotional lives is by starting with ordinary, obvious cases such as these: the sorts of cases where there is no question about what one feels and where it is quite obviously appropriate for one to feel as one does.

Alternatively, we could start with the hard cases. We could construct our account by forgoing those most obvious of examples and focusing, instead, on examples of emotional responses that make the least amount of sense. Phobias provide great hard cases. If we want to understand the nature of fear, we can build our account around the phobic fear of, say, puppies or clowns. With phobias, we could also turn to manic joy and similar cases where one's emotions

don't work the way we expect them to. When focused on the hard cases, our focus is on those cases that stretch our understanding of what emotions are and provide the most difficult tests for our accounts. So, an alternative way to analyze our emotional lives begins with examples of irrational or confused emotional experiences—with the hard cases.

I propose a different path, however. I suggest we focus, rather on ordinary cases or hard cases, on cases that are *both* ordinary *and* hard. There are some emotional experiences that are commonplace for almost all of us but which inhabit a strange philosophic corner of confusion, paradox, and the constant threat of irrationality. These are some of the most perplexing cases of emotional experience, and yet are so ordinary we routinely take them for granted.

What are they, these emotional experiences that are both so ordinary and so inexplicable? Our responses to fictional art. They really are so obvious and ordinary: what neurotypical human *hasn't* responded emotionally to a beautiful film, a glorious novel, a gripping comic? We encounter terrifying fictional monsters far more often than we ever encounter any similar threat in real life. We can weep at the loss of a fictional character nightly, while one will (hopefully) have only a few opportunities to weep at the loss of real loved ones. While one most certainly would experience great joy upon winning the lottery, the chances of that happening at some point in your lifetime are *far* lower than the chances that you will cheer for a fictional character's great success sometime in the next week. If we count as ordinary, obvious cases of emotion those cases that are the most prevalent within a person's life, then our emotional responses to fictional art are perhaps the most obvious, the most ordinary.

And yet, our emotional responses to fictional art sit at the heart of one of the most confounding and frustrating puzzles about our emotional lives. As hard a case as phobias may be, how it is possible for us to feel fear in response to a fictional monster is even harder. After

all, the puppy at least *is real*, for you to fear it, while the fictional monster is not. When we fear the fictional monster, we are frightened of something that is metaphysically incapable of doing us harm. When we cheer for the successes of a fictional character, we are cheering for something that never happened. When we are moved by the death of a fictional character, we feel sorrow for the loss of someone who never lived. If hard cases can help us stretch our understanding of our emotions and the full complexity of our emotional lives, then our emotional responses to fictional art are some of the most informative examples.

It is for this reason that this is a book about how we respond emotionally to fiction. Our emotions in response to fiction are the most ordinary examples and the most challenging to account for. By analyzing how we respond emotionally to fictional art, we will come to better understand the nature of our emotions in general. My goal is to elucidate the nature of our emotional lives by elucidating, in particular, the nature of our emotional responses to fictional art.

But first things first: let's begin by exploring why our emotional responses to fiction are so puzzling.

Section 2: The Puzzle

For as long as there has been philosophy, it has been understood that fictions move us, emotionally. Or, at least, philosophers have been interested in this fact since the time of Plato and Aristotle. Take Aristotle's *Poetics*, for instance¹. Aristotle's focus is the nature and value of tragedy, with particular focus on which specific emotions tragedy inspires and why we would find experiencing these emotions valuable. His ultimate conclusion is that tragedy elicits *catharsis*, which is generally translated to mean a mixture of fear and pity. Different translations

¹ Aristotle and Sachs, *Poetics*.

interpret the value of experiencing *catharsis* differently, and how much attention Aristotle's theory deserves depends on which translation one accepts. But regardless how exactly one understands the value of *catharsis*, this much is clear: it is an emotional experience. For at least the last few thousand years, since the time of Aristotle's *Poetics*, it has been acknowledged that our emotional reactions to fictions are significant to our experience of fictional art in general.

My concern here is not what Aristotle says about tragedy. Instead, it is what Aristotle *doesn't* say—and, in fact, what no one said for thousands of years after his work. At the very heart of Aristotle's work is the assumption that we do, indeed, feel emotions in response to fictional tragedies. What is taken for granted by Aristotle (as well as, in fact, just about all of us) is that fiction is the sort of thing to which we *can* have emotional responses. The assumption is that untrue stories can move us to pity or fear or any other sort of emotion. *This* is what is so puzzling about our responses to fictional art: as obvious as it may be that we do have such responses, it is not clear that we should be able to.

Let's be very careful: the puzzle isn't how we respond emotionally to fictions we find ridiculous or far-fetched. That's what Coleridge was concerned with, when he first coined the phrase "the suspension of disbelief."² In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge considered how we can enjoy fictions involving supernatural elements, such as monsters and mythical beasts we know are not real. His suggestion is that we suspend our disbelief in those supernatural elements, so far as our engagement with the fiction is concerned. We'll return to Coleridge's suggestion later, but for now, notice how limited his focus is. By focusing specifically on fantastical fiction, Coleridge presupposes the same as does Aristotle: that in general, fictions are the sorts of things that can inspire pity or fear. It is this broader claim that is central to our puzzle.

² Coleridge, Engell, and Bate, *Biographia Literaria, Or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*.

Wittgenstein, that master of puzzles, was the first to hint at it. Deep within *Philosophical Investigations*, he offers these cryptic comments: “don’t take it as a matter of course, but as a remarkable fact, that...fictitious narratives...occupy our minds.”³ Aristotle took it as a matter of course. Coleridge took it as a matter of course. Wittgenstein, however, highlights it as remarkable. But *why*?

The remarkability of such responses only became elucidated in the 1970s. In fact, it was elucidated in two different ways, by two different theorists, at almost the exact moment in history—one in England, one in the United States. First, in 1975, Colin Radford presented his paper, “How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?”⁴ Second, in 1978, Kendall Walton published his paper, “Fearing Fictions.”⁵ These two papers began an entire cottage industry, attempting to explain away the remarkability of our responses to fiction. These two papers both raise the same puzzle—the puzzle that concerns us presently—but in radically different ways, and they reach radically different conclusions. One, Radford’s, has become barely more than a historical footnote, as almost no one has adopted his particular approach to the puzzle or the solution he provides. The other, Walton’s, has become one of the most influential and significant works in the philosophy of art.

In later chapters, I’ll turn my attention more significantly to Walton’s approach to the puzzle. But here, after teasing out this puzzle for so long now, I’ll express what it is by focusing on Radford’s version of it.

Radford begins by considering what needs to be the case for us to respond emotionally. Consider pity: under what conditions will you feel pity for another? When you believe that something terrible has happened to that other. Take away his terrible plight—make it the case

³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 524.

⁴ Radford and Weston, “How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?”

⁵ Walton, “Fearing Fictions.”

that you believe nothing terrible has happened to him—and it will not be the case that you pity him: “We have to believe in his torment to be tormented by it.”⁶ The same, it seems, is true for other emotions. When are you frightened of a bear charging towards you? When you believe there is in fact a bear charging towards you. When are you happy to have won the lottery? When you believe that you have in fact won the lottery. And so, working from these sorts of “ordinary” cases, Radford concludes that this is a general precondition for the experience of the emotion: one must have some corresponding belief about the world. To feel pity, one must believe that there is someone who has suffered; to feel fear, one must believe there is something threatening; and so on.

Now, this is a very vague claim: “one must have some corresponding belief about the world.” One may (rightfully) wonder: what is the nature of the correspondence, between belief and emotion? What specific sort of belief must it be? As important as these questions are, I’ll leave them aside for a few chapters. The reason is that any attempt to answer these questions will require settling on one side or another of the debate between cognitivists and non-cognitivists about emotion. Cognitivists hold that emotions have a cognitive element. In other words, cognitivists hold that emotions have objects—they are *about* things. And so, they would hold that the condition Radford highlights is this: to experience an emotion, one must believe that the object of one’s emotion exists. Non-cognitivists, on the other hand, hold that emotions do not have a cognitive element. Non-cognitivists maintain that emotions do not have objects. Instead, non-cognitivists would hold that the condition Radford highlights is something like this: to experience an emotion, one must believe that what caused that emotion exists. In Chapter 4, I’ll go over these different theories and how they relate to this puzzle in greater detail. What matters

⁶ Radford and Weston, “How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?,” 68.

for now is just that we can see how Radford's condition can be made to fit with either of these two approaches to emotion.

Given this condition, we should not be able to respond emotionally to the contents of fictions. We don't believe that fictions are real. Count up all the people who have ever died, and your list will not include Anna Karenina, Mercutio, or Jack from *Titanic*. If you do in fact believe that a fiction is real while engaging with it, then something is wrong with you. If, while watching *Titanic*, you believed that Jack really was in the process of dying from hypothermia, then wouldn't you try to find a lifeboat from him? (Or perhaps, earlier in the film, you would have shouted frantically for the captain to slow the ship so the iceberg could be missed entirely!) If you believed that Mercutio really were stabbed, as you watched a staged production for *Romeo and Juliet*, then wouldn't you call a paramedic? That you do not is proof sufficient that you do not believe Jack really is dying of hypothermia or Mercutio really has been stabbed. And so, given the condition for emotional experience Radford points out, and given that we do not believe that fictions are real, it follows that we cannot respond emotionally to that which is fictional.

This is the puzzle: *and yet we do*. "We weep, we pity Anna Karenina, we blink hard when Mercutio is dying and absurdly wish that he had not been so impetuous."⁷ Given the evidence available about how human emotionality works, the only things that should be able to elicit an emotional response are what we believe to be real. Given the nature of fiction, we know that its contents are not real. And so, fictions should not be able to elicit emotional responses. The fact that they do, despite the apparent fact that they should not be able to, is what makes our responses to fiction so puzzling.

⁷ Ibid., 69.

The puzzle is most often formulated as a paradox. What we have are three distinct claims, each of which appears to be perfectly intuitively plausible individually but which cannot all be true at once:

1. We experience emotions like fear and pity in response to that which we know is fiction.
2. We only experience emotions like fear and pity to that which we believe to be real.
3. We know that fictions are not real.

In later chapters, this paradox will be clarified dramatically. For now, however, it will be worthwhile to consider why someone would take each of these three statements as true.

Statement 1 is intuitive, likely from personal introspection. Think back to the last good movie you saw or the last good novel you read: you can likely remember the feeling of fear, or pity, or some other specific emotion. That evidence alone should be sufficient to justify accepting Statement 1. Statement 2 is may be a little less intuitive, as it is a broad claim about the nature of emotionality. However, Radford, like most theorists, justifies it by appealing to those ordinary cases, like being chased by bears. Statement 3, hopefully, is obvious, in light of one's own experiences sitting comfortably in a theater while a fictional character died onstage. And so, we have three statements, all of which are plausibly true on their own but which cannot all be true together.

Given its progenitor, this is sometimes referred to as Radford's Paradox. That name has fallen out of style more recently, however, and it is more often referred to as The Paradox of Fiction. However, I don't like this name, in part because it implies that what is interesting here is just the quirky metaphysics of fiction while ignoring the role of emotion in the paradox. So, I will instead refer to it as The Puzzle of Fiction and Emotion.

If my reader is already familiar with this topic, then hopefully none of the above is new. If my reader is not already familiar with it, however, then there is a very good chance that you have already dismissed the paradox as not really all that puzzling. In all of my years talking with and to people (students, laymen, and professional philosophers) about the puzzle of fiction and emotion, I have never encountered someone new to the topic who did not immediately believe the puzzle is open to easy resolution. This is one of the puzzle's most significant features: upon being introduced to it, almost no one accepts it is actually a paradox!

To appreciate why this puzzle is in fact puzzling and why it deserves to be the centerpiece to an analysis of emotion, allow me to take some time to consider the most obvious potential solutions available. It is by seeing why these solutions, as obvious as they may seem, fail that one will be better positioned to recognize the real heart of the paradox.

Section 3

Obvious Solution 1: "The Suspension of Disbelief"

I mentioned earlier that Coleridge coined the term "the suspension of disbelief" in order to account for our interest in fantastical fictions. Since Coleridge's writing, however, this phrase has been used to capture more extensively how we interact with fictions. Suppose, then, we say that engaging with fiction involves suspending one's disbelief. We can take this as a denial of Statement 3: while our disbelief is suspended, we do not in fact know that the fiction with which we engage is not real.

The problem with this solution is what it claims we suspend: disbelief. A state of disbelief is a state of incredulity, of doubt, of shocked suspicion. A state of disbelief is the sort of state we adopt regarding vampires, werewolves, and Ancient Greek gods—the sorts of entities

that were Coleridge's original focus. Our disbelief is a reaction to the suggestion that such entities are possible beings—that entities such of them could possibly exist. We may doubt that such creatures could exist, we could be incredulous that the plot is in any way possible, but instead we suspend those doubts in order to enjoy the story. When engaging with fictions in general, however, do we have any similar doubts to suspend? We do not *doubt* that Anna Karenina is not a real person, as would be required to suspend such doubt. Instead, we *know* that she is not. The audience member who watches a movie, feeling incredulous about whether the events represented are truly happening or not, is one who has failed to understand the basic conventions of fiction-telling. The problem is with our *beliefs* about Anna Karenina—namely, that she is not a real person—not with any state of *disbelief*.

Of course, one can account for this by changing the offending term. Suppose we say not that we suspend our *disbelief*, but instead that we suspend our *belief*. We (rightfully) believe that Anna Karenina is not real, but we suspend this belief while reading the novel. We (rightfully) believe that the man standing on stage is an actor clutching a wooden sword in his armpit, but we suspend this belief while watching the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. We suspend these beliefs, in the sense that we ignore them, set them aside, forget that we have them so long as it is aesthetically appropriate to do so.

The problem with this is that it doesn't accurately describe how we behave while engaging with fiction: we do not behave like people who have suspended our beliefs, as we read a novel or watch a play. What would you do, while watching Mercutio get stabbed, if you ignored or forgot about your belief that what you're seeing is really just an actor clutching a wooden sword? Hopefully, you wouldn't continue sitting comfortably in your seat, watching what you take to be a young man die from lack of medical aid! Without the belief that

Mercutio's death is (merely) fictional, hopefully you would rush the stage, provide medical assistance, call 911.⁸ The fact that you do not act in such a way, the fact that you remain comfortably seated, can only be explained by appealing to the fact that you remain constantly firm in your belief that what is happening on stage is a performance, that the only murders are fictional ones. And so, it cannot be the case that, as part of the aesthetic experience in which one feels sorrow for Mercutio, one suspends one's belief that Mercutio is fictional.

For the sake of Coleridge's poetic phrase, at this point, one may want to broaden its meaning even wider. Perhaps we should not take "the suspension of disbelief" as a literal description of what we do while engaging with fiction. Instead, perhaps, we should interpret that phrase as a description of the fact that we know fictions are not real but respond to them as if they were. Coleridge's phrase, then, could be seen as a way of maintaining: we know fictions are not real but we respond to them as if they are. This, unfortunately, will not be of very much use. If "the suspension of disbelief" is taken to mean only that we can respond to that which we know is not real, then all the phrase does is express the very puzzle we're attempting to solve. On this interpretation, *The Puzzle of Fiction and Emotion* could very well be re-named *The Puzzle of the Suspension of Disbelief*. It may permit a more poetic expression of the topic, but it will do nothing to shed light on our emotional lives.

I grant, there's a great deal of intuitive pull to the phrase, "the suspension of disbelief." It is a great bit of poetry. However, as lovely a collection of words it may be, it provides us no help in resolving our puzzle.

Obvious Solution 2: Deny Statement 2

⁸This is a point raised by a variety of theorists, including Walton, "How Remote Are Fictional Worlds from the Real World?"; Schaper, "Fiction and the Suspension of Disbelief."

Statement 2, again, provides a necessary condition for the experience of emotion: for one to experience some emotion, one must have certain beliefs about the world. This may seem like a pretty strong claim. Certainly, we should not accept any claims about what is necessary for emotional experience without solid evidential support. And, it is worth noting, Radford doesn't provide such support: notice, above, I did not explain how Radford justifies this claim.⁹

Radford's justification relies on cases that just do not work to the purposes he wants them to work. One may be left wondering, then: why not just deny Statement 2 and accept that we can experience emotions independent of any beliefs about the world?

The problem is that denying Statement 2 implies holding that we experience emotions indiscriminately. If one denies Statement 2, then one denies that there should be any reason or explanation behind one's emotions. Suppose your friend tells you that she is angry at you. You may very well be inclined to ask: "Why are you angry with me?" Consider what sort of answer would satisfy that question: one wants to know her reasons; one wants to know what your friend believes about you or what you have done, such that she now feels anger. So, that very question, "Why are you angry?" presupposes that your friend's anger relates to certain beliefs she has about the world around her. To deny Statement 2 is to deny that there is any answer to that question. Or, suppose your friend were to clarify her feelings: "I'm very angry at you, but for no reason. I don't believe you have done anything to hurt or upset me. I don't believe you have done anything at all deserving of anger. I'm just angry at you." Such an answer would be upsetting.

⁹ He compares our reactions to fiction to three related cases. First is the case of the bar story: a man at a bar moves you nearly to tears with a story about his sister's plight and then informs you that he has no sister; Radford notes that your tears dry up upon learning this. Second is the case of the pantomime: he asks you to consider how awkward and non-moving it would be to watch a friend perform some sort of pantomime of horrible pain; then he notes how moving the exact same pantomime could be, if you were informed your friend were re-enacting the death throes of soldiers he had met in battle. Third is the case of the news story: he asks you to consider a news report about a terrible plight and how moving it would be; then he asks you to consider what it would be like to learn that the news report is false. Given that, in each case, learning that the story is not true leaves us unmoved, he concludes that belief that the object of one's emotion is non-fictional is necessary for the rational, coherent experience of emotion.

Such an answer likely implies that your friend has some sort of psychological issue. Someone who experiences anger with no good reason, such as this, is someone we do not hold to be psychologically well. But if one denies Statement 2, then one must maintain that *every* case of anger is like this. To deny Statement 2, then, is to deny the distinction between justified and appropriate anger and unjustified and inappropriate anger. Denying Statement 2, then, means giving up on the idea that one can account for the *how* and *why* behind the experience of an emotion.

But maybe you're not yet satisfied. Maybe you are content with a view of emotional experiences as mere psychological *happenings* that should not be held to standards of appropriateness, that cannot be understood as connecting up to one's cognitive structures in any meaningful way. Even still, there is a major problem with denying Statement 2: without it, you cannot explain why, right now, you are not frightened of the snarling tiger in front of you.

You aren't, right? I hope not—if there *is* in fact a snarling tiger in front of you, then I hope you'll put this book down until that more pressing issue is dealt with. But, I'm willing to bet, there currently *isn't* a snarling tiger in front of you, and you know this. And, notice, this is why you are not currently afraid of the snarling tiger in front of you. That you believe there is no snarling tiger explains why you are not currently afraid of a snarling tiger. The same can be said for all of the emotions right now that you *aren't* experiencing. You are not currently overjoyed about winning the lottery, given that you have not won the lottery. You are not angry that I have insulted your mother, given that I have not insulted your mother. This is the most significant evidence in support of Statement 2: when we *don't* experience emotions is clearly related to when we *don't* have certain beliefs.

The body of evidence that supports Statement 2 is the same body of evidence that made cognitive theories of emotion popular. But note that supporting Statement 2 does not mean one must accept a cognitive theory of emotion. All it requires is that there is some connection between our emotional lives and our beliefs. Both cognitivists and non-cognitivists can hold that, though they disagree on the nature of that connection. And both *should* hold that, given how it is a necessary component to any adequate explanation of all those ordinary cases, like when we are frightened by tigers or overjoyed about winning the lottery. But any theory of emotion that accounts for this connection between our emotions and our beliefs will have a problem explaining how and why we can respond emotionally to fictions. Denying Statement 2 may provide an easy solution to our puzzle, but only by relying on a warped and insufficient account of our emotional lives in general.

Obvious Solution 3: Deny Statement 1

If one is convinced that we are always firm in our belief that fictions are not real (Statement 3) and that our emotions are connected to our beliefs (Statement 2), then there seems to be only one possible solution left: claim that we do not, in fact, feel emotions in response to fictions (deny Statement 1). As I will discuss later, there are some very influential solutions that do just that. We will have to consider each of these solutions carefully, but for now, let us focus on just this: why hold Statement 1 as true at all, given everything that has so far been said?

The reason why we should not be too quick to deny Statement 1 is that we want to be careful to respect our ordinary practices and ways of speaking. We fall into this puzzle given our ordinary observations of what we do and how we feel while engaging with fiction. We say things like, “I feel so sorry for Anna Karenina!” and “I’m terrified of the clown in *IT!*” We understand

ourselves to be the sorts of creatures who do in fact feel pity, fear, and a whole host of other emotions in response to fictional art. To deny this is to deny our understanding of ourselves. To deny Statement 1 is to accept an error theory about our own emotional lives.

This, alone, doesn't prove that Statement 1 cannot be denied. Certainly, there are many reasons to accept that we are not prime experts regarding our own emotions. But I take it as a steep price to pay, to say that such ordinary and simple claims such as, "I was so happy that Rose survives in *Titanic*", is in fact false. As a methodological point, I take it that the ordinary testimony of competent speakers should be accepted as good evidence. Denying Statement 1, then, is unjustified, absent some good reason to claim that competent speakers are regularly and consistently mistaken about whether or not they were happy that Rose survives.

We are thus left with each of the three inconsistent statements. None of them can be easily denied; no easy solution is available by simply rejecting one of the three claims. To adequately solve this puzzle, we must respect that none of the three statements listed above can be denied easily.

Obvious Solution 4: Embrace the Paradox

The fact that the three previous obvious solutions fail may be taken to support an alternative response to the puzzle: embrace it. Accept that all three statements are true even though they imply a paradox. This is the route that Radford himself went. His ultimate conclusion, after rejecting a series of different potential solutions, is that there is no solution. He says, "I am left with the conclusion that our being moved in certain ways by works of art, though very 'natural' to us and in that way only too intelligible, involves us in inconsistency and so

incoherence.”¹⁰ We just are incoherent creatures, he says. Our emotional lives just are not subject to reasonable explanation. This fourth solution, then, is in fact no solution at all, but a willful, happy acceptance of irrationality, inexplicability, inconsistency.

Understandably, this is not a very popular ‘solution’. Radford notes in later writings that he has found himself quite alone in accepting this response.¹¹ And for good reason. We should not be satisfied with paradox. I call this subject the *puzzle*, rather than the *paradox*, of fiction and emotion for a number of reasons that will be clarified in later chapters, but also for this reason: a puzzle is a problem begging for solution, and that is what we have here. We run into paradox at those times when our theories need to be expanded or clarified. We run into paradox, not because the world is inexplicable or incoherent, but because our understanding of it is somehow lacking. We run into paradox when and because there is work to be done—philosophic work, conceptual work, the work of making sense of the world around us. What we need to do is develop the correct conceptual tools, to form a better understanding of the subject central to our puzzle. To embrace the paradox as unresolvable is nothing more than avoiding this work. It is not a solution to a philosophic puzzle but instead the avoidance of philosophy at all.

Whatever solution or solutions we find to the puzzle of fiction and emotion, we should want it to expand our understanding of human life and the emotions that structure it. If we shrug and refuse to resolve the puzzle at all, we will be robbing ourselves of that expanded understanding. We will be robbing ourselves of the opportunity to think with clarity and purpose about why we feel as we do when we do, and why it matters whether we do or not. This is why it is worthwhile for us to approach this paradox so that we may discover how to resolve it: for the sake of our own self-understanding.

¹⁰ Radford and Weston, “How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?,” 78.

¹¹ Radford, “Paradoxes of Emotion and Fiction.”

In the pages that follow, it will be useful for us to remember that this is the ultimate purpose behind a paradox. We will be encountering a *lot* of paradoxes in later chapters. Each one is intended to help clarify a gap in our philosophic understanding of human emotion. Each one is intended to clarify what intuitions or theoretic commitments clash with one another, so that we can work to develop a more fruitful theory. Each paradox is a puzzle, and each puzzle is an opportunity to develop clarity.

Section 5: A Roadmap

Here is a roadmap to what you will encounter in this book. The first section is focused on the puzzle of fiction and emotion itself. Chapter 2 goes over the puzzle's history. Casual readers may want to skim over portions of it, but the end result of the discussion is a far more careful understanding of the puzzle of fiction and emotion and how it can be resolved. Chapter 3 considers how one might approach the puzzle from the metaphysics of fiction. This will help us understand how the metaphysics of fiction can (and cannot) help one avoid the puzzle. Chapter 4 then considers how one can approach the puzzle from the nature of emotion. It is through this discussion that I will be able to show how I believe the puzzle can be resolved the most successfully and why resolving it can play such a central role to our understanding of our emotional lives overall. What I will ultimately show is that, to resolve the puzzle, one should focus attention on different types of emotions individually, rather than attempting a solution for emotionality in general.

The second section of the book attempts the piecemeal solution justified in the first section. Each chapter in the second section focuses on a particular kind of emotion in light of our emotional responses to fiction: pity, fear, worry, amusement, uplift. These chapters are structured

around the puzzle of fiction and emotion, and the analyses provided are structured primarily around examples of that emotion experienced in response to fiction. The result is a clarified understanding of how fiction can be emotionally potent as well as a more thorough understanding of these specific emotions and the roles they play in our lives.