Topoi (2020) 39:743–749
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-019-09664-3

Introduction: Empathy, Fiction, and Imagination

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Published online: 22 August 2019

In contemporary discourses, it has become common sense to acknowledge that humans and some species of animals, from their very inception, are embedded in social and intersubjective contexts. As social beings, we live, interact, communicate, and cooperate with others for a range of different reasons: sometimes we do so for strategic and instrumental reasons, while at other times it is purely for its own sake. Moreover, in one way or another, we encounter others not only as rational but also as sentient beings; our interactions with others are shaped by reason, though not exclusively so. They are also affected by our emotions, feelings, moods, and environments. In this way, we seek understanding both for and by others. We are able to recognize, interpret, and categorize others' expression and behavior; in turn, we express our emotions, desires, and motivations to act towards others and hope that others will react adequately and appropriately.

Empathy is usually understood as the capacity to apprehend others' mental states—especially emotions. In recent decades, it has become one of the most widely discussed concepts, especially in the philosophy of mind, ethics, and aesthetics. Although there is a vast array of publications on the topic of empathy, a number of controversies have persisted, particularly in relation to how the process, outcome, and value of empathy should be understood. One recent debate concerns the question of whether we directly perceive others' mental states or whether we rather imagine their perspective. Another central discussion is ongoing regarding empathy in respect of narratives and fictional characters.

The aim of this Special Issue is to interrelate these two branches—fiction and imagination—and to examine the role of imagination in the empathic process, especially in relation to the thesis of direct perception of others' mental states. Despite the wealth of recent research into empathy that has emerged from a diverse range of disciplinary perspectives, there is still no consensus about the nature and role of imagination and whether empathizing with fictions should be categorically or just gradually distinguished from empathizing with real persons.

1 Research Background and Challenges

The concept of empathy has been central to many debates in the humanities and neuroscience. Since the discovery of "mirror neurons" in the 1990s (e.g. Gallese 2001), there has been much debate on the nature and function of empathy. For the sake of a better understanding, in this introduction we will use an operative definition of empathy (for an overview, see Batson 2009; Coplan 2004; Maibom 2017), according to which empathy, broadly construed, is the apprehension and understanding of others' mental states such as emotions, beliefs, and desires.

Leaving the debate on so called mirror neurons and processes of mimetic resonances aside, for a while the discussion has been dominated primarily by two different theoretical frames of mindreading. During the 1990s, there was a major controversy over whether empathy implies a kind of theoretical inference or whether it was rather better explained as projective simulation. According to the first model, the *Theory Theory* (TT), empathy presupposes that the one who feels empathy has a folk psychological theory of mind about the one with whom she or he empathizes (Carruthers and Smith 1996; Fodor 1987; Gopnik and Wellman 1994). In this regard, empathy is rather a cognitive way of reading and understanding other minds. From a third-person, observational standpoint, we deploy (implicitly or explicitly) law-like generalizations, which imply concepts of mental states such as perception, belief, and desire. The epistemic impact of this process lies in the comprehension of others' mental processes, their reasons for acting, and in predicting

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their future behavior. TT has been widely criticized for being overly theoretical and too general (Zahavi 2014). According to the second dominant approach, the *Simulation Theory* (ST), the process of empathy does not imply having a theory, but rather a mechanism of simulation: imagining what we would feel if we were in the other's situation. On a relatively complex, high level, we simulate the other's state in our own mind and then arrive at the knowledge of how the other feels by imitating the other's behavior in our mind and then projecting our own mental process onto the other. According to ST, we play through, via a first-person perspective, being in the other's situation and utilize our own mental mechanisms to generate thoughts, beliefs, desires, and emotions (Goldman 2006; Stueber 2006).

One of the main critiques leveled against these *Theory of Mind* approaches (TT and ST) is that they both have an overly narrow, occlusionistic view of the human mind, that is to say, they assume that the human mind is impassable for observers. Indeed, TT and ST agree that there is no immediate and direct apprehension of the other, since this is always mediated by a theory or by an imaginative process in which the empathizer uses her own mind as a model to then infer from herself to the other person's state (for an overview of these different approaches, see: Hagener and Vendrell Ferran 2017; Maibom 2017). Consider, first, the TT approach: This theory claims that from a third-person perspective or mere observational point of view, we deduce from another person's behavior and on the basis of some folk psychological insights that the other is in a specific mental state. For this deduction to be successful, we need to have a theory about the connection between certain mental states and certain behavior. Very roughly spoken, when we see that the other smiles, we merely infer that s/he is happy because we know about the link between both phenomena. In other words, insofar as the mind is unobservable, or so TT claims, we can only perceive and interpret others indirectly. According to TT, we interpret human behavior in the same way that we interpret natural phenomena—hence, empathic mindreading is quasi-scientific. We use laws and theories that we can apply to the human domain. However, or so one objection goes, in our encounters with others we do not always apply a theory, nor do we always cognitively infer from a general law to concrete behavior. In contrast, as theories from phenomenology and embodied cognition have stressed, we meet each other as embodied and embedded creatures within a shared world. We meet each other, in other words, not only as cognitive observers, but as intercorporally and emotionally interrelated companions which very often *see* each other directly face-to-face and interact in shared contexts. Some argue in an anti-Cartesian way that a basic form of empathy rather consists in directly perceiving the "fury in *his* face" instead of inferring to it or looking "into yourself", as a famous quote by Wittgenstein formulates it (Overgaard 2007; the same thesis was defended by Max Scheler in his book *The Nature of Sympathy*, see Scheler 2008). Another important objection concerns the fact that this approach cannot explain basic empathic reactions experienced by beings who do not possess an explicit theory with which to understand others' behavior such as newborns or certain animals. Moreover, when we claim to empathize with others, this does not always involve a theory. Quite the contrary: in our everyday encounters, our understanding of others' mental states often seems to occur in an immediate and direct manner, so that no theory, inference or deduction is needed.

The ST approach has also been subjected to criticism. As mentioned, simulationists claim that we understand others thanks to a mental simulation of the others' states for which no theory is needed. Instead, the apprehension of others' mental states takes place by putting ourselves in the shoes of the other and in simulating a similar state in us. For instance, when we see someone in a joyful situation and recognize the joy in her face, we imagine being in the same situation and play through how we would feel. When experiencing the joy, we project this state onto the other and then come to understand that s/he is feeling happy. One of the most challenging aspects of this approach concerns the idea that the simulated mental states take place in a "off-line mode" (Currie 1997, p. 51, 2006, p. 213; Stroud 2008, p. 21). One of the problems with this account concerns the understanding of the simulated mental states such as emotions, desires, and so on. Given that they are simulated, i.e. created through a process of imagination, some authors claim that the imagined mental states are of a different nature from that of the non-imagined mental states. In this context, many authors speak of quasi-emotions and quasi-desires (on the idea of quasi-emotions, see Walton 1990, and on the idea of quasi-desires, see Doggett and Egan 2007. Both concepts can also be found in Meinong 1977, p. 314). Some proponents of the simulation account, for instance, claim that quasi-emotions do not motivate action, while non-simulated emotions do. But this criterion is false, since those emotions that arise from a simulation or an imagining are also able to motivate actions outside the fictional experience. For example, when we lie in bed and imagine out of the blue that a burglar might be in our kitchen, we might become scared and then motivated to verify whether or not somebody is there. Or if we read a fictional story about the fate of a refugee, our emotional engagement and empathic understanding might motivate us to donate to a refugee relief organization. Imaginary worlds, in other words, are mostly connected to our real world. Some of these topics concerning the nature of such imagined emotional states have been at the center of a fierce debate known as the "paradox of emotional responses to fiction" or simply the "paradox of fiction" (for a recent discussion on the productivity of the debate, see Konrad et al. 2018). A second challenge for the ST approach, which

has largely been formulated by phenomenologists, is that it presupposes what it wants to explain. The *petitio principii* runs as follows: in order to simulate the mental states of the other, I must, in the first place, recognize the other as other and not as merely an object. Thereby we grasp the expressive behavior of the other. That is, we have to be able to understand on a very basic level that the other is in some specific mental states before we can simulate them.

More recently, coinciding with a renewed interest in approaches closer to intersubjectivity and with the rise of contemporary phenomenology, a new and influential account has appeared on the scene. This has been baptized as the *direct perception theory* (DPT) since it emphasizes the immediacy with which the understanding of the other takes place. According to DPT, neither a theory nor a simulation is needed in order to grasp the other's experience. Contrary to TT and ST, phenomenological accounts stress the direct intercorporal, interactive encounter and the embeddedness of the self in a shared environment (Gallagher and Hutto 2008; Gallagher 2012; Szanto and Krueger 2019; Zahavi and Overgaard 2012). We perceive immediately in other beings' expressions what they experience. For this to happen, face-to-face and intersubjective interaction is necessary. Some of them consider empathy to be an automatic, pre-reflective perception and paring with the other's experience (Thompson 2001). Others (Zahavi 2014) object that the traditional empathy concept (e.g. Scheler 2008; Stein 2012) did not require affective isomorphism and that it was always distinguished from both contagion and feeling-with the other.

However, since the direct encounter principle obviously limits the scope of empathy, some phenomenologists sought to broaden DPT by way of a narrative theory and argued that we not only perceive the other's momentary expressions, but also recognize her with her personal narrative, within her situational context, and with her individual perspective: we are not just embedded; we are protagonists of our (own) story (Gallagher 2012). In interaction, we perceive others within their personal perspectival field (Zahavi 2014). The phenomenological accounts draw on the work of traditional phenomenologists such as Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Alfred Schütz, Wilhelm Dilthey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as contemporary theories of embodied social cognition.

This model does not have the problems of the other two models such as third-personal theorizing or egocentric simulating. Unlike the other two approaches, the DPT explains the apprehension of others underscoring the fact that the other is given to us as such directly, i.e. not through the mediation of a theory or through imaginative simulation. That is, when I see the smile on the face of the other, I see the joy *in* the smile. This theory explains what the other two theories in fact presuppose: The other is given to us as such, i.e. as a living being and not as a quasi-inanimate object from which we infer, deduce, or suppose; nor is the other a closed mind which we first imitate simulatively in our own mind. The strength of DPT lies in its simplicity: the insight that other persons' mental processes are given to us and that we interact on a much more unmediated level than other theories assume (Zahavi 2014). That is, basic empathy is much easier and much more common. It occurs in our everyday encounters and is an integral part of social interaction. However, some phenomenologists still argue that empathy is "something extra" and demands more from us than mere sensitive perception (Gallagher 2012).

2 Empathy with Fictional Characters

Despite the explicative power and the virtues of the direct perception model, when applied to the field of fictional and imaginary objects this approach—at least in its basic version—faces important challenges. It is obvious that in fictional and imaginary contexts—such as a fictional film, a novel, a play, or a mental image such as a daydream, a fantasy, a memory, an expectation—the other is not really present but represented, namely via imagination. Here, we consider imagination to be the representation of an object which is either non-existent, or absent, or which is present elsewhere (Sartre 2004, p. 12; Stevenson 2003). It seems also plausible that we are able to engage empathically with such imaginary objects. This is indeed compatible with ST. But does this also count for DPT approaches which question the role of imagination in empathizing? Moreover, if there is no direct reciprocity or intersubjective interaction with fictional and imaginative objects, can we ever empathize with them? The relationship between readers and fictional characters, for instance, is, from an ontological perspective, a unilateral, asymmetric relationship; the objects of our empathy (as readers) cannot reciprocate our empathy for them. Yet, empathy is a crucial empirical and normative feature of fictional experiences: Readers, moviegoers, theater audiences, video games players, etc. all claim to feel empathy for the protagonists with which they are cognitively and emotionally engaged. However, it would be an ontological confusion to speak of a face-to-face interaction. Fictional characters are not given to us in a direct and immediate way. In other words, DPT seems not to apply. Are we therefore reliant on the other approaches—such as TT or ST—when it comes to our empathic understanding of fictional minds? In this Special Issue, we would like to foreground the role of imagination and explore whether or not imagination is compatible with DPT.

The modes of givenness of fictional others presuppose, in one way or another, the exercise of our imagination. For sure, there are interesting differences between the various kinds of fiction involved and the different relations of the characters with whom we empathize. Readers have to

recreate the specific characteristics of the characters following the descriptions given in the text, filling in the gaps with their own imaginative powers, while in theater and film we have to be able to look through the actor and "see in" them the represented character. We can feel empathy for fictional characters, but the actor who embodies a character has to also establish a certain empathic relation with the recreated character that s/he is supposed to embody.

That said, the direct perception model does indeed have the capacity to explain empathy as a natural form of perceiving others. But the account cannot explain how this direct perception works in the context of fiction and imagination, for there is no face-to-face encounter, nor are any real persons involved with whom we may interact. In order to bridge this gap, we need our capacity of imagination and narrativity to become empathetically engaged with fiction and the emotional situations of the characters, to understand their respective view on the world and thus to understand how they feel and why they act as they do. This is why some scholars, especially from film and literary studies, emphasize the imaginative impact of empathic processes (Currie 1997; Gaut 2010; Grodal 1997), argue for an additional contextual, narrative approach (Breyer 2015; Gallagher 2012), and stress the importance of allocentric perspective-taking (Dullstein 2013; Magrì 2015; Schmetkamp 2017; Vendrell Ferran 2018). In order to better understand the mental states of fictional characters, or so they argue, we must use our capacity of imagination, broadly understood as the ability to represent entities which are not actually present or do not exist. Insofar as there is no real encounter, we have to fill in the gap via our imaginative capacity and comprehend the perspectives of characters by way of a particular form of perspective-taking (Goldie 2000, p. 176). But the question then arises as to what extent these aspects are interrelated and even compatible: direct perception, narrative comprehension, and imaginative perspective-taking. Convinced by the significance of fictions and narratives in our lives and interested in the scope of the different empathy approaches, one of our aims as editors is to critically connect and/or reconcile phenomenological approaches of direct givenness with approaches that underscore the role of the imagination.

While most of the articles here sympathize with the basic idea of the phenomenological account, they also seek out a solution with regard to the challenge of empathizing with fictional others and their narratives. Thus, taking the phenomenological approach seriously, and yet at the same time challenging its applicability with regard to fictional worlds and characters, this Special Issue addresses sets of interrelated questions, which can be summarized under the headings of the "ontology of the other" and "the function of imagination".

2.1 Ontology of the Other

One question concerns how the ontological status of fictional characters as a target of our empathetic engagement conditions the nature of empathy itself. Unlike human beings "of flesh and bone", fictional characters are invented, non-existing entities, whose ontology depends on a process of creation and authorial intention. This radical ontological difference also suggests differences in the process of empathizing with characters or with real people. However, it is not clear whether these differences are only nuances of the same phenomenon or lead to two different forms of empathy, i.e. an aesthetic empathy and a real-life empathy. More specifically, one could ask to what extent empathizing with fictional characters is different from empathizing with real people.

Furthermore, what these ontological differences make clear is that the use of the word "other" in the case of fictional empathy is far from straightforward. If the other is merely a creature of an author's imagination, then to speak about "taking over the other's perspective" has a different meaning and impact than in the case of a real person: what does it mean to *have* a perspective? Whereas real persons see their world from their individual view point—which is shaped by their experiences, character, emotions, etc.—a fictional character expresses and represents a perspective that is narrated within a narrative, scripted by an implicit or explicit author. Whose perspective is it, then, that we empathetically comprehend? And do we learn something in this process? It is commonly assumed that by imaginatively perspective-taking, especially through fictional narratives, we expand our epistemic and moral horizon (Rorty 2001; Nussbaum 2011). But how does this happen if the empathic relationship is neither interactive nor reciprocal, but instead based only on imagination and interpretation? Isn`t it then just projection?

2.2 The Function of Imagination

A second major concern of the following collection consists in exploring the role of imagination in empathy, especially with fictional characters. Despite the immense bulk of literature on the topic of empathy and, more specifically, on empathy with fictional entities, there is no clear consensus on the nature, role, and specific function of imagination. One of the main questions to be addressed here is whether imagination is an integral part of our engagement with fictional others and, if so, whether or not it is always an important part of the overall empathic experience. If—as stated above—we define imagination as our capacity to make something present to us which is not actually present or does not exist (for the different meanings of the concept of imagination, see Stevenson 2003), it is plausible that imagination is a

necessary condition for fictional experience in general. But do we also need it for our understanding of movie characters if we *see* the emotions in the character's face (especially via a close-up) where "everything"—as Béla Balázs famously stressed—is already implied (Balázs 2012, p. 52)? However, we still have to apprehend their respective narrative context, their character traits, experiences, etc. in order to correctly discern their intentionality (Gallagher 2012, p. 15).

These issues concerning the "function of imagination" obviously challenge the scope of the direct perception account. If imagination plays an integral role in—at least aesthetic—empathy, does this mean that the direct perception accounts of empathy are unable to explain empathy with fictional characters? And in turn, one might ask whether an account that involves imagination is still at least compatible with the direct perception proposal, even in lieu of the thesis that imagination plays no role in direct empathy. The narrative approach to empathy (Gallagher 2012; Hutto 2007) extends the direct perception proposal by stressing the importance of the other's narrative context and situation. Gallagher uses the expression of "N-Imagination" as the necessary tool for narratively framing the other person's experience (Gallagher 2012, p. 15).

3 The Papers of this Special Issue

The issue contains a selection of contributions by Robert Blanchet, Thiemo Breyer, Marco Caracciolo, Francesca Forle and Francesca de Vecchi, Shaun and Julia Gallagher, Suzanne Keen, Matthias Schloßberger, Thomas Szanto and Christiana Werner. The first group of papers (Blanchet, Forle and de Vecchi, Schloßberger, Gallagher) examines the interrelationship between empathy, fiction, and imagination from both conceptual and historical points of view and discusses the dominant theories from a critical stance. A second group (Szanto, Gallagher, Carracciolo, Keen, Werner) combines theoretical and empirical approaches and discusses the scope and limits of empathy in our experiences with fictions or fictional characters, e.g. in the case of empathic inaccuracy or imaginative resistance.

The issue begins with an extended TT account and thus with a critique of DPT and ST. In his paper "Empathy as the Opposite of Egocentrism: Why the Simulation Theory and the Direct Perception Theory of Empathy Fail", Robert Blanchet reacts to the debate between Theory Theory, Simulation Theory, and Theory of Direct Perception and develops what he calls "the third person account of empathy". This account characterizes empathy as a form of being sensitive to others' state of affairs by representing the other's situation from her point of view. In contrast to simulation theory, Blanchet claims that "point of view" and "perspective" should be understood only as a metaphor and that we actually do not overtake a first-person perspective or really see the other's situation through her eyes. Stressing that we take over an allocentric view by focusing on the state of affairs, needs, interests, reasons, etc. of the other person, Blanchet's approach conceives of empathy as the opposite of egocentric attitudes. That said, his approach is rather in line with the Theory Theory view of mindreading than with Simulation Theory or Direct Perception Theory. However, Blanchet also underlines that our folk psychological understanding of others' mental states can indeed be very elaborate and context-sensitive rather than merely general, schematic or superficial, as some critics of TT have argued.

From quite another, namely historical phenomenological, viewpoint, Francesca Forle and Francesca de Vecchi focus on the relationship between direct perception and understanding fictional characters. In their paper "Phenomenological Distinctions between Empathy de vivo and Empathy in Fiction: From Contemporary Direct Perception Theory back to Edith Stein's Eidetic of Empathy", they develop an account of empathy for fictional characters which is strongly inspired by the work of the early phenomenologist Edith Stein. Their aim in the paper is to offer a sound argument for the thesis that between empathy for real others and empathy for fictional characters, there is no structural difference, but only a qualitative one which concerns the vividness and intensity of the experience.

Against a widespread view in contemporary philosophy of empathy, Matthias Schloßberger argues in his paper "Beyond Empathy: Compassion and the Reality of Others" that empathy can neither enable a basic understanding of other persons nor found morality. In his account, which takes inspiration from the work of Max Scheler and other early phenomenologists, Schloßberger argues that empathy as an imaginative process in fact already presupposes the existence of an interpersonal sphere. With this account, Schloßberger offers two strong lines of argumentation. On the one side, he offers a new version of the phenomenological arguments against the Simulation Theory and the Theory Theory approaches. On the other, he develops a critique of the term "empathy" and its use in contemporary philosophy of mind and morality.

Shaun and Julia Gallagher's paper "Acting Oneself as Another: An Actor's Empathy for her Character" is somehow in-between the two groups. By approaching the topic from both a theoretical-historical and a practical-contemporary point of view, the authors try to answer the following question: What does it mean for an actor to empathize with the character she is playing? By taking into account the concept of twofoldness, the authors claim that the actor must distinguish between the character portrayed and her own portrayal effected in her craft. In contrast to empathy with real people, Shaun and Julia Gallagher argue that in the case of playing a character, empathy may begin with

higher-order (narrative or imaginative) processes that provide a contextualized understanding of the character, which may then be followed by a more basic, low-level form of empathy. To answer their central question, the authors rely not only on traditional and contemporary phenomenological accounts (such as Shaun Gallagher's own narrative account), but also on theories of method acting and an actor's character identification.

Thomas Szanto starts off the second group of discussions, which focuses on both the successes and failures of empathizing with fictional characters. The paper "Imaginative Resistance and Empathic Resistance" takes up the much-debated question as to why readers often resist the invitation of authors to imagine morally deviant fictional scenarios. We seem to have a hard time imagining morally evil deeds or facts to be right and thus consequently resist imagining them. Szanto shows that imaginative resistance (IR) is restricted to a specific problem of imaginative perspective-taking that only occurs in specific cases, namely cases in which (a) there is a so-called "engaged" reporting and reception of (b) a normatively valenced narrative, and (c) at the same time, there is narrative underdetermination of the relevant normative facts or the moral-psychological features of the dramatis personae. In particular, the paper discusses proposals by Karsten Stueber and Peter Goldie and differentiates between empathy proper and in-his-shoes imagining.

Thiemo Breyer's paper "Self-affection and Perspective-taking: The Role of Phantasmatic and Imaginatory Consciousness for Empathy" distinguishes between several modifications of perception and perspective-taking in order to grasp the relevance of phantasmatic and imaginatory consciousness for empathy. Drawing on insights from phenomenology, the paper tries to elucidate the complex process of empathically perceiving and understanding the other. It focuses on the description of certain ways in which phantasmatic and imaginatory consciousness inform the process of empathy and as a result our understanding of other minds, ranging from the kind of self-affection that shapes our perception of the other, to the ways in which we adopt the other's spatial perspective by imagining their position, to grasping their subjective experience by imagining their personal situation and background, and to being led by and constructing narratives that enrich our understanding of an individual fate. Thereby, the intertwinements of expectation-driven and stimulus-driven components of the empathic process are reviewed.

Taking into account empirical studies, in his paper "Fictional Characters, Transparency, and Experiential Sharing" Marco Carraciolo examines the question of how providing less textual information about a fictional character makes her/his mind more accessible to readers. Taking a study conducted by Kotovych et al. as his point of departure and employing the conceptual frame of "experiential sharing" developed by Zahavi and Rochat, Caracciolo argues that the inferential work cued by implicature creates an intersubjective dynamic in which the reader complements the missing information by drawing her/his past experiences and which leads to a sharing of cognitive resources. Regarding our central question of the relationship between DPT and imagination, Caracciolo argues that this experiential sharing might result in empathetic perspective-taking. However, in his view, not all cases of empathy involve such sharing.

Suzanne Keen's paper "Empathic Inaccuracy in Narrative Fiction" takes up a similar route by discussing the nature and role of empathic inaccuracy. In contrast to Caracciolo, she stresses how and how often readers fail to infer the correct mental states towards fictional characters. By referring to psychological studies, Keen shows that we also consistently overestimate our own empathic abilities. She extends some earlier theorizing on accuracy by grappling with the problem of empathic inaccuracy as a phenomenon of fiction reading. In her paper, she recognizes empathy's defining quality of errancy (or at the very least idiosyncrasy) in divergent emotional reactions to fiction, without veering into normative prescriptivism supporting judgments of either authors or readers. Keen considers empathic inaccuracy to be an undeniable though hardly universal feature of narrative fictional texts. Moreover, she argues that literary education often masks a tacit prescriptivism under its cultivation of critical tact. But paradoxically, so Keen claims, the same teachers who guide students to interpretations that stay within acceptable bounds also celebrate resistant, cross-grain, and revisionist readings advanced by literary professionals.

Werner finally takes up again our focal question, namely if and how DPT, imagination, and fiction are interrelated. In her paper "'See Me, Feel Me': Two Modes of Affect Recognition for Real and Fictional Targets", she focuses on the difference between empathy for real people and empathy for fictional characters. In her line of argument, she distinguishes two types of processes of affect recognition, namely "Perceptual Affect Recognition" and "Affective Affect Recognition". The consensus view about empathy with fictional characters has to be challenged, or so she argues, if "empathy" refers to the former or the latter process because of the significant differences between the fictional and the non-fictional scenario: first, readers as "empathizers" cannot perceive the fictional target person directly, but only the literary text. This is especially problematic for Affective State Recognition. Secondly, fictional characters do not exist, at least not in the sense that they are real people or entities with mental states, which leads to relevant differences in the accuracy conditions of Affective Affect Recognition in the fictional and the non-fictional scenario.

Acknowledgements The guest editors of this Special Issue are very grateful for the thorough work of a number of experts who have kindly accepted to serve as anonymous referees for the contributions. We would also like to thank the editors of *Topoi* for an exceptionally helpful collaboration. The idea to publish a Special Issue on this topic first arose out of a panel at the *Empathies* conference at the University of Basel in 2017. Susanne Schmetkamp wishes to thank the organizers, especially Manuela Rossi, for giving her the chance to hold a panel on the topic, as well as the "Forschungsfonds" of the University of Basel and the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Konstanz for a generous research grant to work on Perspectivity, Empathy, and Antipathy. Íngrid Vendrell Ferran would like to thank the *Nomis Foundation* and *Eikones—Center for the theory and History of Image* at the University of Basel for a generous research grant to work on Empathy and Imagination in fictional and non-fictional works.

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