

EXPLORING PETER GOLDIE'S CORE CONCERNS

SANDRA-CĂTĂLINA BRÂNZARU-LLINAS SUAU¹

A review of *Art, Mind and Narrative: Themes from the Work of Peter Goldie*. Edited by Julian Dodd, Oxford University Press, 2016.

As the title suggests, this philosophical anthology explores Peter Goldie's main philosophical concerns. It consists of essays aiming at clarifying, analyzing, challenging or building upon Goldie's claims about emotions and their relation to the mind, to art, the nature of aesthetic experience, and the role that narrative thinking plays in our lives, with narratives (in Goldie's view) taken as *vehicles* that lead to a *deep understanding*. Some essays focus less on Peter Goldie's work, representing rather original approaches to topics that Goldie has tackled, while others focus on further developing his views or challenging them. Nevertheless, every contributor in this volume continues a *philosophical conversation* with Peter Goldie, in the words of Julian Dodd, the editor of the anthology. Dodd skillfully writes a pellucid introduction that helps us follow the thread connecting all the essays: art, mind and emotions, tied insightfully and coherently with narrative thinking, trying to paint the picture of how we think, how we understand (ourselves, others, art), how we engage emotionally with fiction, our past and our future. Julian Dodd does justice not only to Goldie's work, but also to the contributors who come up with original theses and fruitful approaches to Goldie's main themes. The volume is structured in three sections, namely *Narrative*

¹ Sandra-Cătălina Brânzaru-Llinas Suau is a doctoral student of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. Contact: sandra-catalina.branzaru@s.unibuc.ro

Thinking (part I), *Emotion, mind and art* (part II), concluding with *Art, value and ontology* (part III).

The first section covers the topic of narrative thinking at the crossroads of phenomenological and cognitive approaches – we come to know the roles that narratives play in our lives, in our interaction with art, with others, and ourselves. By the end of the first section, we can grasp what narrative thinking might consist in, thanks to the essays written by Marya Schechtman, Derek Matravers, Peter Lamarque, David Papineau, Edward Harcourt, and Robert Hopkins. At first glance, it may seem that narrative thinking applies solely to fiction, and we later find that it plays a major role in the puzzle of personal identity (Schechtman, Davenport, MacIntyre, Ricoeur and others). Although the authors do not pursue the topic in this anthology, narratives can play a more central role in cognition, mainly in social cognition (Hutto 2015). Enactive approaches to cognition view the understanding of narratives as a form of *participatory sense making* (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Popova 2014), leading even to narrative alternatives to a theory of mind (Gallagher 2006).

Even though most of the authors in this section seem to place an emphasis on identity problems (the role that narratives play in understanding *ourselves* / rendering our *selves*), the papers tackle various related phenomena that I believe deserve a thorough exploration on their own: such as the role of memory and imagination in *constructing histories and making long-term plans* (Papineau), or the role that attention may play in fictional engagement (Stock).

Narrativity was a topic dear to Goldie, he approached it in *The mess inside* (his last monograph), as a form of understanding, he used it to account for grief (“Grief: a narrative account,” 2011) and to the way we affectively respond to our distant self, while adopting an external perspective to that past (Goldie 2003). In the debate surrounding identity, he places himself in between the strong *narrativists*, who claim that we construct a sense of self via narratives, and the *sceptics*, who think that narratives do not construct or shape our self, they can rather distort our thinking (narratives do not aim at truth). It was Goldie’s belief that narratives can shed some light on how we come to act and motivate our actions, without committing to the idea of narratives making-up identity: “the narratives we weave about our lives can

profoundly affect how we respond to our past and how we lead our lives in the future" (Goldie 2004: 117).

Goldie was interested in the gap between the perspective of the past self and the one of the current (real-time) self, and Marya Schechtman tries to bridge this gap with the concept of *empathic access*, saving the unity of the self by arguing that we feel for our former self while being different (phenomenological access differs from empathic access) (Schechtman, in Dodd 2016: 21). Her essay, a defense against Goldie's criticism in *The mess inside*, argues that her notion of empathic access had been offered as a supplement to her narrative account of identity, not as a constituent part of the theory (Schechtman, in Dodd 2016: 28). Matravers finds no distinction between engaging with fictional narratives and non-fictional narratives, as opposed to Goldie, while Lamarque proposes a non-central view of narrative understanding, criticizing Goldie's insufficient skepticism (the use of indirect speech and dramatic irony) of fictional narratives. Most of the objections to Goldie's views are conceptual, except for Papineau, who promotes a naturalistic approach to narrative thinking, placing the origins of this ability into a basic natural tendency – that of *building histories*. The first part of the anthology ends with two case studies that employ fictional narratives to make sense of characters' memory systems and moral systems, but also to draw attention to the danger of *fictionalizing narratives* (over-attributing agency, assuming that we have the ability to plot our lives, looking for explanations and connecting dots with imaginary threads instead of accepting that no explanation is available, borrowing from fiction the idea of unity, of life as a narrative) (Lamarque, in Dodd 2016: 38-39).

The second part of the volume, *Emotion, mind and art*, consists of essays written by Kathleen Stock, Joel Smith, Ronald de Sousa, Matthew Kieran, Sabine Döring and Paul Harris. Once again, Goldie adopts an in-between position, this time concerning emotions: he avoids cognitive approaches, but at the same time examines them in relation to intentionality, and asks what the epistemic relevance of emotions is. For Goldie, the personal stance is the key feature for making sense of other people's thoughts, actions and beliefs, in contrast to the impersonal stance provided by empirical science. He deems over-intellectualizing

emotions to neglect the central roles that feelings play. An emotional experience, in his view, consists of various elements that are connected by a narrative structure (thoughts, sensations, expression). This section does not deal directly with Goldie's view, but the bits and pieces from the conversations that the authors engage in, come to shape his approach, an approach clarified in *The emotions: a philosophical exploration* (Goldie 2000). The section starts with Stock who discusses free indirect style and the idea of imagining from the inside when reading fictions. For Goldie, the free indirect style calls for the reader to listen to the voice of the narrator describing the experience of the character, whereas for Stock it calls for the reader to imagine the experience of the character from inside the character's mind and from the narrator's view. The problem is one cannot account for what a character knows and what a narrator knows at the same time. Kathleen Stock's solution consists in having one imagine these perspectives in a non-simultaneous manner. Taking one perspective at a time excludes the idea of integrating the character's view and the narrator's view into a single view. This solution is also applied to autobiographical memory – making sense of events from the point of view of the past self, and the present self. Nonetheless, it seems to me that such integration may not be necessary, nor in understanding our past selves, nor in understanding fiction. Smith argues that emotions can be perceptual as long as we make them context-dependent, and De Sousa asks whether love differs from other emotions or not. Kieran embraces a non-cognitive view, describing sentimentality as feeling connected to someone. Now the thread turns towards art, with Döring arguing that art enables us to feel emotions, feelings that would not be available to us otherwise. Döring might have more clearly distinguished between causal thinking and narrative thinking, as that seems presupposed by her claim that *in art, one's action does not have to be intended as a means of expression*. However, this path is not taken. It is not clear what it is about art that makes us feel emotions/feelings that are otherwise not available. Harris proposes a new approach in thinking about what makes us feel emotions, likely one that departs most from Goldie's views and places an emphasis on developmental aspects. His empirical approach targets the development of emotions in children. He challenges the continuity thesis developed by Darwin and the importance of first-hand

experience in emotional development studies. His claim is that emotions are not merely responses to events in the physical world, or to agents encountered in the physical world. He explains that the emotional states of children can be linked to a mental space instead of proximity in physical space. Children can have strong emotional reactions to people who are not physically present in their environment (fictional characters, public characters) and to events that are reported or provided by testimony of other agents. He also stresses the importance of pretend play and imaginary friends on emotion development. Imagined events and imagined creatures also challenge the continuity assumption (Harris, in Dodd 2016: 190-192).

The third and last section deals with the aesthetic and the epistemic, questioning the nature of conceptual art. Is conceptual work an art form? How is it experienced? Do we gain knowledge from art? Schellekens builds upon Goldie's virtue theory of art and finds that epistemic virtues are linked to aesthetic virtues. Schellekens thinks that art can provide knowledge, since it can coherently represent real life events. Goldie's concept of *emotional sharing* (which he thinks is *unique to artistic virtue*) proves to be useful to Schellekens who tries to show how artistic, epistemic and moral virtues are not conceptually different. Artistic virtue is a kind of epistemic virtue, and narrative understanding is central in this framework:

One of the things we learn from engaging with literary artworks is how to become better at telling these tales and applying the narrative to real life... Narrative can help us reach a deepened understanding of character, be it our own or someone else's, by enabling us to improve our epistemological method or the methods leading to epistemic success. (Schellekens, in Dodd 2016: 219-220)

For both Goldie and Schellekens, the lines between the epistemic and the aesthetic virtues are at least blurred. Lopes tries to widen perceptual experience so that all experiences carry analog information, in art experiences they carry information about aesthetic properties, meant to be delivered to cognition, which is digital, like beliefs (drawing from Dretske's types of encoding). He claims that the aesthetic properties are

encoded in experiential states. We have two ways of experiencing those properties: either by experiencing the sensory properties in which aesthetic properties are encoded or by experiencing aesthetic properties that are not encoded in sensory properties- this would be the case for conceptual art (where the aesthetic properties are actually carried by the beliefs the artwork is meant to convey to the spectator). The last essay, Dodd's, goes against Schellekens and Goldie as well. Dodd is challenging the assumption that conceptual art counts as a form of art. Peter Goldie and Elizabeth Schellekens think that conceptual art is not experienced aesthetically, like traditional art, they view conceptual art(works) as *ideas*: "in conceptual art, there is no physical medium: the medium is the idea" (Schellekens, in Dodd 2016: 241).

Dodd views conceptual work as cross-genre, we need not necessarily think of it as an art form, since it seems to be something we experience cognitively, not perceptually (the physicality of the conceptual art may not be available to our perception, we *think* about it).The last three essays try to help us make sense of the aesthetic value of conceptual art.

This anthology is a wonderful opportunity to explore Peter Goldie's work. It is also an insightful read for those interested in philosophy of mind, aesthetics, narrative thinking and theories of emotions.

REFERENCES

- De Jaegher, Hanne and Ezequiel Di Paolo, "Participatory sense-making." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2007): 485-507.
- Dodd, Julian (Editor), *Art, Mind, and Narrative: Themes from the Work of Peter Goldie*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Hutto, Daniel, "Narrative Understanding." In *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Literature*, edited by Noël Carroll and John Gibson, 291-301, London: Routledge, 2015.
- Gallagher, Shaun, "The Narrative Alternative to Theory of Mind." In *Radical Enactivism. Intentionality, Phenomenology, and Narrative*, 223-229, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006.
- Goldie, Peter, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Goldie, Peter, "Narrative, Emotion, and Understanding." In *Narrative Research in Health and Illness*, edited by Brian Hurwitz, Trisha Greenhalgh, Vieds Skultans, 156-167, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.
- Goldie, Peter, "Grief: A narrative account." *Ratio* 24, no. 2 (2011): 119-137.
- Goldie, Peter, *The Mess Inside: Narrative, Emotion and the Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Popova, Yanna, "Narrativity and Enaction: the Social Nature of Literary Narrative Understanding.", *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (2014), 895.