# EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY IN LEV NIKOLAEVICH TOLSTOY'S NOVEL "ANNA KARENINA"

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**Annotation:** *This article examines the claim that emotional responses are important for understanding literary texts. This statement can be found in different versions. We will distinguish between the weak and the strong variant, both of which are prominently represented by Jennifer Robinson.*

**Keywords:** *emotional vocabulary, vocabulary, emotive vocabulary, fiction, suffixes, lexemes.*

When Robinson suggests that "our emotions help us construct a satisfactory summary of a novel, play, or film, or what is often called an 'interpretation'" [1], she advocates a weak version of this claim, since emotions are considered simply an unnecessary means of facilitating understanding.

I have no objection to this statement. There are many fairly uncontroversial ways in which emotions can "help" us understand literary texts. Suppose John read Tolstoy's War and Peace and was deeply impressed by it. Subsequently, John became interested in other books written by Tolstoy, and as a result read Anna Karenina. It can be said that epistemic emotions such as curiosity, interest, desire to expand one's horizons, etc. played a role in understanding the work, because without them John probably would never have read - and therefore, if everything went well , I would understand... Anna Karenina'. Therefore, it seems entirely reasonable to us to say that emotions did help John understand Anna Karenina.

But Robinson is not satisfied with the depth of this statement and continues to defend a stronger version:

Even if you agree with me that emotional experience […] helps us understand [a novel], you might still think that the same understanding can be arrived at through more mental engagement with the text. […] I will try to show that this is not so: nothing else can do the job that emotions do. Without appropriate emotional reactions, some novels simply cannot be adequately understood. [2]

The last sentence of the passage contains, in our opinion, the most ambitious and at the same time the most interesting version of the statement: emotions are important for understanding literary texts. This is a strong option because it considers emotion to be a necessary condition for understanding. [3] In what follows, we will focus on this version of the claim and examine the three main arguments that Robinson presents in its favor.

The first argument can be called the trigger argument. [4] Its main idea is this: every reader of a literary text is faced with a huge amount of information that he has to process. Emotions are said to provide orientation and guidance in navigating this thicket: they are “sources of significance” [5] in the sense that they “alert us to important aspects of history.” [6] Therefore, if we react emotionally to a particular episode, event, or character, “we are in a good position to try to figure out why we react emotionally the way we do, and this in turn may prompt us to look in the work for the origins of that reactions. […] [T]hereby [we] acquire a deeper and more complete understanding of the work.”[7]

The trigger argument does have some persuasive power. Aspects that evoke strong emotional reactions are often important for understanding a text. Consider, for example, Anna's last meeting with her son Seryozha in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. Not only is this episode generally pity-inducing, watching Anna and her realization of what her son means to her also makes the reader realize that Anna's life from now on will be nothing short of miserable as she simply cannot live without her. son. Additionally, the trigger argument explains why reading the same text over and over again has the potential to reveal new information over and over again. Each time we read, we are in a different emotional state, and our emotions draw attention to different aspects of the text, thereby potentially providing new understanding. [8]

However, the potential triggering function of emotions does not convincingly support the claim that when it comes to adequately understanding literary texts, “nothing else can do the job that emotions do.” [9] To support this claim, a trigger argument must provide evidence that triggering her emotional reactions is the only way for the reader to become aware of important episodes in the text. We can't understand how the trigger argument can do this. Think, for example, of a reader who is well trained in all areas of literary criticism. Its awareness can be evoked by a number of textual aspects that are not only based on emotional reactions, but also remarkable in form and content: significant episodes can, for example, be placed right in the middle of the book (for example, the fateful meeting of the English and the Scottish queen in Schiller's Mary Stewart"); they could be the first or last cases of their kind (like the last meeting of Anna and Seryozha); or there may be special narratological features, such as changes in focus or changes in the tense of discourse (as, for example, the alternation of present and simple past at the beginning of Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain). Therefore, to take one's emotional reactions into account is to draw inferences from one of many possible sources of significance. Emotional reactions in this regard are not exceptional. Moreover, it seems problematic to assume that, as Robinson says, only “appropriate emotional reactions”[10] can bring about our awareness of significant passages of text. [11] Suppose a sadist reads Anna Karenina and, because of her sadistic constitution, she does not feel pity for Anna, but instead enjoys her sadness and pain. Why should the inappropriate emotion of joy make the reader aware of the central episodes of the text (for example, the last

meeting of Anna with Seryozha) to a lesser extent than the emotion of pity? Apparently, any emotion can serve as a trigger. Thus, the trigger argument fails to prove the strong thesis that "[without] appropriate emotional reactions, some novels simply cannot be adequately understood." [12]

Robinson considers a second way in which emotional reactions are necessary for the understanding of literary works, namely, emotional engagement with fictional characters: Briefly, the argument is as follows: (1) An understanding of character is necessary for understanding the great realistic novels of which I have in mind; (2) understanding character is similar to understanding real people; and (3) understanding real people is impossible without emotionally engaging with them and their difficulties. [13]

In what follows, we will take (1) for granted, but discuss statements (2) and (3). To examine the putative epistemic value of emotional interaction with a real person, we begin with Robinson's claim (3).

The phrase "emotional involvement" refers to a wide range of emotional reactions, such as falling in love with someone or being angry at each other; some reactions involve forms of perspective taking or feelings toward or toward another person, such as sympathy, emotional contagion, and sympathy. Given the richness of emotional reactions and the brevity of this article, it is necessary to narrow the scope of this phrase. Since it is often argued that empathy is a way of understanding another person's thoughts, or at least a process that helps us understand others, [14] empathic emotions seem to be the most promising candidates for emotional responses that may play a crucial role in understanding another person. . character or person. [15]

Following Coplan, we understand empathy as a creative process in which the empathizer accurately models the mental situation of the target, the latter including not only states such as beliefs and desires, but also affective states. [16] Given Robinson's proposal, one might assume that the affective components of empathy, that is, empathic emotions, have epistemic value. According to this specification, we can reformulate (3): Understanding real people is impossible without empathic emotions (towards them).

How can empathic emotions be a source of understanding for others? Understanding someone's mental situation involves information about her mental states, which in turn include not only cognitive but also affective states. The phenomenology of affective states is a central aspect of these mental states. If a person does not know what it is like to be in a state of grief, for example, he is missing important information about grief and, therefore, about the mental situation of the grieving person. Experiencing an affective state is a way of gaining information about what it is like to be in that particular state. We do not want to argue here that it is metaphysically necessary to experience a certain affective state in order to know everything about the phenomenology of this state, but we argue that it is necessary

psychologically: in order to acquire all information about the phenomenology of an affective state, a person must experience this state.

Even if this is true, we still have not shown that the empathic experience of a particular affective state is necessary for obtaining information about what it is like to be in that state, and therefore for properly understanding the mind of another person. Consider the following situation: A is trying to understand B while B is in the affective state c and A has experienced state C before. To properly understand B, is it necessary for A to experience C again, this time empathetically? We don't think so: if A has already had an experience with , she knows what it is like to be in the state of s (let's take it for granted that she remembers this experience). If this is true, then empathic experience of an affective state does not provide additional information about the phenomenology of the affective state in question if the empathizer has already had prior experience of the relevant affective state. As a result, we argue that empathic emotions are only necessary for empaths who have not previously experienced the affective state in question to fully understand another's thoughts.

So far, we have focused only on the epistemic value of empathic emotions for understanding real people. We now see that even if (2) is true, readers do not necessarily need to empathize with fictional characters to know what it is like to be in their mental situation—prior experience of the affective state in question is sufficient.

Let us now look at premise (2). The question is whether understanding a character's mental situation is similar to understanding the psychology of a real person. Although there is no consensus on what mental process the term empathy refers to, all theories seem to assume that there is a goal in the form of mental states. Regardless of whether we follow a realist or an antirealist view of the ontology of fictional characters, the problems of the fictional case begin with this basic assumption: according to antirealist positions, there are no such things as fictional characters. Therefore, there is no such thing as the mental states of fictional characters, whereas according to the theories of realist creationists, fictional characters do exist. However, here fictional characters are treated, for example, as abstract artifacts.[17] or the provisions of literary criticism. [18] In any case, they are assumed to be entities without mental states. If either of these versions is true, then either fictional characters, including their mental states, do not exist, or they exist only as entities without mental states. Against this background, the object of empathy in the fictional case remains an open question. If we allow for non-existent objects of empathy, we still need to clarify what mental states we are talking about.

A solution to this problem would be for empathizers in a fictional scenario to imitate or imagine the mental states that the fictional characters are in according to the text. For example, if the fictional target is in a state of fear, the empathizer has to imitate that particular state. Thus, the reader receives information about the phenomenology of the character’s specific state. But many literary works do not, or at least do not always, directly reflect the state of mind of the characters. Therefore,

elucidating the mental states of a fictional character turns out to be a matter of textual interpretation. However, a direct meeting with a real person whose mental state we want to find out is not much different from this procedure. We are, of course, not talking about textual interpretation, but it is still necessary to interpret its appearance and/or behavior. It is worth noting that even real objects of empathy are sometimes not perceived directly. An empathizer can empathize with a real person during or after reading a text about him. Thus, it appears that interpretation is involved in all of these cases. So, we assume that in this respect there are no decisive differences between the real and the fictional case.

However, it is important to note that if there were two or more equally plausible interpretations of the appearance and/or behavior of a real person, then that interpretation would have no effect on the fact that the real person is in a particular state. state (or that it does not exist). In the case of fictional characters, the situation is somewhat different. There may be literary texts with more than one equally plausible interpretation of a character's mental situation at a particular point in the story. Moreover, there may be an interpretation of a according to which the character is in the affective state x but not in the affective state y. However, according to interpretation b, the character is not in the affective state x, but in the affective state y. Although the interpretations are contradictory, they can both be equally adequate or equally “optimal”, as Gregory Currie puts it. [19] Readers, following these different interpretations, will then simulate different mental situations and therefore gain information about different mental states through empathizing with the fictional character. One empathetic reader, following an interpretation of a, will gain information about what it is like to be in state x; another empathetic reader, following interpretation b, will gain information about what it is like to be in state y. Since empathy in both cases is based on equally adequate interpretations, any piece of information that readers receive as a result of the empathic process is equally epistemically relevant with respect to the mental situation of a fictional character, [20] whereas in the case of the real goal is a fact that determines the epistemic significance of the information.

As a result, I find that empathy for fictional characters is decidedly different from empathy for real people in relevant respects. However, we have argued that empathy for real people as well as fictional characters can provide the information needed to properly understand the fictional character or real person in question. However, empathy is not the unique way to obtain information discussed above. Previous experience with the affective state in question may also be a source of this information. Therefore, to properly understand (certain) literary texts, empathy is only necessary for those readers who have no prior experience of the affective state in question.

The results of our discussion of the empathy argument are also relevant to the third argument we will now discuss. Its main idea is this: to adequately understand a literary text, it is not enough to grasp the content of the story and process all the

information given by the text in a purely cognitive way. According to the argument, there are additional features of literary texts that can only be captured through emotional reactions:

[When] reading a complex novel like Anna Karenina, we don't just feel emotions about Anna. We use our emotional reactions towards her as data to interpret her character. [21]

As discussed above, empathic emotions toward fictional characters can be sources of information for those readers who have never previously experienced the affect in question. However, Robinson seems to be thinking about a different kind of information that is important to the interpretation of the character and therefore the entire work, but is not necessarily related to the mental situation of the characters. Next, we will focus on the question of what additional evidence our non-empathic emotional responses may provide.

In the process of interpreting text, we often attribute properties to texts or fictional characters. Robinson attributes the qualities of humor and repugnance to Strether and Macbeth, the protagonists of Henry James's novel The Ambassadors and Shakespeare's play Macbeth, respectively. [22] Such properties can be called response-dependent properties, since whether an object has such a property depends on the corresponding response. To put it bluntly, because we are repulsed by Macbeth's ruthless pursuit of power and amused by Strether's awkward but endearing behavior, Macbeth is repulsed and Strether is amused. If the response that solves the problem is an emotional response - as in the case of amusement or repulsion - it seems very plausible to say that our emotional responses give access to a special kind of information, viz. information about whether a fictional character has a certain response-dependent property or not.

However, I am not convinced that this is evidence for a strong claim. It is not clear to us why information about characters who have certain response-dependent properties should be provided only by emotional reactions. We believe that it is possible to know whether a character has a certain emotional response-dependent property or not without reacting emotionally to the character oneself. For simplicity, let's assume that a character has the property of being funny or disgusting as soon as at least one person finds him funny or disgusting. However, it is important to note that while being funny or repulsive depends on the emotional reaction of at least one person, it does not depend on the mood of a particular person. emotional reaction. For this reason, we think that a reader can also learn that Macbeth is a repulsive character or that Strether is a funny character if she, for example, observes the behavior or facial expression of another reader. Let's assume that Mary smiles, chuckles, and sometimes even laughs out loud when she reads a particular passage from The Ambassadors (and also assume that Mary's facial reactions and behavior are reliably related to her emotional reactions), so that the reader can infer that that Mary finds Strether funny and therefore that Strether has the response-dependent property of being funny. The

reader's own emotional reactions to Strether play no role in this scenario. If this is true, then information about properties that depend on emotional reactions can, at least in principle, be obtained not only through emotional reactions, but also in other ways.

To summarize: Although Robinson strongly defends the claim that emotional reactions are necessary for adequate understanding of literary texts, we remain skeptical about the persuasiveness of her claim. Although emotional reactions, of course, often trigger our awareness of important episodes in literary texts, the reader's attention can in principle be captured by other features of the same episode that can be perceived without reacting emotionally. Robinson is also correct in arguing that empathic responses to fictional characters can provide information about the phenomenology of affective states.

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