

Puzzles and Problems for the Theory of Focalization

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Created: 29. December 2011 Revised: 25. April 2013

1 Introduction

{1} In his contribution to the *Living Handbook of Narratology*, Burkhard Niederhoff gives an insightful discussion of both the concept of focalization and the history of its study. We would like to contribute to the discussion by expanding his list of topics for further investigation. All in all, we feel that much more needs to be done.

{2} Before we start, some brief preliminaries are in order:

{3} First, Niederhoff distinguishes between 'focalization' and 'point of view,' pointing out that by introducing the newly coined term 'focalization,' Genette in fact introduced a new concept into the debate. According to Niederhoff, that is, the term 'focalization' does not cover the same phenomena as traditional terms like 'point of view' or 'perspective' do. Now, we do think that it is an interesting question whether Genette's account of focalization does succeed in covering what was traditionally called narrative 'perspective' or 'point of view'. Indeed, this is one of the very topics for future research we shall turn to in the next section. For the time being, however, we shall stick to a more traditional understanding of focalization, one that we take to be common currency in narratology today. According to this understanding, the term 'focalization' is meant to replace terms such as 'narrative point of view' or 'narrative perspective,' but it is *not* meant to introduce a new *explanandum*, or concept, to the debate.[1]

{4} Second, while we aim at a list of problems to be solved by a theory of focalization, we shall be especially specific about one of its sub-types, namely internal focalization. Let us briefly say why. To begin with, internal focalization apparently has received the bulk of attention by narratologists and, in our view, it poses the most interesting, and especially thorny, problems for a theory of focalization. (It might also be the most widely used sub-type of narrative perspective in literary narratives.) But be that as it may, we simply do not have the space to extend our considerations with equal attention to all the other types of

focalization. In any case, we believe that once you understand what is at issue in the case of internal focalization, you have learned a great deal about focalization and its difficulties in general.

{5} Note, finally, that we do not try to solve any of the problems raised. Rather, we try to substantiate the claim that we are dealing with real problems, and we briefly, and rather eclectically, point to some literature that we think throws some light on them.

2 Puzzles and Problems

{6} So let's start with our list of puzzles and problems.

1. What is the core of the phenomenon?

{7} Before one sets out to propose a definition of a term, one needs to be reasonably clear about what range of phenomena the term is supposed to cover. Otherwise, of course, one will never be sure as to whether the definitional enterprise is successful or not. What, then, is the core of the phenomenon called 'focalization'?

{8} For the sake of simplicity, let's stick to internal focalization. In internal focalization, what is said in the text is presented from the point of view of a particular character. But what does this amount to? Here are three proposals that look promising to us:

{9} (a) Genette claims that internal focalization is "essentially [...] a *restriction*" (Genette 1980: 192). What is restricted is the reader's access to the fictional world such that, in internal focalization, readers get to know only what is accessible to a particular character. 'Restriction,' hence, is interpreted in a way that is both reader-oriented and epistemic, and the core of the phenomenon is captured by the question: what do we (not) get to know about the fictional world, and why?

{10} (b) A second proposal takes as its point of departure the idea that whatever is the case in a fictional world can be described in many different ways. Hence, for any description a fictional narrative may contain, we can distinguish between its *referent* (some object, event or state of affairs in the fictional world) on the one hand and the *mode of presentation* on the other.[2] To give an example, my neighbor might be identified as 'John Smith,' 'Tilman's neighbor' or 'the nice guy we met last year on our trip to

Rimini'. Normally, the mode of presentation connected to a description may tell you something about what the utterer knows, takes to be important, values, etc. In fictional narratives, the situation is slightly more difficult, however, because we need to interpret the mode of presentation in a more indirect fashion. The reason, simply put, is that the utterer of fictional descriptions is the author, and rather than taking the mode of presentation to indicate what's on *his* mind, we have to take it as a cue for the reconstruction of some fictional character's perspective. Thus, the core of internal focalization, according to this proposal, draws on the idea that the mode of presentation of what is said in a fictional narrative can be explained with reference to what is on a particular character's mind.

{11} (c) The third proposal to be mentioned here takes its departure from the notion of intentionality in the philosophers' sense.[3] Since what is said in the text is presented from a particular character's perspective, the character stands in an intentional relation to some object or state of affairs. The key to internal focalization thus lies in spelling out the peculiarities of such intentional relations. With the help of these characteristics we can proceed to define an 'intentional operator,' and this operator in turn allows us to clarify the semantic deep structure of internally focalized passages of text. To put it in a nutshell, the content of an internally focalized passage of text lies within the scope of an intentional operator. The task of a theory of internal focalization amounts to specifying the semantic properties of intentional operators which determine the deep structure of internally focalized sentences.

{12} On the face of it, these proposals are quite different. While according to (a), internal focalization needs to be characterized in terms of a restriction of a reader's information about what is the case in the fiction, according to (b) we are dealing with a particular mode of presentation of what is said in a fictional narrative which in turn calls for a particular interpretive move, and according to (c) we are dealing with a particular deep structure of narrative sentences which can be illuminated with the help of a philosophical theory of intentionality. In order to highlight the differences between the three theories, we could say that (a) sees internal focalization in terms of a relation between texts and readers, (b) in terms of surface properties which are cues for a particular interpretive operation, and (c) in terms of the semantic deep structure of narrative sentences.

{13} It is clear that much more needs to be said about the details of each of these theories, about their strengths and weaknesses, and about how they might hang together. To start with (a), note that under the label 'restriction' a whole group of

ideas is hidden of which we mention but one. It is a good idea to ask any such theory: What is restricted, and how, and for whom? Whether the restriction idea can be made to work hangs on answers to these questions. Next, what is particularly interesting is that each of the theories suggests a different path for the direction of future research. And, finally, none of the theories sketched so far contains a definition of the term 'internal focalization'. To this, we shall turn in the next paragraph.

{14} Before we do so, we would like to draw attention to the fact that (a), (b) and (c) as presented thus far only concern internal focalization, and it is not clear (to us) whether they can be accommodated to other types of focalization. Genette, of course, famously claimed that the idea of a restriction is the common denominator of all kinds of focalization. But can this idea be made to work? And does this claim hold true for (b) and (c) also?

2. How can the phenomenon/phenomena be cast in definitions?

{15} The next problem is well known to any beginner in Narratology. When she tries to understand what focalization is all about, she will search the literature for a definition. Typically, all she will find are catch-phrases and characterizations by example or through metaphor.[4] This is remarkable since, to some degree, all narratologists agree about what the phenomenon is. (Tricky details are mentioned in the following sections.) Thus, one desideratum for a theory of focalization would be a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, one that doesn't make use of the words "perspective," "point of view," or related metaphors. In the previous section, we already mentioned three paths on which one could try to produce such a definition.

{16} But there is more to definitions.[5] One should be clear about what one wants from a definition. Sometimes, a rough characterization is all one needs. For practical purposes of interpretation, it is often more important to have a general orientation than to be able to decide (by consulting a definition) for every case if it is, e.g. internally, focalized. Even like the popular "the narrator tells more than/less than/exactly as much as one of the characters in the story knows" can be useful for the purpose of interpretation, and they are widely used indeed. For theoretical purposes, however, we need to be more precise.

{17} But even then, not all definitions fulfill the same purposes. Some are merely meant to get us started. We want to know what we are talking about before entering discussion. Such definitions are not meant to be correct. They are supposed to provide some common basis, which is then open for refinement. Other definitions are the products of discussion and conceptual analysis. With these endpoints we aim

at truth and precision.

{18} Finally, one can suspect that a clear-cut definition is not to be had. Maybe internally focalized texts show nothing more than a family resemblance, i.e. maybe there are no necessary conditions which all internally focalized texts fulfill. Still, one can then aim for an explication of the concept of focalization. The points made with regard to definitions apply equally to such explications. Focalization is a technical term which is used for divergent purposes. Its explication should be tailored to these purposes.

{19} We miss any such considerations in current narratological discussions of focalization.

3. Is focalization a gradual phenomenon?

{20} All accounts of focalization distinguish between different types of focalization. But it is not customary to understand focalization as a gradual phenomenon. According to most theories, a text cannot be more or less focalized through a character. Once we have established that a text is, say, externally focalized, there are no more distinctions to be made in terms of focalization.

{21} This assumption, however, need not be taken for granted. It sure looks as if focalization could be a gradual phenomenon. Compare any two internally focalized texts. It indeed makes sense to say that one conveys the perspective (motives, emotions, thoughts, ways of thinking about something) of its focal character much more than the other text does. If so, theories of focalization should allow for this phenomenon. Probably, though, gradual focalization doesn't make sense for all types of focalization. At least *prima facie* it is a bit weirder to say that text A is stronger zero-focalized than text B than it is to say that text A is stronger internally focalized than text B.

{22} Note that caring for gradual focalization doesn't make a theory of focalization useless. But it seems to us that focalization sometimes can be graded, and that this fact has not yet received the theoretical attention it deserves. Such attention will probably carry over to the first two groups of problems mentioned above. Not any definition allows for gradual focalization. For example, if internal focalization would just consist in the narrator telling exactly as much as the focal character knows, no grading would be possible.

{23} One might try to deny that focalization is a gradual phenomenon. As we mentioned in section 2, definitions and theories are build for specific purposes. One can acknowledge that from text A we learn more about a character's perspective than from text B, but maintain that, all things considered, it is more useful to think

of focalization as not gradual.

{24} Finally, one can acknowledge that grading plays a role, but only in the justification of focalization-claims. A passage of text would then, e.g., be either internally focalized or not. But one would allow for weaker and stronger reasons for believing that the passage of text is internally focalized.[6]

4. What is the domain of definition?

{25} For any term, we can specify what kind of objects it may be applied to. The term 'internal focalization' is usually said to apply to texts. Difficulties arise, however, once we try to be more specific about what 'text' is supposed to mean here:

{26} First, in most cases, only a passage of text is internally focalized. While it seems that there are hardly any upper limits as to the length of such a passage, it is an interesting question how small an internally focalized passage of text can be. In particular, we may ask whether it is reasonable to apply the term 'internal focalization' to discourse units no larger than single expressions. As we have indicated above, a singular term may reflect the point of view of a particular character. This may be the case in a sentence that, as a whole, clearly expresses what goes beyond the character's perspective.[7] Should we say, then, that the singular term is internally focalized? Any refusal to say so, of course, will have to come up with an argument. This argument is the more convincing the more it builds on a plausible understanding of the core of the phenomenon 'internal focalization'.

{27} Second, it is an interesting question how we determine the precise contours of a *particular* passage of text that is internally focalized. The following passage is a case in point:

{28} Amen. Die Frauen verließen das Zimmer. Sie hüstelten, ordneten das Halstuch, zogen den Mantel zurecht, warteten am Ende der Bankreihe auf die Nachbarin, lächelten ihr zu, bildeten Gruppen und flüsterten. Einige hatten ihre Männer mitgebracht, die gingen hinter ihnen und hielten ihre Hüte an der Krempe, bereit, sie aufzusetzen. Herr Gigon stand vor den Bänken, die Bibel in den gefalteten Händen, er nickte leise den offenen Gesichtern zu. Seine Worte sanken wieder in ihn zurück.

Er blickte über die leeren Bänke, deren dunkelbraunes Holz tiefe Kerben von Taschenmessern sich langweilender Konfirmanden trug. Er blieb lange stehen vor diesen Bänken, sie waren tröstlich. Erst dann wandte er sich

den Zurückgebliebenen zu, beantwortete ihre Fragen und war dankbar, drückte ihre Hände, schaute in ihre Augen, dankte für ihr Kommen und blickte dann auch ihnen nach.[8]

{29} Arguably, the first paragraph does not contain any hints that we are dealing with an internally focalized passage of text. This is different in the second paragraph. It invites a reading according to which it is Herr Gigon who experiences the desks as comforting, and it is him who knows that they have been maltreated by the catechumens' knives. But once this much is granted, we might decide that the first paragraph reflects Gigon's optical perspective as well as his mood, too. Thus, it is him who thinks or says "Amen," who watches the women leave, and who feels that his words sink back into him. But how are we to settle the matter? Should we, say, assume that there is some maximizing principle to the effect that a focalized passage of text extends to the next textual signal that indicates that the focalization *must* change? And does such a principle only apply in a forward-looking manner or also backwards, to previous sentences or passages?

{30} Third, we might wonder whether texts other than *fictional* narratives can be internally focalized, and whether texts other than *narratives* can be focalized (see Niederhoff 2011: [37]). On the face of it, this might be taken to be simply a matter of definition: if our definitions allow for an application of the term to non-fictional or non-narrative texts, then this could be said to settle the matter. But since our definitions are intended to capture what we take to be the core of the phenomenon, we need to ask whether there is anything special about the internal focalization of fictional narratives that sets it apart from other modes of linguistic perspective, more broadly conceived. Is there? We are aware of no serious discussion of these questions in current narratology.

5. What does a comprehensive taxonomy of types of focalization look like?

{31} All theorists agree that there is more than one type of focalization. And all theorists have in mind their own taxonomy of different kinds of focalization. But this is where the common ground ends.

{32} One important question is whether a given taxonomy is complete. Take, e.g., Genette's three types of focalization: internal, external and zero. Genette himself seems to understand his taxonomy such that any passage of text must fall into (at least) one of the three categories, i.e. the taxonomy would be complete. But, depending on the way in which the three types of focalization are spelled out, this assumption may turn out to be false. For example, if one allows for focalization through an extradiegetic narrator, such focalization could fall into neither category:

It is not internal, since that concerns only characters in the story, it is not external, since we get more than an outside view on the narrators perception, beliefs etc., and it is not zero-focalized either since a distinctive perspective is conveyed.[9]

{33} A second question concerns the exclusiveness of a given taxonomy. Take again Genette's taxonomy. One take on his taxonomy seems to be that a passage of text can, e.g., never be simultaneously internally and externally focalized. Again, this is one possible way of handling a taxonomy, but it is not the only one. Depending on how we understand the concepts of internal and external focalization, one could claim that a passage of text can be simultaneously internally focalized through character A and externally focalized on A. Genette's own example illustrates the point: in Jules Vernes novel, the external focalization on Philéas Fogg can also be understood as an internal focalization through Passepartout. Whether one wants to disallow the taxonomy to be exclusive hangs on how to decide such cases.

{34} The general question of how to deal with borderline cases touches not only on the questions of exclusiveness and completeness. Remember our example from *What Maisy Knew* (see our note 7), in which one word expresses Maisy's perspective. One way to deal with such an example would be to just ignore it. One could claim that although such borderline cases exist, the way to go in understanding the phenomenon is to concentrate on *central cases*, i.e. cases in which whole sentences are the smallest focalized unit.[10] Another example is direct speech: Traditionally, direct speech has not been analyzed in terms of focalization, since the focus of attention lay on a type of perspective which, as it were, shines through the narrator's speech. Direct speech, in contrast, conveys only the character's perspective, or so it seems.[11] But now reconsider the three accounts (a), (b) and (c) we listed in section 1: all three agree that internal focalization has something to do with revealing the focal character's beliefs, attitudes, ways of understanding and describing the world, and the like. And direct speech seems to be the most immediate way to do just that. Thus, there are systematic reasons to analyze direct speech in terms of focalization.[12]

{35} Note that the theoretician has a certain leeway here. Up to a point, she can decide to exclude phenomena, and she can, again in rather narrow borders, decide in which category to put borderline cases, or not to classify them at all. A taxonomy can be useful without being complete or exclusive.

{36} In any case, one should ask how many types of focalization we need in the first place. There are two aspects to this question. Depending on what one takes to be the core of the phenomenon, many types of focalization might be made up. This is especially true for the restriction conception, which allows for infinitely many

different restrictions,[13] but the other two conceptions also by themselves do not force one to accept a definite number of focalization-types.

{37} More importantly, the question is which types of focalization to use in a theory of focalization. The answer will depend on how closely one wants to stick to traditional accounts of focalization, which types of focalization occur most often, and which types of focalization one is most interested in. Of the many decisions theorists need to make, two have gained prominent status. There is an ongoing debate concerning the question if zero-focalization should be counted as a type of focalization of its own, and there is the question if such a thing as 'hypothetical focalization' exists (see Niederhoff 2011a: [18]).

6. Is there a linguistic basis to focalization, and how is the relation between the linguistic basis and focalization to be understood?

{38} Let us, again, focus on internal focalization. There has been quite some research on the grammatical constitution of *free indirect discourse* (also known as, e.g., *represented speech and thought*).[14] While free indirect discourse has proven to be a veritable Hydra once one tries to pin down its possible linguistic manifestations, it should, first of all, be noted that free indirect discourse cannot be equated with internal focalization. As we noted above (see section 5), in internal focalization, what is said is presented from a particular character's point of view. Now, the most immediate expression of a character's point of view is, obviously, *direct discourse*. If Peter truthfully utters what's on his mind, then we get to know how Peter sees things.

{39} Taking this into account, the question arises whether trying to enumerate the linguistic foundation of internal focalization is a sensible task in the first place, since we should expect a mixed bag of rather different linguistic phenomena.[15]

{40} However, there are other things worth looking into. What is of fundamental importance for the theory of focalization is a better understanding of the relation between the linguistic basis and (internal) focalization. Internal focalization is a higher-order property of narrative texts, and it surely must rest on the text in one way or other. But there are different ways to conceive of this dependence:

{41} First, we might conceive of the dependence of focalization on the text in *causal* terms. According to this understanding, certain textual features cause readers to read a passage of text as being presented from a character's point of view. This way of conceiving the matter fits nicely with a psychological terminology: textual cues trigger a particular mental representation. If you think of this representation as a mental model, you might welcome the idea that the mental model exhibits a

perspective that mirrors the one in the text.

{42} Second, we might think of particular textual features as *reasons* for interpreting the respective passage of text as internally focalized. This way, the relation between text and focalization is characterized in *epistemic terms*. If you want to substantiate the claim that some passage of text is internally focalized, you have to enlist specific textual features. Note that this way of thinking about the matter imports common features of reason-talk: reasons come in different strength, they are additive, they might be highly context-dependent (including mutual dependence), and they can be outweighed. Thus it is possible that a particular textual feature (a particular evaluation, say), constitutes only a weak reason in favor of the text being internally focalized, that it needs to be combined with other reasons in order so successfully back up the interpretation, that it has no such function in other contexts (including other occurrences in the same text), and that it loses its justificatory power in the face of counter-evidence (such as evidence that the narrator's, and not some character's, values are at issue).

{43} Third, we can think of the relation between linguistic features of a text and the higher-order property 'internal focalization' in logical terms. Two sets of properties can be related in different ways which can be characterized in such terms that, despite being abstract, allow us to be very precise about the respective relation. One such logical term philosophers have coined in order to characterize the relation between brain states and mental states is 'supervenience'. Supervenience comes in different types. One feature that is common to all of them is captured by the phrase that, when the properties of set A supervene over the properties of set B, there is no change in A-properties without a change in B-properties.[16] Now, the question whether some sort of supervenience holds between linguistic features of a text and the text being internally focalized forces you to think about some interesting problems. For one, we might ask whether we must characterize B-properties (our linguistic features, that is) in terms of *types* or *token*. Or we might ask how to deal with the fact that *prima facie* there seems to be some dependence of B-properties on A-properties, too—or else, how do we have to understand the fact that the characterization of some particular linguistic feature in a passage of text may seem to depend on whether we have come to the conclusion that the passage is internally focalized?[17] Last but not least, given that we have come to the conclusion that there is *no* supervenience relation between textual features and internal focalization, we might have to seriously rethink the claim that there is causal relation between the two.

{44} As with our above list about different conceptions of the core of the phenomenon called 'internal focalization' (see section 1), it is clear that much more

needs to be said about the details of each of the three ways of thinking about the relation between linguistic properties of the text and focalization, about their strengths and weaknesses, and about how they might hang together. So far, we haven't done more than outlining the problems.

{45} What is particularly interesting is that conventional narratology does not seem to be well-equipped for tackling these problems. It seems much more natural to address them within a theory of fiction, the reason for this being that it is the theory of fiction which has come up with the most elaborate conceptions of the interplay between textual (linguistic) properties and representational properties of texts.[18]

7. What about psychological uptake?

{46} In our discussion of the relation between linguistic features of a text and the higher-order property of (internal) focalization, we have already briefly alluded to the question of psychological uptake of (internally) focalized passages. Here, a number of related questions pop up:

{47} First, we may ask whether some particular psychological stances correspond to particular types of focalization. It is very tempting, from an interpreter's point of view, to claim that an internally focalized passage of text makes people see things from the character's point of view. The details are tricky here once one starts to take statements like this one literally. Suppose some passage of text is internally focalized in that it represents the character's visual perspective on some scenery. Should we say, then, that this is how readers (mentally) 'see' it? That the answer to this question is far from clear stems from the fact that there are many things a reader could be rightfully said to do when reading the passage: she could imagine that the focal character sees the scenery; she could imagine that she sees the scenery; she could (visually) imagine the scenery; and she could imagine visual properties of the scenery. Not only do these accounts amount to different things, there is also a lot of psychological and/or philosophical theory lurking in the background here.[19] Talk of 'mental models,' we are afraid, comes in all too handy, but it tends to lose sight of these differences. In any case, there is need to test any such hypothesis empirically.

{48} Second, in the face of a number of studies on the subject, it is still an open question whether (internal) focalization triggers complex responses such as empathy or sympathy.[20]

{49} Third, and pertaining the question of the scope of an internally focalized passage of text raised above (see section 4), it is an empirical question whether readers indeed tend to keep the focalization of a passage constant until further

notice.

{50} Note that all of these questions aim at illuminating the empirical reality of reading (internally) focalized narrative texts. Thus, the corresponding theses are open to empirical confirmation and, especially, falsification. Conventional narratology has not been too prone to march in this direction, however.[21]

8. Can Narrators focalize?

{51} As noted in section 5, there are systematic reasons to allow for direct speech as being internally focalized. If one was to do so, and given some communicative model of narration in which the narrator speaks directly, counting direct speech as internally focalized would be strong evidence for counting any text which has a narrator as internally focalized through the narrator. It would also be evidence for the idea that focalization can be iterated. However, both ideas are not trivial at all. Let us briefly describe them in turn.

{52} The concept 'internal focalization' has usually been used to catch any extra perspective above the narrator's perspective. Following Genette, the emphasis lay on *distinguishing* between the kind of point of view a narrator brings to the text and the (additional) point of view that is due to one of the characters. However, it is possible to distinguish two perspectives at work without having to claim that they are different in kind. The alternative picture would know only one kind of perspective/focalization/point of view but, without falling prey to the pre-Genettean conflation of 'who speaks' and 'who sees,' it would claim that a text can be structured by the point of view of a narrator and, simultaneously, by the point of view of a focal character.[22] Whether such an account can be made to work is an open question.

3 Coda

{53} Let us close with two general remarks on narratological research on focalization.

{54} First, in reviewing, as we did, some of the problems the current theory of focalization faces, one quickly notices that things hang together. Answers to particular questions suggest, and sometimes actually demand, particular answers to other questions. You cannot combine them at your whim—not, that is, if you care for a coherent theory. Of course, this is not to say that it does not make sense to try to analytically separate the questions before you set out to answer them.

{55} Second, it seems that there is a particular difficulty anyone faces who tries to

come up with a history of the subject. Niederhoff, in his article on point of view in the *Living Handbook*, makes the point that

{56} [w]hen narratologists review the work of their predecessors, they usually focus on the gaps and the mistakes. Previous theories are demolished or quarried for the purpose of building a new one. This does not make for a fair appraisal of the critical tradition. Perhaps it is time for a non-partisan history of theories of point of view and related metaphors from James (or earlier) to the present day, preferably by someone who makes a vow not to conclude the study with a new theory or typology of their own. (Niederhoff 2011: [37])

{57} This is well put, indeed. However, it is very hard not to come up "with a new theory or typology" if that is what allows one to attain a rational reconstruction of the critical tradition. A "fair appraisal of the critical tradition" sometimes requires one to make use of conceptual and theoretical means that go beyond what was available to this very tradition. Apparently, there is no such thing as an innocent eye on focalization. New theories, then, are inevitable.

4 Notes

[*] Work on this response was funded by the German Initiative of Excellence.

[1] Doubts about the sharp distinction Niederhoff sees between 'focalization' and 'perspective,' by the way, arise from the very definitions he gives in the introductions to the respective articles in the *Living Handbook*. Thus, he claims that "[p]erspective in narrative may be defined as the way the representation of the story is influenced by the position, personality, and values of the narrator, the characters and, possibly, other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld" (Niederhoff 2011: [2]). "Focalization," in turn, is defined as "a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld" (Niederhoff 2011a: [2]). Now, the difference between the two definitions obviously hinges on the question whether there is a real difference between "the way the representation of the story is influenced by [a certain subject's] position, personality, and values" on the one hand and "a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge [of a certain subject]" on the other. We feel that, presumably, these are two different ways of saying more or less exactly the same thing.

[2] This idea goes back to Frege 1892.

[3] This account of internal focalization was suggested to us by our colleague Jan Stühling. For clear introductions into the philosophical theory of intentionality, see, e.g. Searle 1983; Rosenthal 1987.

[4] Genette himself sets the unfortunate standard by declaring his idea to be coextensive with previous accounts, and then jumping between explications of the concept of focalization, heterogeneous lists of examples, and tests for types of focalization (cf. Genette 1980).

[5] For an excellent overview, see Robinson 1954.

[6] See section 6 for the commitments of the talk of reasons.

[7] See Cohn 1978, 47, for famous examples from Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*. One of the sentences, containing "papa," is this: "It hadn't been put to her, and she couldn't, or at any rate didn't, put it to herself, that she liked Miss Overmore better than she liked papa; but it would have sustained her under such an imputation to feel herself able to reply that papa too liked Miss Overmore exactly as much." For another especially insightful discussion see Reinhart 1983; see also our discussion of the general problem of borderline cases in section 5.

[8] Bichsel 1994, 38. Note that this is the beginning of the short story.

[9] But see section 8 for the question if narrators can really focalize.

[10] However, *What Maisie Knew* is one of the standard examples mentioned in accounts of internal focalization. Therefore one would also have to claim that it has been wrongly cited as a core case.

[11] Of course, direct speech by a character can be internally focalized through a different character.

[12] See also section 7 for further comments, and section 8 for the related problems of iteration and applying focalization to narrators.

[13] For instance, one can make up a yellow-focalized text, in which the reader gets to know only about yellow things.

[14] Most notable are the book-length studies Banfield 1982, Ehrlich 1990, and Fludernik 1993.

[15] This is not to say, of course, that studying these linguistic phenomena *individually*

is not a sensible thing to do. Quite the contrary is the case. But it is not clear to us what the linguist gains by grouping these diverse phenomena together under some heading that captures their possible function as indicators of internal focalization. (Note that, usually, it is assumed that any linguistic phenomenon can have more than one function.)

[16] For details, see the discussion in McLaughlin/Bennett 2011.

[17] This may be true of evaluations, for instance. Once we have decided that a particular passage of text is internally focalized, it is often customary to assume that all the evaluations expressed in it are due to the focal character. Otherwise, we might take them to express a narrator's evaluative attitudes.

[18] Note that the *definiens* of our initial definition of internal focalization is entirely cast in representational terms, for it speaks of a character and her point of view. For an excellent account of this sense of representation, see Walton 1990. Amongst the rare attempts to explain narrative in terms of this theory of fiction is Bareis 2008 .

[19] See, e.g., Currie 1995; Nordoorf 2002; McGinn 2004.

[20] See e.g. van Peer/Pander Maat 1996.

[21] A notable exception is Bortolussi/Dixon 2003. Somewhat ironically, the neglect of empirical confirmation/falsification is *especially* true of many variants of so called 'cognitive narratology'. While more conventional narratology is immediately empirically testable on the basis of the text, there seems to be no easy way to test the bold assertions cognitive narratologists tent make about what goes on in the head when reading narrative fiction. For a discussion that is sensitive to these problems, see Gibbs 2000.

[22] Cf. Lindemann 1987; Chatman 1986. Note also that in our talk we take for granted that there is a categorical difference between narrators and characters. According to some theories, any fictional narrator *is* a fictional character; see Köppe/Stühling 2011, for details. Note also that iteration of focalization is one possible way in which different perspectives could be arranged. But one could, in principle, reject the idea of focalization by narrators while embracing the iteration of character-focalization, i.e. that one can take Paul's view on Anna's view on Peter's view etc.; cf. Bal 2009, 160-163.

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