

CAN WE TURN A BLIND EYE TO ELIMINATIVISM?

FRANCISCO CALVO GARZÓN

Abstract

In this paper I shall rejoin to two arguments that Stephen Stich (1990; 1991; 1996) has recently put forward against the thesis of eliminative materialism. In a nutshell, Stich argues that (i) the thesis of eliminative materialism, according to which propositional attitudes don't exist, is neither true nor false, and that (ii) even if it were true, that would be philosophically uninteresting. To support (i) and (ii) Stich relies on two premises: (a) that the job of a theory of reference is to make explicit the tacit theory of reference which underlies our intuitions about the notion of reference itself; and (b) that our intuitive notion of reference is a highly idiosyncratic one. In this paper I shall address Stich's anti-eliminativist claims (i) and (ii). I shall argue that even if we agreed with premises (a) and (b), that would lend no support whatsoever for (i) and (ii).

Keywords: eliminativism; folk semantics; theory of reference

I Eliminativism and Folk Semantics

Stich interprets the thesis of eliminativism as the claim that the theoretical terms of folk psychology fail to refer. However, Stich holds that the theory of reference is a branch of psychology:

It is my contention that a 'philosophical' theory of reference is in fact a bit of psychology. Its aim is to make explicit the tacit theory of reference that is

presumed to underlie our intuitions about questions like [(a) Does '____' refer to ____? and (b) Does '____' refer to anything at all?]. (Adapted from Stich, 1991, pp. 240-1)

Stich then contends that the relevant responses of psychological subjects fail to determine whether or not the theoretical terms of folk psychology refer, once they realise that folk psychology has been discredited empirically.

[There] is good reason to suppose our tacit theory of reference says little or nothing about questions like [(a) and (b)] when the term in question is a theoretical term in a largely discredited theory. (*Ibid.*, p. 241)

Stich supports this claim by considering our commonsense *intuitions* about reference in the following experiment:

Start with a theory that you take to be largely correct, and focus on some theoretical term central to that theory. Now imagine that the theory is found to be much worse than you supposed. One tenet after another must be rejected and replaced by a very different, and incompatible, tenet. At each step, ask whether the term, as it was embedded in the old theory, can plausibly be said to refer to anything. It is my experience that most people who play this game report that when the theory is imagined to be seriously mistaken, they often no longer have any clear intuitions about the reference of the term. (*Ibid.*, p. 240)

In short, Stich's first argument against the thesis of eliminativism rests upon an empirical claim. Namely, that people who know folk psychology has been discredited actually lack clear intuitions about the reference of the theoretical terms of folk psychology. Our tacit theory of reference remains silent when confronted with questions like "Does '____ believes that p' refer to anything at all?" (*Ibid.*, p. 241). Therefore, Stich concludes, the thesis of eliminativism lacks determinate truth conditions, and is not true but not false either.

Let me start with one caveat in order to reply to Stich's above argument. Stich's argument hinges on *what* theory of reference we employ. As we saw, by favouring a psychological approach to the theory of reference, Stich reached his anti-eliminativist conclusion. An obvious starting point for a rejoinder would then be to ask whether we are justified in making use of commonsense intuitions when dealing with semantic notions such as reference. Stich (1996) wonders what makes a theory of reference correct. He considers two accounts. On the one hand, his *folk semantic* intuitional account according to which the role of a theory of reference is to capture the theory of reference that speakers tacitly endorse. An alternative approach to reference, Stich notes, would be a scientific theory of reference whose role is to construe word-world mappings to be employed by the empirical sciences, such that reference is determined by empirical facts regardless—maybe, orthogonally—of the intuitions of the layman. Stich dubs this alternative *proto-scientific* theory of reference. Stich argues that we cannot make use of proto-scientific theories of reference unless we have an up-and-running empirical discipline where the relational notion of reference does play an active role; and we still lack such a discipline.

So, from a practical point of view, the only way to make progress is to concentrate on the account that views a theory of reference as an attempt to describe the intuitive reference relation, the one specified by folk semantics. (Stich, 1996, p. 46)

Those sympathetic to the proto-scientific approach may simply object that intuitions and tacit theories of reference miss what's at stake. The key question is: What is the relevant evidence to construct a theory of reference? Stich is considering intuitions in response to semantic questions (a) and (b) above, which concern theoretical terms. However, the construction of a theory of reference requires the employment of many technicalities orthogonal to the intuitions of the lay man. The issue of what the notion of reference consists of, someone may contend, is not to be settled by a folk psychological theory of reference. It is rather to be settled by a *scientific theory of reference*; in fact, by the best motivated and best regimented theory of reference at hand. It's an open question what this scientific theory of reference is, but folk psychological intuitions, if relevant at all, are not relevant in the simple and direct way that Stich's argument supposes.¹

Nevertheless, we may go at least *part way* with Stich for argument's sake, and assume that people's commonsense intuitions may play a direct role, and further that commonsense intuitions have little to say about the reference of the theoretical terms of largely discredited theories. As I shall argue next, Stich's anti-eliminativist conclusion does not follow from this empirical assumption.

Following Stich, we may concede that intuitions are partly relevant when assigning truth values to sentences. Consider the following sentence:

(s) Santa Claus brings joy to children.

The reference—i.e., truth value—of (s) is determined by the reference of its constitutive parts. We have then a number of options available: If the singular term ‘Santa Claus’ refers to the historical character, *Saint Nicholas*, we may conclude that (s) is false. Saint Nicholas does not bring joy to children. On the other hand, if ‘Santa Claus’ is an empty singular term, which fails to refer, (s) is neither true nor false. And finally, if ‘Santa Claus’ refers to a *fictional* character (see Evans, 1982, pp. 363-6), (s) would be *true-in-the-fiction*. Clearly, depending on which *intuitions* we have about the referential relation of the singular term ‘Santa Claus’ to the objects of our universe of discourse, we will assign different truth values for (s), or no truth value at all. In this example, it is reasonable to maintain, as Stich does, that speakers’ intuitions do matter. Someone, moreover, may contend that Stich’s ‘commonsensical’ approach may well generalize to other situations. Plausibly, intuitions do matter as well—at least, to some extent—in determining the reference of sentences embedding, for example, mass terms.

Consider the mass term ‘caloric’ which, according to XVIII and XIX centuries’ scientists, referred to a fluid substance held in bodies which produces melting, boiling, etc. Take the sentence:

(s’) When caloric flows into a body it produces thermal expansion.

Suppose firstly intuition tells us that the extension of ‘caloric’ is *not* the null class—i.e., there is at least one object in our universe of discourse which falls under the mass term ‘caloric’. Then, if we accept the verdict of intuition, (s’) is false. The reason is that nowadays we know that thermal expansion is produced by kinetic energy, rather than by

caloric fluid. Alternatively, suppose intuition tells us that the extension of ‘caloric’ is the null class. And, furthermore, we accept the verdict of intuition. (s’) this time will come out true. Notice that (s’) can be read as:

(s*) $(x)(y)((x \text{ is caloric} \ \& \ x \text{ flows into } y) \rightarrow x \text{ produces thermal expansion in } y)$

Now, if the predicate ‘x is caloric’ has the null class as its extension, then (s*) is true. The reason is that for *any* pair of objects, *a* and *b*, in our universe of discourse we may wish to consider, such that:

$((a \text{ is caloric} \ \& \ a \text{ flows into } b) \rightarrow a \text{ produces thermal expansion in } b),$

the antecedent will always be false. We may then say that (s*) is true *by default* (see below).

The eliminativist, however, need not call into question these considerations. With the above proviso in mind, the eliminativist can still argue that an analysis of the logical form of belief-sentences drives us to the eliminativist’s conclusion—even though intuitions may play the role Stich assigns to them. First, consider a fast route that a sympathizer of Stich may try out to obtain Stich’s conclusion. Someone may argue, for example, that the sentence

(s’’) Tom’s belief that the cat was on the mat caused him to say that the cat was on the mat,

has no determinate truth-conditions. We may interpret (s''), the suggestion would run, as referring to *Tom's belief*—i.e., to *his belief that the cat is on the mat*. It would then follow that (s'') has no determinate truth conditions, since we are treating 'Tom's belief that the cat is on the mat' as an empty singular term. Therefore, Stich's conclusion obtains.

This conclusion, however, may have been too rash. We may read the logical form of belief-sentences in terms of a quantificational structure that binds a belief-variable. Take, for example, the following folk psychological law:

(A) If x believes that P & Q then, *ceteris paribus*, x believes that P.

Taking P and Q to be variables for lumps of Home language, we may set out the above folk psychological law in formal notation as follows:

$$(x)(P)(Q) \{(\exists y) (x \text{ believes } y \ \& \ y \text{ samesays } P \ \& \ Q) \rightarrow \textit{ceteris paribus}, (\exists z) (x \text{ believes } z \ \& \ z \text{ samesays } P)\}$$

On this reading, (A) is, by default, trivially true—if the eliminativist is right. Notice that the antecedent is false, assuming that the eliminativist is right, whatever values we choose for 'x', 'P', and 'Q'. However, admitting that the laws of folk psychology are (trivially) true does not damage the eliminativist's position. If we now examine a particular folk psychological statement, we shall see why, and see which claims of folk psychology the eliminativist rejects as false, not, as Stich requires, *neither true nor false*. Take a particular application of (A):

(A1) $(\exists y)$ (a believes y & y samesays “the cat is on the mat and someone left the window open”) \rightarrow *ceteris paribus*, $(\exists z)$ (a believes z & z samesays “the cat is on the mat”)

To explain a’s action, the folk psychologist claims:

$(\exists y)$ (a believes y & y samesays “the cat is on the mat and someone left the window open”) \rightarrow *ceteris paribus*, $(\exists z)$ (a believes z & z samesays “the cat is on the mat”)

$(\exists y)$ (a believes y & y samesays “the cat is on the mat and someone left the window open”)

$(\exists z)$ (a believes z & z samesays “the cat is on the mat”)

The explanatory argument is valid, and its major premise is true, the eliminativist concedes. But the minor premise and conclusion, the eliminativist claims, are simply false because they are existential claims, and there is nothing we can assign as a value of y or of z which will make either true.

The reader can now see which claims of folk psychology the eliminativist rejects as false—not, as Stich requires, neither true nor false. According to the above logical transcription, ‘a’s believing’ is not a singular term. The sentence “a believes that the cat is on the mat” does not contain a reference to a particular belief of a , but rather is a general existential statement with respect to *believings of z by a* . Particular folk psychological statements such as the minor premise and the conclusion in the above folk explanatory argument are false. They contain variables, bound by existential

quantifiers, which range over beliefs. We are thus dealing with *relational* expressions whose reference is, not an object, but a second-level function. *Contra* Stich, the question “Does ‘____ believes that p’ *refer to* anything at all?” has the determinate answer ‘Yes’. It refers to the relation $(\exists y)$ ____ believes y & y *samesays* p. We don’t obtain *truthlessness*, as Stich requires, for ‘a believes that the cat is on the mat’, but rather *falsity*, as the eliminativist claims. This conclusion, moreover, is perfectly compatible with the claim that general folk psychological laws, such as (A) above, are true. The fact that (A) is (trivially) true, I contend, is to be seen as a byproduct of the *logical* apparatus in place when spelling out folk psychological laws *formally*. In short, the fact that (A) comes out true *by default* reveals that no ontological commitment is being made, and is therefore compatible with the eliminativist claim that particular applications of (A) contain relational expressions which do *not* fail to refer, and, thus, allow us to dissolve the alleged indeterminacy urged by Stich.²

II Eliminativism and the Idiosyncrasy of Reference

Stich is quite prepared to give up the empirical premise he relied on in his first argument. Namely, that speakers lack clear intuitions about the reference of the theoretical terms of folk psychology. What’s at stake now is not whether the thesis of eliminativism lacks determinate truth conditions. Even assuming that the eliminativist thesis were true, Stich now contends, that would be philosophically uninteresting. Stich sees the notion of reference as ultimately an *idiosyncratic* word-to-world semantic mapping. The idiosyncrasy of reference, as we’ll see next, is what makes the eliminativist thesis philosophically uninteresting.³

Stich favours a ‘causal-historical’ theory of reference—e.g., Putnam, Kripke, etc.⁴ Put bluntly, after an initial reference-fixing event, reference is transmitted along a

causal-historical chain. Stich then wonders how we are to discriminate between genuine and fake referential transmissions. Since the theory of reference is a part of the theory of psychology (see section I above), Stich notes that genuine transmissions must be those “sanctioned by intuition” (Stich, 1991, p. 242). Intuitions, nonetheless, do *not* provide us with a *homogeneous* test of how word-to-world mappings are to be transmitted from the original referential baptism onwards:⁵

[When] one looks carefully at [...the] class of transmissions that pass this test [i.e., the test of commonsense intuition], it appears that in each category the allowable events are a mixed bag having at best a loosely knit fabric of family resemblances to tie them together. The causal chain linking my use of the name ‘Rebecca’ with my daughter is notably different from the one linking my use of ‘water’ with water. And both of these are notably different from the chain linking my use of ‘quark’ with quarks. What ties all these causal chains together is not any substantive property that they share. Rather, what ties them together is simply the fact that common sense intuition counts them all as reference fixing chains. (*Ibid.* pp. 242-3)

And Stich goes on:

But if it is indeed the case that common sense groups together a heterogeneous cluster of causal chains, then obviously there are going to be lots of heterogeneous variations on the common sense theme. These alternatives will depart from the cluster favored by common sense, some in minor ways and some in major ways. They will link some words, or many, to objects or extensions different from those

assigned by commonsense intuition. In doing so, they will characterize alternative word-world links, which we might call REFERENCE*, REFERENCE **, REFERENCE***, and so on. (*Ibid.* p. 243)

In Stich's view, there's nothing substantially different in our favoured scheme of reference—call it REFERENCE—, as opposed to REFERENCE*, REFERENCE**, etc. apart from the fact that it is the one intuition guides us towards. REFERENCE enjoys no privileged status over its putative alternatives since the tacit rules that according to folk semantics determine our commonsense intuitions are themselves, Stich claims, a cultural product.⁶

The bearing on the eliminativist thesis is straightforward to Stich. The fact that '___ believes that p' *refers* to nothing brings no worry, since REFERENCE is a highly idiosyncratic mapping. Other relational mappings—e.g., REFERENCE*, REFERENCE**—will pick on various word-to-world semantic relations such that '___ believes that p' does *refer** to, or *refer*** to, *something*; and we have no factual reasons to favour REFERENCE over, say, REFERENCE*, but merely historical reasons.⁷ In the remainder of this paper, I shall elaborate on an argument against Stich's second argument based on the idiosyncrasy of reference.

It strikes me as surprising that Stich does not provide any *specific example* of an alternative theory of reference under which the extension of '___ believes that p' is *not* empty. Stich treats beliefs as having content in virtue of causal relations linking those beliefs to referents in the world. However, Stich points out, there are a lot of causal relations out there, such that we may assign referents to sentences in a number of ways. Nevertheless, if it is actually the case that, under a particular word-world mapping, believers* and beliefs* do exist, why doesn't Stich put an example on the table, nailing

thus down the eliminativist's coffin forever? As I shall argue next Stich does not do so because he *cannot* do so. The following quote from his recent *Deconstructing the Mind* reveals where Stich's argument goes astray:

On the account we have been working with, eliminativism is true if and only if '____ is a belief' refers to nothing. Let ELIMINATIVISM* be a doctrine that is true if and only if '____ is a belief' REFERS* to nothing; let ELIMINATIVISM** be a doctrine that is true if and only if '____ is a belief' REFERS** to nothing; and so on. *Clearly, some of these ELIMINATIVISM-stars are bound to be true, while others will be false.* (Stich, 1996, p. 51; emphasis added)

The key question is: Why 'bound to'? How can Stich be certain that there is going to be a semantic mapping where '____ is a belief' REFERS*...i...* to something? It seems to me that Stich uses the idiosyncrasy of reference to give a free ride to his anti-eliminativist conclusion. To advance the flavour of my rejoinder, I shall contend that if according to our sanctioned theory of reference eliminativism follows—premise that Stich grants—, then ELIMINATIVISM*...i...* will follow as well, for *any* value of *i*—i.e., for any alternative theory of reference Stich may properly consider.

Granting that under REFERENCE eliminativism follows, the eliminativist's fast route to making her case is to argue that there's just *one* correct theory of reference: Namely, REFERENCE. The anti-eliminativist challenge then comes, as we saw, from the idiosyncrasy of reference. Nonetheless, Stich's move unjustifiably shifts the burden of proof to the eliminativist. The eliminativist is being indirectly forced to argue that REFERENCE is the only correct theory of reference. I believe however that this is the

wrong approach to the issue. An explanation must be forthcoming from the anti-eliminativist corner as to how alternative theories of reference can deliver results orthogonal to those achieved via REFERENCE (orthogonal with regard to truth value assignments). As things stand, the onus is on Stich to tell us *how* different theories of reference can deliver different results as far as ontological considerations go, *while* remaining empirically adequate.

Since Stich does not offer any particular example, we may speculate about which alternative word-world mappings would provide him with a best-case scenario. In a Quinean fashion, for instance, we may generate an indefinite number of mappings that pick out objects and extensions different from those that REFERENCE picks out; the only constraint being preservation of *stimulus meaning*.⁸ Our intuitive theory of reference, REFERENCE, axiomatizes belief-predicates as follows:

(a) (x) (x satisfies ‘belief’ iff x is a belief).

However, we may easily produce a number of Quinean alternatives, REFERENCE* and REFERENCE**, which contain respectively axioms (a*) and (a**). To wit:

(a*) (x) (x satisfies ‘belief’ iff x is a temporal stage of a belief);

(a)** (x) (x satisfies ‘belief’ iff x is an undetached belief part); and so forth.

It is of course odd to talk of a temporal stage of a belief, and of undetached belief-parts. But assuming beliefs are, if they exist, the kind of things folk psychology claims them

to be—functionally discrete, semantically interpretable and causally efficacious states⁹—then we may take such states to have parts and temporal stages.¹⁰

Unfortunately, Stich cannot make use of REFERENCE* or REFERENCE**. The reason is simply that if beliefs don't exist, then temporal stages of beliefs, or undetached parts of beliefs cannot exist either! Assuming, with Stich, that under REFERENCE ELIMINATIVISM is true, it is then difficult to see how under REFERENCE* or REFERENCE**, ELIMINATIVISM* or ELIMINATIVISM** is going to be false.

What Stich requires then is a more radical way of producing alternative theories of reference—i.e., a strategy not constrained by preservation of stimulus meaning—, such that ' ____ is a belief' can *refer-star* to something. However, to illustrate why Stich's project is doomed we need not worry about how more radical examples would run.¹¹ Rather, let me draw your attention to an issue that has been largely ignored in the literature on Eliminativism:

It is standardly assumed among physicalists that the debate between an eliminativist and an anti-eliminativist relies on agreement on *basic* theories such as physics. Physics allegedly has the resources to explain everything. The eliminativist wishes to eliminate folk psychology. On the other hand, the anti-eliminativist wishes to reduce folk psychology to the physical level, or reconcile the two levels in some other way. Elimination or reduction is what's at stake, agreeing thus about the privileged status of physics as an essential part of our scientific explanations.¹² The language of Physics involves notions of reference of various kinds. Note that for example reference of observational terms is different from reference of natural kind terms, or reference of highly theoretical terms. In like vein, physics involves notions of causality and notions of explanation of various kinds. However, and this is the key point, we are not to entertain alternative theories of reference which change the notions of reference,

causation and explanation of our *background* physical theory. Now, granting this, we certainly cannot assume that the referential relation which we are holding fixed for the terms of physics (e.g., quarks) will dictate to us how the reference of ‘_____ believes that p’ is to be fixed. We may wonder then what the appropriate referential relation for the distinctive predicates of folk psychology is. Trying to provide an answer goes beyond the purposes of this paper. Nonetheless, any naturalistic attempt will grant the fact that there are certain associated concepts that we are not allowed to gerrymander, such as causation. These considerations have a direct bearing on Stich’s argument.

There are some basic requirements that a ‘causal-historical’ theory of reference—which Stich endorses—is not allowed to violate. Terms or predicates of a language cannot refer to objects or extensions in the world unless there is an appropriate *causal relation* between the referential expressions in question and the referents they allegedly pick out. This brings two further constraints which will suffice to drive my point home: On the one hand, any putative theory of reference must be able to engage in predictions of linguistic behaviour. On the other hand, the causal relation between the terms employed and the objects they pick out must facilitate non-linguistic dealings with the objects in question. But how can Stich confidently claim that there are theories of reference which meet these constraints, *and*, at the same time, differ in truth value assignments with respect to REFERENCE?

Once the Quinean alternative has been discarded, I cannot think of other strategies that meet this *desiderata*. Take, for instance, Putnam’s permutation argument. Putnam exploits the notion of an arbitrary permutation—i.e., an arbitrary one-to-one mapping of every object in the universe of discourse onto another. In this way, we may obtain *any* arbitrary word-world mapping by making compensatory adjustments to the extensions of predicates when assigning referents to terms.¹³ It seems then that Stich has

a path to exploit. If I can make any radical rearrangement in the referential relations under consideration, we may find out to our surprise that even though ‘_____ is a belief’ fails to refer under REFERENCE, it does *refer** to something under REFERENCE*. Unfortunately, any *radical* rearrangement would miss the causal link between terms and their referents, and considering the above constraints, we would lose any ability to predict linguistic behaviour, and to amend our own cognitive attitudes (linguistic as well as non-linguistic) by using others as a source of information. Hence, it is my contention, Stich’s only way out is to gerrymander the notion of causation.¹⁴ By changing the notion of causality in any bizarre way in the Home language—i.e., the metalanguage—, he may stick to his argument. I ignore how such a strategy might actually run; however we need not worry since, as we saw, the overall discussion of Eliminativism presupposes a common starting point between eliminativists and anti-eliminativists as far as the notion of causation is to be fixed in physics.¹⁵

In conclusion, if eliminativism is true—premise that Stich grants—, then ELIMINATIVISM*...i...* must also be true, at least for the Quinean alternative ways of generating theories of reference considered above.¹⁶ This outcome holds, I conjecture, unless Stich is willing to give up constraints that govern the construction of our semantic apparatus, as well as, the privileged status of physicalism, in which case the price we would be paying to refute eliminativism would be far too high.

III Conclusion

Stich argued that (i) the thesis of eliminativist materialism, according to which propositional attitudes don’t exist, is neither true nor false, and that (ii) even in the case it were true, that would be philosophically uninteresting. To support (i) and (ii) Stich relied on two premises: (a) that the job of a theory of reference is to make explicit the

tacit theory of reference which underlies our intuitions about the notion of reference itself; and (b) that such a notion of reference is a highly idiosyncratic one. In this paper I tried to show that even if we agreed with premises (a) and (b), Stich's arguments are still doomed.

Before closing this paper, however, let me expand briefly on an aforementioned caveat with regard to Stich's second argument, and premise (b) above—see fn. 16. As I acknowledged earlier, the ideal eliminativist conclusion according to which if eliminativism is true, then ELIMINATIVISM*...i...* must be true, for any alternative theory of reference Stich may consider, is far too strong. Or, better said, it is too strong to be supported by the arguments I've offered in section II. Rather, what I've tried to show is that Quinean alternatives won't do for Stich, and that Putnam's unfettered permutations won't do either. However, I haven't shown that there is no non-Quinean/Putnamian permutation available which is constrained by holding causation, and the rest of our background theoretical apparatus— notions of reference, explanation, etc.—fixed. On the other hand, it must be stressed that Stich has not shown that there is such an option available. Hence, a fairer way to read the results of section II would be as a stand off between the eliminativist and Stich. This, nonetheless, should not be interpreted as a partial defeat for the eliminativist. Stich himself has abandoned the views we've been concerned with in this paper. As I mentioned in section II, Stich (1990; 1991) interprets the thesis of eliminativism as the claim that the theoretical terms of folk psychology fail to refer. However, according to Stich's (1996) latest (!) view, the theory of reference just isn't the place to go to when trying to settle ontological disputes. Stich's latest twist in the eliminativist plot makes of him a 'social constructivist' or, as he prefers, a Quinean pragmatist—see Stich (1996), pp.55-9, p. 72. If Stich is right, and the theory of reference cannot shed any light upon the

eliminativist/anti-eliminativist debate, then whether my results in section II are strong enough, or not, becomes a secondary issue. The purpose of this paper has been simply to show that even if semantic considerations of the sort Stich considered threw some light over disputes on ontology, we still couldn't turn a blind eye to eliminativism.¹⁷

University of Murcia

References

- Bickle, J. (1998) *Psychoneural Reduction: The New Wave*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Calvo Garzón, F. (2000a) 'State Space Semantics and Conceptual Similarity: Reply to Churchland', *Philosophical Psychology* 13: 77-95.
- Calvo Garzón, F. (2000b) 'A Connectionist Defence of the Inscrutability Thesis', *Mind and Language* 15 (5): 465-80.
- Calvo Garzón, F. (under review) 'Connectionism and Propositional Modularity.'
- Evans, G. (1982) *The Varieties of Reference*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fodor, J. (1987) *Psychosemantics*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Godfrey-Smith, (1986) 'Why Semantic Properties Won't Earn Their Keep', *Philosophical Studies* 50: 223-36.
- Putnam, H. (1981) *Reason, Truth and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stich, S. (1983) *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Stich, S. (1990) *The Fragmentation of Reason*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Stich, S. (1991) 'Do True Believers Exist?', *The Aristotelian Society* 65 (suppl.): 229-44.

Stich, S. (1996) *Deconstructing the Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹ Those uneasy with the employment of intuitions in the first place may consult Bickle (1998) for a formal construal of our ontological commitments which undermines the role allegedly played by commonsense intuitions.

² For a different attack to Stich's first argument launched by Jackson, see Stich (1996), pp. 52-4.

³ For an origin of Stich's notion of the idiosyncrasy of reference see Godfrey-Smith (1986).

⁴ For argument's sake, I shall go along with Stich and grant a 'causal-historical' approach to reference. I believe, however, that the case against 'descriptive' theories of reference is not settled yet; though space prohibits me from extending on this matter. For Stich's distrust of descriptive theories of reference see Stich (1990, pp. 108-ff.; 1992, pp. 254-ff.).

⁵ Stich calls into question the homogeneity of the referential baptism itself, as well as the subsequent transmissions. I'll focus on the transmissions. Nothing in my present argument hangs on ignoring the ground-fixing events.

⁶ A comparison that Stich draws between folk semantics and the theory of grammar illustrates this point: "The fact that our intuitions pick out the particular word-world relation that we call *reference* rather than one of the many others [...] is largely the result of historical accidents, in much the same way that details of the grammar of our language [...] are in large measure the result of historical accidents" (Stich, 1996, p. 50).

⁷ I must confess I am a little sceptical about the role played by ‘historical reasons’ in bringing support to the idiosyncrasy of reference. The quote from Stich in fn. 6 above may bring implicitly an answer. However, Stich’s position would need to be fleshed out in more detail before submitting it to critical scrutiny. Nevertheless, I shall not press on this point here.

⁸ I’ll skip the details. See Calvo Garzón (2000a; 2000b).

⁹ This reading is not forced by the eliminativists themselves, but rather encouraged by defenders of folk psychology’s posits—the reader may care to consult, for example, Fodor, 1987, p. 10. See also Stich (1983) for an earlier elaboration of the three tenets of propositional modularity.

¹⁰ Further qualification would be required to make this counter-intuitive view tenable. We need nonetheless not worry for present purposes since, were we to discover empirically that temporal-belief-stages and undetached-belief-parts don’t exist, we wouldn’t even be able to generate alternative referential mappings to REFERENCE, in which case Stich would find himself unable to exploit the idiosyncrasy of reference for his purposes. The problems for Stich’s position, however, run deeper, and are not dependent on agreement on the above Quinean setting (see below).

¹¹ I have in mind for example Putnam’s (1981, chapter 2) model-theoretic arguments; in particular his permutation argument—see below.

¹² Obviously, the spectrum of possibilities is much broader. Anti-eliminativists may opt for any of the non-reductive materialist options available in the market nowadays. However, as far as my present considerations go, the Stich of *The Fragmentation of Reason* is a token-identity theorist, and would thus fall within the broad region I outline here—see Stich (1990, p. 103; p. 117). Nevertheless, in *Deconstructing the Mind* Stich

changes his mind on the epistemic status of physics. For present purposes, we may ignore his recent shift—see Calvo Garzón (under review).

¹³ The reader not familiar may consult Putnam (1981) chapter 2; and pp. 217-ff. for a formal proof of the argument.

¹⁴ Note that the only way for Stich to meet the above *desiderata* would be by generating ‘less radical’ alternative schemes of reference—less radical in the sense of trying to preserve the causal links between terms and their referents in the world. But, how ‘less radical’ can Stich go? Obviously, he would need to produce schemes of reference which earn their keep empirically—i.e., that remain empirically adequate with respect to the standard one (REFERENCE). But, to the best of my knowledge (although see section III below), that can only be accomplished by endorsing a Quinean framework, in which case Stich’s argument wouldn’t go through for the reasons offered earlier.

¹⁵ To illustrate the point, it might help to look at a case where there is wide agreement. Take ‘phlogiston’. According to Stich’s line of argument, the fact that ‘phlogiston’ fails to refer would be uninteresting. The reason is that, presumably, there is a different theory of reference according to which ‘phlogiston’ does refer to *something*. The question for Stich is thus: “But what could that ‘something’ possibly be?”. I fail to find an answer to this question that conforms to our scientific—physical—standards. In fairness to Stich it must be noted that precisely this sort of considerations have made him change his views dramatically on this subject (see Calvo Garzón, under review).

¹⁶ If put under pressure, I would be ready to concede that my conclusion is far more modest than the one that the eliminativist should set for herself. Ideally, the eliminativist would like to conclude that ELIMINATIVISM*...i...* must be true for *any* alternative theory of reference Stich may consider. Nevertheless, I believe the eliminativist can live with the more modest results achieved in this section (see section III below).

¹⁷ I would like especially to thank Jim Edwards for many helpful discussions on these and related topics during the last few years, and Patricia Kitcher for valuable comments and suggestions. This research was supported by a grant from *The Darwin Trust of Edinburgh*, and by a grant from the *Caja Murcia Savings and Loan Association of Spain (Fulbright Program)*.