

DISCUSSION NOTE

Against Slagle's Reading of Eliminative Materialism on Self-Defeating

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Abstract

Jim Slagle claims that eliminative materialism (EM) denies some of the mind's self-evident properties, such as intentionality, qualia and the view that beliefs are real or veridical. I, herein, will argue that what EM denies is actually the folk psychological notion of belief, not belief as such. The Churchlands construe propositional belief as merely one kind of representation in the larger representational scheme. The point here is not to deny belief, but to construe it as one of the, and possibly a very recent, sorts of representations that the brain uses, not the general or fundamental form thereof.

I. Introduction

The first half of this paper claims that Jim Slagle's recent argument in this journal seems to ascribe to eliminative materialists something which is no longer true of EM, given that EM is different in this version from the original arguments of every one of its leading proponents.¹ Slagle's version of the argument takes eliminativists to suppose that being eliminative involves denying belief as such. Upon closer scrutiny, it turns out that he assumes that the reason for elimination is not the conviction that a theory which embeds these features is false, but instead our prior ontological judgement concerning their nonexistence; that is, they are illusory. I claim that this is not the contemporary eliminative materialists'

1. Slagle, J. (2020). "Yes, Eliminative Materialism Is Self-Defeating." *Philosophical Investigations* 43(3): 199–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.12252>.

notion of eliminativistic name-dropping, and that Slagle's version hinges on a reversal of Stich and Churchland's own reasoning.

By contemporary eliminativism, I refer to the idea that takes the following as its central premise: the propositional attitude psychology's prospects of surviving the advances made in the brain and behavioural sciences are getting increasingly dim (that is, FP or common-sense psychology or belief-desire thesis), given that the view is, at best, seriously incomplete, or at worst, largely mistaken. Stephen Stich and Paul Churchland are the first two figures in mainstream philosophy to explore this idea by drawing from behavioural and cognitive sciences instead of from purely conceptual investigations. Stich's early publications display an ongoing engagement with cognitive science. Paul Churchland's book² and his seminal paper³ were similar efforts during the same period.⁴

These works provide the initial formulations of contemporary eliminativism against propositional attitudes.⁵ First, Stich explores the cutting-edge developments in primatology and cognitive science to see whether or not the notion of belief can be applied to animals or babies. In so doing, Stich, I believe, clears the path for contemporary eliminativism. A strand of future eliminativism emerged here, and other strands were also being followed as this exploration unfolded. The targets become much more focused and concrete. The first attack proceeds from a detailed knowledge of cognitive and behavioural sciences. The writing of the times is brimming with references to animal cognition, especially chimpanzee intelligence.⁶ In addition, other ventures were made into areas such as the pros and cons of AI studies, including the connectionist models, which were widely discussed. "Rules," "representations," "cognition," and "computation" were the concepts one was most like to have encountered in the best interdisciplinary journals on mind and behaviour.⁷ These all provided the grounds upon which to launch a full-

2. Churchland, P. M. (1979). *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

3. Churchland, P. M. (1981). "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes." *Journal of Philosophy* 78, no. 2: 67–90. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2025900>.

4. See, also, McCauley, R. N. (1986). "Intertheoretic Relations and the Future of Psychology." *Philosophy of Science* 53: 179–199.

5. Stich, S. P. (1996). *Deconstructing the Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

6. D. Premack and G. Woodruff, "Does the Chimpanzee Have a Theory of Mind?," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1, no. 4 (1978): 515–526.

7. Chomsky, N. (1980). "Rules and Representations," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, no. 3: 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00001515>; Fodor, J. (1980). "Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 1: 63–73, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00001771>; Pylyshyn, Z. W. (1980). "Computation and Cognition: Issues in the Foundations of Cognitive Science," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 1: 111–132.

scale attack against propositional attitudes and against von Neumann's computer metaphor for the human mind.

II. Contemporary eliminativism is not primarily an ontological issue

During the 1970s, Paul Churchland began to produce coherent and extensive literature by which to defend and advance what we could call “neurocomputational naturalism” today. Authors generally think that Paul Churchland's seminal paper,⁸ entitled “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes,” is contemporary eliminativism's starting point. In a nutshell, Churchland-style eliminativism primarily concerns the propositional conception of mind. More specifically, it argues against propositional attitudes, such as sentential belief and desire.

Eliminativism has come to broadly encompass philosophical theories of human behaviour and mind that weaken or altogether reject the idealised medium for the working and the structure of the propositional attitudes assumed by FP's framework. The idealised condition is the sentential notion of the representations and symbolic levels of computation. This assumption makes it possible to discuss ideal rationality, and to perfect decision making, including the total capacity to exercise free will. EM appears to many as an ontological hypothesis, given that EM attacks propositional attitudes.

Like many others, Stich⁹ repeatedly emphasises the view that eliminativism is essentially an ontological doctrine.¹⁰ However, it is not the case that eliminativism is actually an ontological doctrine, but it does include a few ontological anticipations; however, EM functions best at the methodological level, as a methodological doctrine, in the most relevant sense of the word “doctrine”: the body of principles in a system of belief, or a set of fundamental beliefs. There are principles and fundamental beliefs to be found in eliminativism. EM is a system of belief with a body of principles. What might they be? In what follows, I outline seven major beliefs and seven underlying principles of EM. When combined together, they yield insight into EM's core message that I intend to discuss after having presented the beliefs and the principles:

Belief One construes FP as a theory-like systematised set of inferentially, somewhat integrated, beliefs and the like, which laypeople have been using for millennia to predict, explain, and manipulate the thoughts

8. “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes.”

9. Stich, S. P. (1996). *Deconstructing the Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

10. See also Ramsey, “Was Rorty an Eliminative Materialist?”; Ramsey, “What Eliminative Materialism Isn't.”

and behaviours of others, as well as to coordinate and cooperate.¹¹ What we call FP is, at best, a philosophically idealised refinement of what actual folks possess.

Belief Two notes that FP has achieved no *significant* progress in its very long history, and has become increasingly isolated from the relevant sciences, thereby suggesting a stagnant and degenerative research programme.¹² This does not imply that FP did not evolve over time.

Belief Three observes that FP is, at best, only a rough approximation of underlying representational and computational states and processes. At worst, it is a seriously flawed theory of human behaviour, whose problems primarily become conspicuous when we test it in the contexts of animals, prelinguistic children, abnormal psychological conditions, or neurological syndromes, or better, when we attempt to get non-vague predictions therefrom and compute its success in terms of measurable predictions. Animal problem-solving, the split-brain phenomenon, phantom limb pain, almost universally held cognitive fallacies, very young children's display of theory of mind, or the difficulties involved in the applications of the notions of belief and desire in many daily situations—all these suggest severe flaws at the core of FP.¹³

Belief Four is an observation made from the history of science. The observation is that in similar cases from other domains in the history of scientific change, the wholesale elimination of entrenched folk frameworks is not uncommon. Thus, the arguments about FP being a series of common idioms displaying familiarity, the central role played by the theory for some broader system of belief, or the intuition suggesting the craziness of abandoning it, have no force.¹⁴

Belief Five is a negative attitude that contrasts with many of the analytic dualities that are used as tools for making moves, and is popular in core analytic philosophy: the analytic and the synthetic, the conceptual and empirical, philosophy and science, the shift in meaning and the shift in theory, truth and rational belief, semantics and pragmatics, the necessary and the contingent, and finally, ontology and epistemology.¹⁵ Using labels like “necessary” and “conceptual” is not helpful, given the lack of

11. Churchland, P. M. (1994). “Folk Psychology (2).” In S. Guttenplan (ed.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 308–316.

12. Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes.”

13. For many other examples, see Churchland, P. S. (1986). *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

14. Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes.”

15. Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*.

a much better account of what they mean and how the boundaries between these pairs ought to be drawn.¹⁶

Belief Six puts eliminativism under the parent category of neurophilosophy, whose parent category is a naturalistic framework that “argues for physicalism, for intertheoretical reduction, for naturalising epistemology, for conceptual-role semantics and for revisability of theory at every level (eliminative materialism).”¹⁷ EM is a scientific attitude about our self-conception, one that is our person-theory. Taking the *possibility* of a wholesale elimination of that self-conception *seriously* is known as EM.¹⁸ EM is not the idea that we should empty the content of mind; instead, it is an ontological level for a prediction, not a final judgement about the fate of FP.

Belief Seven is a hunch that the Parallel Distributed Processing approach (PDP) version of connectionism, or some strand in the dynamical approach, could provide a firmer ground upon which we might construct a superior theory of cognition, one with a higher explanatory capacity and greater predictive power than the classical architecture does or may eventually have.¹⁹ It may replace the classical representational theory of mind and the classical computational model (symbolic processing), which is a flawed framework about how the mind works. The classical approach’s striking failures primarily lie in explaining the graceful degradation of function, holistic representations of data, spontaneous generalisation, and an appreciation of context.²⁰ These problems may or may not be fixed through the progress of computing power, memory capacity, and smart programming.

While eliminativists see FP’s failures to account for the structure of our internal representations and the nature of computations undertaken in biological cognition as signalling the need for an alternative framework in the study of cognition, the connectionists see the failure of classical architecture to simulate the enormous flexibility and incredible efficiency of human cognition as the initial indicators of the real need to explore alternative paradigms in cognitive modelling. Cognitive models like the one developed by critics of connectionism, are not the only

16. Churchland, P. M. (1986). “The Continuity of Philosophy and the Sciences.” *Mind and Language* 1, no. 1: 5–14, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.1986.tb00088.x>.

17. Churchland, P. S. (1986). “Replies to Comments.” *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Computational models of cognition and perception, 29, no. 1–4: 241–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00201748608602089>.

18. Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, 5.

19. Churchland, P. M. (2012). *Plato’s Camera: How the Physical Brain Captures a Landscape of Abstract Universals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

20. Rumelhart, D. E., J. L. McClelland, and The PDP Research Group. (1986). *Parallel Distributed Processing: Explorations in the Microstructure of Cognition. Volume 1: Foundations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. ix–x.

game in town, though. Indeed, I am not even certain that, in the contemporary philosophy of cognitive science, they are currently the most popular game in town.

I have sketched a set of seven fundamental beliefs that form eliminativism's major premises. Some of these are assumptions, others are attitudes. Still others are observations and hunches. Now I will attempt to enumerate the essential principles that link the beliefs listed above to EM's rather notorious conclusions.

Principle One is to upgrade our psychological taxonomy and statements – observed regularities, explicit assumptions, and underlying principles – as brain and behavioural sciences proceed in a way that gleefully compels us to do so.²¹

Principle Two involves the endorsement of Quine's definition of existence, thereby implying that ontology is best when it is derivative of epistemology. "What there is" exists through its being a part of our successful theories: "to be is to be the value of a bound variable" in true theories.²² It is not very meaningful to discuss these postulations' metaphysical existence or external reality above and beyond the necessity to postulate them in order to have a valid theory.

Principle Three considers "unification by reduction" in scientific explanation, something that is desirable and worthy of being actively pursued.²³ This reduction has nothing to do with the subsequent notions of reduction in the history of logical empiricism. Reducibility means neurobiological addressability, and reductionism involves the adoption of bottom-up strategies without excluding a fruitful co-evolution with top-down research.

Principle Four suggests revisability at all levels of theory, which is the most minimal conception of EM to date. Nothing is sacrosanct, not even so-called analytic or conceptual truths. Every statement is subject to ordinary empirical pressures and is open to revision as a function of these pressures.²⁴ The key here is the phrase "ordinary empirical pressures."

Principle Five involves the idea that a co-evolutionary research strategy is the best one available to account for highly complex, multi-faceted, elusive phenomena such as mind, brain, and behaviour. Neurophilosophy's central methodological thesis is that "the interanimation and co-

21. Mölder, B. and P. S. Churchland. (2015). "Neuroscience Is Relevant for Philosophy," *Problemas* 88 (2015): 176–86, <https://doi.org/10.15388/Problemas.2015.88.8487>.

22. Quine, WVO. (1948). "On What There Is," *The Review of Metaphysics* 2, no. 5: 21–38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20123117>.

23. Churchland, P. S. (1982). "Mind-Brain Reduction: New Light from the Philosophy of Science." *Neuroscience* 7, no. 5: 1041, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0306-4522\(82\)91117-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0306-4522(82)91117-4).

24. Churchland, "The Continuity of Philosophy and the Sciences."

evolution of theories at all levels of organisation has the best chance of yielding results.”²⁵

Principle Six suggests that hard and fast data are more likely to be found in relatively lower-level research, not necessarily in particle physics or physical chemistry. Introspection, intuition, conceptual analysis, irresponsible thought experiments, and most forms of functionalism, besetting the top-down approaches of philosophy and classical cognitive science, have been found to be unreliable in this quest.²⁶ This last sentence by no means implies that philosophy is either dead or should be abandoned. Some problems still find a more natural home in philosophy, at least in naturalistic philosophy. What is being repudiated is not philosophy but the boundary between philosophy and the rest of science.

Principle Seven is a subtle normative combination of Quine’s thoroughgoing pragmatist naturalism and the Kuhnian image of scientific change:²⁷ We should attempt to dissolve as many philosophical questions as possible into empirical ones, in the broadest possible sense of the term.²⁸ When this proves improbable for a large set of related problems, we might explore a new paradigm in order to reformulate and possibly dissolve them.²⁹ This is an exploration, not an exploitation, in both action and belief. Not all commentators see an unequivocal and full-fledged pragmatism in Paul Churchland, however.³⁰

Eliminative materialists reach the following conclusions by combining seven premises with the seven principles that lurk behind EM:

Central Ontological Conclusion is an ontological prediction concerning the fate of FP: the projected displacement of the propositional attitudes that occupy the core of FP.³¹ This is a *hunch*, not a final judgement. At the ontological level, EM concerns FP’s ultimate fate. It does not issue recommendations for getting rid of FP entirely. Before elimination becomes the only possible route, there will probably be a long chain of revisions, fragmentations, innovations and realignments regarding

25. Churchland, “Replies to Comments,” 242; also see Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*.

26. Churchland, P. M., and P. S. Churchland. (1998). “Intertheoretic Reduction: A Neuroscientist’s Field Guide.” In Y. Christen and P. S. Churchland (eds.), *Neurophilosophy and Alzheimer’s Disease*. Berlin: Springer Verlag, pp. 18–29.

27. See Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, 123–124.

28. Quine, W.V.O. (1969). “Epistemology Naturalized,” in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 69–90; Quine, W.V.O. (1995). “Naturalism; Or, Living Within One’s Means,” *Dialectica* 49, no. 2–4: 251–261.

29. Esp. Kuhn, T. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, sec. IX.

30. Rockwell, W. T. (2011). “Beyond Eliminative Materialism: Some Unnoticed Implications of Churchland’s Pragmatic Pluralism,” *Contemporary Pragmatism* 8, no. 1: 173–89, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18758185-90000189>.

31. Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes.”

individual FP concepts and the principles that underpin the framework's integrity.

Central Methodological Conclusion states that FP is not in charge.³² More specifically, when cleared of their respective propositional attitudes, psychology and neuroscience would perform better than FP. Psychology without neuroscience is lame, neuroscience without psychology is blind. EM's real lesson is that FP is not in charge, as Dominic Murphy has put it.³³ Not only is FP not in charge in neuroscientific research, but it is also very much not in charge in scientific psychology, either.

The Resultant Conclusion. Let us employ an alternative epistemological paradigm, namely the emerging neurocomputational cognitive and social neuroscientific framework in the areas of philosophy of mind, of science, epistemology, cognitive science, moral philosophy and all of the relevant behavioural sciences, including scientific psychology.³⁴ The attainment of this application is not "within easy reach, but this does not make the search for it any the less worthwhile."³⁵ Slagle disagrees with this view, however.³⁶

Neurocomputational surrogates for belief might not deny, but might actually expand, the boundaries of belief as such, born-again as our internal cognitive representations, and which co-vary with the relevant features of our surrounding environment and can be found primarily in the business of prediction. Rather than presenting a threat to our notion of unqualified belief, EM calls for a broadening of its proper scope of applicability.

We will yield some initial results as neurocomputational regularities through a systematic and comprehensive trial that uses the new epistemology. These new regularities may be very detailed, specific, and accurate concerning relatively lower-level cognition such as perception or memory; for higher-level cognition, though, such a set of neurocomputational statements might be crass and raw in the extreme in the short run, given that most newly emerged generalisations tend to be so. Nevertheless, they are hardly rawer and less reliable than the ones appearing in FP.

32. Mölder and Churchland, "Neuroscience Is Relevant for Philosophy"; Moscow Center for Consciousness Studies, "Neurophilosophy on the Way of Solving Problems. Interview with Patricia Churchland in Moscow" (Russia: Youtube, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP8o-yjZePc>.

33. Murphy, D. (2017). "Can Psychiatry Refurnish the Mind?," *Philosophical Explorations* 20, no. 2: 160–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2017.1312499>. See also Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, 5.

34. Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*; Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes."

35. Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, 121.

36. Slagle, "Yes, Eliminative Materialism Is Self-Defeating."

Nonetheless, the new paradigm might ignore, for a time, some of the problems that FP addresses. Some of these teething pains might be dismissed as ill-defined problems and dissolved instead of actually being solved. Some others will probably wait for further assessment from new angles and in more concrete settings, given that the newer tools utilised by the successor paradigm acquire the capacity to address them reliably. The tools employed by serial digital computers are very good at conducting and will be the last ones to be involved in the neurocomputational epistemology. Some examples include mathematical or logical reasoning, the simulation of which would find a more natural home in a serial and digital computer or in any cognitive model modelled thereon.

If high-level cognitive concepts are elusive from a neurocomputational standpoint, then they are more deceptive still when viewed from the angle of FP, particularly when the structure and the nature of our internal representations are theorised under the constraints forced upon them by our self-conception.

The premises listed above as a set of seven beliefs could provide a sound basis for eliminativism's ontological and methodological conclusions, but only if they were to be supplemented with those seven principles. Nor is eliminativism's ultimate message, as is often suggested, that FP should be or will be eliminated because there is no belief, nor is it that belief will play no role in a mature cognitive neuroscience of cognition because its reference is empty. Both wordings are subtly misleading, despite their apparent plausibility, unless the reader knows the exact explications of the terms employed in these two sentences. The first formulation is simply confused, putting the cart before the horse. If the term "belief" were to disappear, then this would result from the emergence of some neurocomputational or other replacement that proved itself to be superior. Talking about the nonexistence of belief or its reference's being empty is subtly misleading. It leads people to think that there is an obvious contradiction to be found in the conclusion. This formulation suggests that eliminativist thinkers believe in the nonexistence of belief. Alternatively, and perhaps more accurately, they have a belief that there is no belief: is this a paradigmatic instance of reduction to absurdity that has gone unnoticed by some eminent philosophers? Propositional belief, as well as the rest of propositional representations, is a candidate for elimination. Even this is eliminated from being representation's general and basic form in biological cognition. Moreover, EM does not deny that linguistic animals, such as humans, might have recently evolved to have such a propositional form of representation on top of a much more general and fundamental form of representation that animals have had for millions of years.

III. Eliminativism's real lesson is that FP is not in charge

Eliminativism's real lesson is that FP is not in charge, as Dominic Murphy succinctly puts it.³⁷ The projected wholesale displacement of FP is just one of many predictions in the web of beliefs surrounding eliminativism. Yes, the Churchlands believe that the concept of a propositional attitude is not the best available notion according to which to understand cognition. It fails to represent the nature and functioning of our inner cognitive states and processes. Propositional belief cannot explain many well-established phenomena that are pertinent to human and animal cognition, intelligence and behaviour (a longer form of what EM claims). This is why Paul Churchland occasionally states that belief does not exist (a shortcut to a longer form). Anyone who substitutes the longer form of what EM claims by its shortcut wording will immediately realise that there is no refutation of EM to be found here, *let alone* a refutation from self-defeat.

A naturalised belief in the propositional belief's wrongness is not even a *pragmatic* contradiction, *let alone* a *logical* one. The intuitive resistance against a naturalised belief will disappear when we shift to a neurophilosophical paradigm, in which we do not have such a *traditional* conception of truth, rationality, consciousness, and knowledge. Unfortunately, this explanation is frequently regarded as an insufficient reason to endorse EM, and rather as a reason to refute it, because it makes the discontinuity between FP and its neurocomputational successor all the more striking. It is impossible to use FP to express EM when the critics of EM assume that discontinuity blocks the existence of even a partial common ground and communicability between these two paradigms. Any attempt to do so would result in something alien to EM, according to Slagle. In fact, this is the most fundamental reason that Slagle provides for us to accept his conclusion.³⁸ Slagle misses how EM has developed, according to a Quinean and Kuhnian orientation. There is no cosmic exile, no Archimedean point, and no 'View from Nowhere'. The critics of EM presume that the discontinuity between FP and its possible neurocomputational successor makes even a partial use of folk psychological terms, even in a revised form, something totally unacceptable. However, even though discontinuity certainly means incommensurability, the latter does not deny the existence of partial common ground and communicability

37. Murphy, "Can Psychiatry Refurnish the Mind?"

38. Slagle, "Yes, Eliminative Materialism Is Self-Defeating," 202–204.

between the adjacent transitory theories in a continuum chain of succeeding, thereby revising, theories.³⁹

This explains how EM expresses itself partially through FP, but that it remains EM nevertheless. *Pace* Slagle, this move is open to actual champions of EM. Nonetheless, he is right to claim that it would be an illegitimate move for his imaginary version of EM. Indeed, Slagle's imaginary EM is self-defeating. Where the critics see self-defeat, incoherence, or a vicious circle, I only see a fully-fledged Quinean naturalism, perfectly captured in Neurath's boat metaphor combined with the Kuhnian theory of scientific change; in Neurath's metaphor, we aim to reconstruct our floating boat out of the best materials and will not abandon our boat.

The sentence-like belief was intended to account for what analytic philosophers and behavioural scientists thought they knew when they wrote up their accounts. What did these scholars think that they knew? They thought that consciousness, intelligence, and problem-solving were unique to humans or, at best, to apes. Human cognition was like computer computation. There are sentential representations and symbolic computations in familiar computer programmes. There are symbolic representations and sentence-crunching manipulations. This computer metaphor has successfully worked for a substantial subset of human behaviour for decades. These domains are rule-following ones. They were nonetheless modelled on the laws of science, legal systems, and human linguistic capacity.⁴⁰ Representations with determinate contents, and the rule-following manipulations of these representations, make it possible to have successful communication, cooperation, coordination, and accurate transmission of knowledge through generations and across languages.⁴¹ This was familiar Fregean "thought" for analytic philosophers.⁴² Indeed, this computer was modelled on what we used to think of as higher-level human cognition; now, we model cognition on the basis of an artificial computer with classical architecture.⁴³

This conception of cognition has additional virtues for analytic philosophers. These representations, Fregean thoughts, are amenable to logical crunching. Moreover, the logical conception of thought, in turn,

39. Kuhn, T. (1982). "Commensurability, Comparability, Communicability," In *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association, Vol. 1982, Volume Two: Symposia and Invited Papers*, pp. 669–688.

40. Smolensky, P. (1988). "On the Proper Treatment of Connectionism," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 11, no. 1 (1988): 1–23.

41. Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, 150.

42. Frege, G. (1956). "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry," *Mind* 65, no. 259: 289–311.

43. Cf. Turing, A. M. (1950). "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind* 59, no. 236: 433–460, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LIX.236.433>.

provides ground for *a priori*, conceptual philosophy, which has enough space not to be assimilated into messy science; hence, the sharp Wittgensteinian distinction between science and philosophy.⁴⁴ A bonus comes alongside this logical notion of philosophy; philosophy becomes a branch of necessary knowledge, while science contends with probable knowledge. Hence the autonomy of philosophy.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has aimed to unearth the premises and principles through which contemporary eliminativism reached its notorious conclusions, and to show how Slagle and many others are wrong in their construal of the true nature of EM. Since they could not figure out what EM actually says, or the motivations thereof, they fail to realise that their objections from self-defeat are confused, given the EM's real lesson. EM is primarily methodological and claims that FP is not in charge. At the ontological level, it only expresses a hunch concerning FP's possible fate. EM's advice is to get rid of FP to the extent that it becomes an albatross for scientific psychology, cognitive science, and behavioural sciences. It aims for a more accurate theory of how brains model the world's causal and social structure, one that may finally free us from the linguaform model of cognition that we usually call the propositional notion of mind. Belief is divided and partly eliminated, as Stephen Stich would put it: (i) linguaform representation, underlying sentential belief as the fundamental and general form of our inner cognitive representations, will probably get eliminated; (ii) propositional belief as a recently emerged type of cognitive representation, which is used in such functions as making predictions, might prove a useful posit, a posit that is probably unique to linguistic animals like humans. Therefore, it is both confused and confusing to present EM as arguing that we should believe in the nonexistence of beliefs, unless this seemingly absurd statement is presented as a shortcut to EM's *resultant conclusion* that I have presented above: Given both FP's severe flaws and the existence of a rival paradigm, whose initial indicators are promising, let us continue to explore this alternative epistemological paradigm, that is, the emerging neuro-computational cognitive and social neuroscientific framework, in the

44. Wittgenstein, L. (2002). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. London: Taylor and Francis e-Library.

areas of philosophy of mind, of science, epistemology, cognitive science, moral philosophy, and all the relevant behavioural sciences, including scientific psychology.

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