

## CARING ABOUT THE TRUTH

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The pragmatist-relativist rejection of truth is expounded and criticised. The focus of criticism is the thesis of S. Stich that attaining truth is not and should not be the goal of epistemic enterprise. It is shown that this rejection of truth rests on a series of mistakes.

“Truth is no value, and people should not care about the truth”.

This is harsh judgment, and none not too pleasant for its proponent. For, suppose first that it is true. Then, the proponent should not care about its truth, and should not rejoice about his judgment being true. Second, suppose it is false. Then the proponent should care about its truth, and ought to regret endorsing a false judgment. So either way, the proponent loses.

“Well” the proponent says, “if my judgment is true, it will have other liberating and generally pleasant consequences, which will largely recompensate for the loss”.

But if the truth of this judgment can have such nice consequences, then truth is not entirely without consequence, at least not in this very case. Then we should care about the truth, and the judgment is false.

So, it takes a brave philosopher to defend the judgment. Stephen Stich defends it in his book “Fragmentation of Reason”. Not only does he defend it, but he builds upon it much of his case for his new brand of relativism-cum-pragmatism.

In this paper I propose to examine and criticise Stich’s main argument for the judgment that truth is worthless.

Before doing it, however, I would like to state briefly my positive view on the

matter.

I think that people do care about the truth and rightly so. Why do they care? Let me break the question down, in two parts.

First, why care about particular beliefs, whether they are true or not?

The answer for basic cases seems simple and obvious: People usually care whether some belief "p" is true because they care whether p. I care whether my belief that Mary loves me is true because I care whether Mary loves me. I am primarily interested in Mary, and not in my belief, but I can reformulate my interest so that it is now for my belief - I wonder whether my belief that Mary loves me is true. The motivation, however, remains extroverted, turned to the state of affairs, not to what is going on in my head. To put the answer in the form of a slogan:

To care about the truth of "p" is to care about p.

The derived cases almost do not deserve special mention.

I want a true answer about the date of Socrates death from my student, because I want him to be reliable, because he will one day teach Socrates, and he will have to transmit the truth about his death to others, etc.

Secondly, why endeavour in general, to have true beliefs, and not to have false ones?

Because of the role of beliefs in guiding our action. If my belief that  $q_1$  is true, this will help me in situation where " $q_1$ " is relevant, and so for  $q_2$  etc. Interest in having true beliefs is not primarily introverted, directed to beliefs themselves, but extroverted, turned to outside reality. To use the worn analogy with maps, you can collect maps of Croatia for two purposes - You might be interested to historical and aesthetic properties of maps themselves (nice colours, fine drawing) in which case I would recommend old, inaccurate but beautiful maps, or you might have a touristic interest, wanting the map to have you find your way during your travel, in which case you need an accurate map. The latter is what the maps are primarily for, the former is secondary and additional function of map. So it is with beliefs too - the primary value is not aesthetic (or antiquarian) but action guiding, and the valuation in terms of accuracy and truth is the relevant one.

Let us now turn to Stich and his main argument.

Stich chooses as his format for discussion the Language of Thought hypothesis. To believe that p, according to this hypothesis, is to have a mental sentence "p" in ones "belief box" (We shall follow Stich in using this format throughout this paper, and shall not question it). Mental sentences are in all relevant respects like sentences of natural language. They have truth conditions, by mapping from sentences to states of affairs. The mapping which maps singular terms onto their referents will be called reference scheme, and it will enter or be a "part" of the mapping of the whole sentence. The mapping of the whole sentence will be called

“interpretation function”. All this is familiar from semantics of natural languages. Of course, syntactically identical strings can figure in different mappings. To use Davidson’s example, phonetic string we get by pronouncing “Empedocles leaped”, would in German yield a sentence which is true if and only if Empedocles was in love. “Empedocles liebt”. So the same phonetic string gets different truth conditions under different interpretation functions.

Stich needs a bit more apparatus than a formal semantician. His reference schemes will not differ only in what individuals they pick up, but in the ways they do it. His favorite example is the contrast between causal and descriptive manner of picking up a referent. One can think of a lot of different reference schemes.

We have mentioned the fact that Stich associates with each reference scheme a corresponding notion of TRUTH<sup>x</sup>, and we have chosen two of such, and called them TRUTH<sup>c</sup> and TRUTH<sup>d</sup>. Now Stich does not have a common name for all TRUTH<sup>x</sup>s. He certainly does not want them to be more varieties of the same thing. He wants the notion of truth as defined for English and similar languages to be a separate notion.

We shall not prejudge the issue but we do need a common term, so we shall use the term “positive correlation” to denote the genus, of which various TRUTH<sup>x</sup>s are species. Also, we shall call the notion of truth as defined for English and similar languages (Stich’s TRUTH) TRUTH<sup>o</sup> and for reference.

His favorite example is the reference of proper name, and here it is the story of Jonah which furnishes the illustration. We are invited to consider schemes of reference for proper names which differ in weight of descriptive component of meaning - from zero (no description is relevant for the reference of “Jonah”) to maximum (all and only descriptions determine the reference of “Jonah”). I shall stick to his example so let me mention the specific details:

Suppose the object language name “Jonah” was given to a person, call him (in meta-language) Jonah-C (for “causal”) who never was in the belly of the fish, and of whom the biblical story is thus false. Call the reference scheme which considers only the causal origin REFERENCE<sup>c</sup>, then we might call the interpretation function induced by it TRUTH<sup>c</sup>. There is an example of a sentence evaluated under TRUTH<sup>c</sup>: “Jonah was a Moabite” is true iff Jonah-C was Moabite. Suppose further that there was a person, whose name was “Samuel”, who is the real doer of the famous exploits attributed falsely to Jonah - he was in the belly of a fish, etc. Now consider the reference scheme which completely disregards the causal origin and rules that a name is to refer to the person of which the most descriptions

associated with the name are true call it REFERENCE<sup>d</sup>. This scheme induces the interpretation function which we shall associate with TRUTH<sup>d</sup>. Again, the example:

D: "Jonah was a Moabite" is TRUE<sup>d</sup> if Samues was a Moabite.

The difference between the two reference schemes goes deeper than the difference between say English and Dutch. The assignment of the nominatum follows different principles - causal origin in the first case, descriptive truth in the second.

All this has been merely a stage setting (we shall accept all of it in our discussion). Now comes the story proper.

From the fact that TRUTH<sup>c</sup> and TRUTH<sup>d</sup> result from reference schemes which are different in principle, Stich seems to conclude that they stand for entirely different concepts. Suppose that the causal schemes (REFERENCE<sup>c</sup> and TRUTH<sup>c</sup>) are our (English or Croatian, etc) choice. Then, Stich thinks, when we say "truth" we in fact refer to TRUTH<sup>c</sup> and to no other truth-predicate, to "our" interpretation function, and to no other.

Finally the point.

He thinks that the fellow who embraces C and C-like clauses has a substantially different epistemic goal that the fellow who works within D and D-like clauses:

"These alternative interpretation functions are not the ones sanctioned by our intuitive judgment. They strike us as wrong or inappropriate"(p.245).

He offers no argoment to support this extremely important step in his attack on truth.

To revert to the Jonah example. Suppose two biblical scholars are working on the story of Jonah. The first, call him C-scholar, follows the REFERENCE<sup>c</sup> scheme - he tries to identify the fellow who was called Jonah, and whose name has been transmitted to us, and does his work honestly and with passion. The other, call him D-scholar, has same scholarly virtues, but a different interest: He wants to know whether there was a fellow whom the biblica story fits, who was in the belly of a fish, who preached an Nineveh, etc. For him Jonah is just that fellow - he follows REFERENCE<sup>d</sup> scheme. Now Stich thinks that if our truth-concept is TRUTH<sup>c</sup> we shall only see our C-scholar as seeking truth ("our" truth) whereas we shall regard D-scholar as doing something wrong and inappropriate, certainly not as seeking truth.

Once we have got accustomed to the idea that to each reference scheme corresponds a different type of positive correlation, Stich does have a comparatively easy job to show that we are partial to a certain type, and then a more difficult job to show that it is wrong to be so partial.

It is obvious that exhibit a definite preference for one type of correlation,

TRUTH<sup>0</sup> (generated by REFERENCE<sup>0</sup>). But there is a lot of alternatives, and we then, by the same token, ignore all these alternatives.

The unkind way to put this fact is to say that our choice is “highly idiosyncratic”<sup>1</sup>

Here is Stich’s excuse for the unkindness:

Stich invites us to consider a set of belief tokens, say  $S_1, \dots, S_n$ . Interpreted according to the function TRUTH<sup>X</sup> it will have a certain number of positively valued (“true<sup>X</sup>”) tokens, call the number  $n^X$ . Interpreted differently, by TRUTH<sup>XX</sup> it

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<sup>1</sup> Here is how Stich summarises his stance:

“I began by announcing my intention to question the widespread conviction that having true beliefs is something to be valued. And I proposed that we approach the issue by first focusing in on a plausible cluster of views about the nature of beliefs and what it is for them to be true. On beliefs, I opted for a realistic construal in the spirit of the token identity theory. Belief tokens, I have been assuming, are neural state tokens. What distinguishes beliefs (and other “intentional” mental states) from the many neural states that do not have truth values is the existence of a function - the “interpretation function” - that maps beliefs to truth conditions (or propositions, or possible states of affairs). In 5.3. I sketched the popular causal/functional story about how the interpretation function works.

And in 5.4. I argued that the causal/functional interpretation function is both partial and idiosyncratic. There are lots of alternatives to the intuitively sanctioned causal/functional interpretation function, and these functions map mental states to truth conditions in many different ways. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the intuitive function is any better or more natural than many of the alternatives. Each of these alternative functions provides an alternative specification of the truth conditions for beliefs. So while the interpretation function based on the intuitively sanctioned notion of reference might specify that a certain belief token of mine is true if and only if there is no H<sub>2</sub>O on the sun, an interpretation function based on REFERENCE would specify that the same belief token is true (or, better, TRUE) if and only if there is no H<sub>2</sub>O or XYZ on the sun.

One consequence of all of this is that when it comes to deciding what we really value in our doxastic states and in the processes that generate them, truth has lots of competition. Any given set of beliefs tokens that I might have will contain a certain percentage, say  $n$ , of true beliefs. The same set will also contain a certain percentage,  $n$ , of TRUE beliefs, a certain percentage,  $n$ , of TRUE beliefs, and so on for indefinitely many variations on the intuitively favored semantic theme. Moreover, in general  $n/n/n \dots$  so it will often be the case that when we increase our percentage of true beliefs we will decrease our percentage of TRUE (and/or TRUE, and/or TRUE . . .) beliefs. If we really value true beliefs, presumably we won’t much care about giving up TRUTH<sup>X</sup> or TRUTH<sup>XX</sup>!”

will have another number,  $n^{xx}$  of positively valued ("true<sup>xx</sup>) tokens, and generally, interpreted by TRUTH<sup>x</sup> it have  $n^x$  positivelyvalued tokens. Now, in general,  $n-s$  will differ, so if you stick with one TRUTH<sup>x</sup> you miss all the good things from the other ones, and you might end up with the smaller set of positively valued tokens, than you would have had on some other alternative.

Well, as a matter of fact, we do stick to one interpretation function, TRUTH<sup>0</sup>, and we have intuitions saying that our choice is O.K. But Stich thinks that we also have intuitions condemning other choic, and this is where he grounds his criticism of our referential practices:

"The conservatism entailed by the idionynoratic nature of the interpretation function is of a rather different kind. There are endlessly many functions mapping mental states to truth conditions (or propositions or possible states of the world). In this bristling infinity of functions there is one that is singled out by common sense as providing the "real" truth conditions for mental states, in contrast with the TRUTH CONDITIONS<sup>x</sup>, the TRUTH CONDITIONS<sup>x</sup> and all the other variations on the theme. But if, as we have been assuming, it is the causal/functional interpretation function that is sanctioned by intuition, then it is not a particularly simple or natural function. Rather, it is something of a hodge-podge, built from a more or less heterogeneous family of strategies for fixing the reference of terms and another family of strategies for transmitting reference from one speaker to another. What distinguishes acceptable groundings and transmissipns is not that they share some common natural property, but simply that they are found to be acceptable by commonsense intuitions"(p. 251)

Now, I take it that the just quoted claim that our intuitions do not result from a systematic and critical assesment of the many alternative interpretation functions and the various virtues that each may have represents a value judgment, and a crucial one in the attack on truth. So I will take Stich to mean that an ideally reflective and impartial inquirer would try to asses in a systematic and critical way alterntive interpretation functions, and then perhaps choose the best one. (Like a polyglot who carefully reflects on the language he will use - maybe Latin to speak to God, French to speak to women, German to speak to soldiers and English, says Charles V, to speak to merchants). I will also take Stich to imply that such an Impartial Inquirer wil eo ipso have a higher, more suitable and less parochial epistemic goal, then the common people do.

## DISCUSSION

I think Stich-s argument is an original and interesting one. Nevertheless, I am persuaded by it, and I will try to show that it is flawed. Here is the plan of the counterattack:

I will first question Stich's contention that we are in fact ready to discriminate against people who are seeking some other kind positive correlation than TRUTH<sup>0</sup>, and that we do not see them as truth seekers (if they are all right on other relevant counts, honesty, dedication, etc.) An important by-product of the discussion will be the idea that our epistemic goal is not specifically TRUTH<sup>0</sup>, but simply positive correlation, TRUTH<sup>0</sup> being just means to achieve the more general goal. This should then undermine the accusation that by pursuing TRUTH<sup>0</sup> we are untrue to wider Truth.

In the second and last step, I shall try to make explicit the idea that the only way to seek the Truth is to compare various interpretation functions, and choose the one which maximises positive correlation. The idea is not found explicit in Stich, but seems to be the positive proposal that can be extracted by looking at his criticism of opposite practises. I want to show that this idea is not very attractive, and that the common way - stick to the interpretation function you have, and try to get to know as much about the facts as you can - is more reasonable. This will bring us back to the extroverted approach with which we have begun. This should serve as final refutation of the criticism that people are conservative (in a bad sense), and generally that it is conservative to stick to one's interpretation function.

There is a third point which will be important in the sequel. In unpacking our pretheoretical notion of truth, philosophers and logicians are aiming at various goals. Some given analysis might well fit one purpose, and not another. It is important to bear in mind that when semanticist is building his theory of truth he is not primarily aiming at capturing the cognitive value of truth, or characterising truth in such a way that it becomes immediately obvious that should care about it. (Compare the everyday notion of "health". The biologist might unpack it in terms of normal functioning of organism, and then break it down into a detailed description of what should a particular organ be doing. When confronted with such a low level description, and asked: do you really care about that? most of us would be either puzzled or would answer in the negative. That does not entail that we don't care about our health).

Let us first look at various natural languages which presumably share the scheme of reference.

When I seriously utter an English indicative sentence, say "It is raining" I intend to say something true by using it as a sentence with its usual English meaning. The analogous thing goes on when I speak Croatian.

Now, we can state the same thing using the technical terminology. The classical semanticist analysis of truth breaks the concept down into more specific notions of truth-in-L where L is schematic letter for various languages: truth-in-English,

truth-in-Croatian, etc.

When I speak Croatian, and want to be truthful, then to state it in this terminology it is the case that I care for truth-in-Croatian. However, when I speak English, I care for truth-in-English, and when I try to teach philosophy in Slovenian, I care for truth-in-Slovenian. A biologist friend of mine who speaks **only English** cares onli for truth-in-English. Now does this attitude of his make his love for truth idiosyncratic or conservative? Is he thereby less generous, less serious or less trustworthy in his pursuit of truth, than I am? Do I become inquirer into truth simply by expanding my knowledge of languages, and thereby by expanding the range of L and the true-in-L schemata which presumably capture my epistemic concern?

The answer to all these questions is a clear No.

The commonsense intuition says that honest and serious speakers of various languages aim all at the same goal, namely the truth. Distinction between truth-in-English, truth-in-Croatian and truth-in-Slovenian is irrelevant to the determination of the goal.

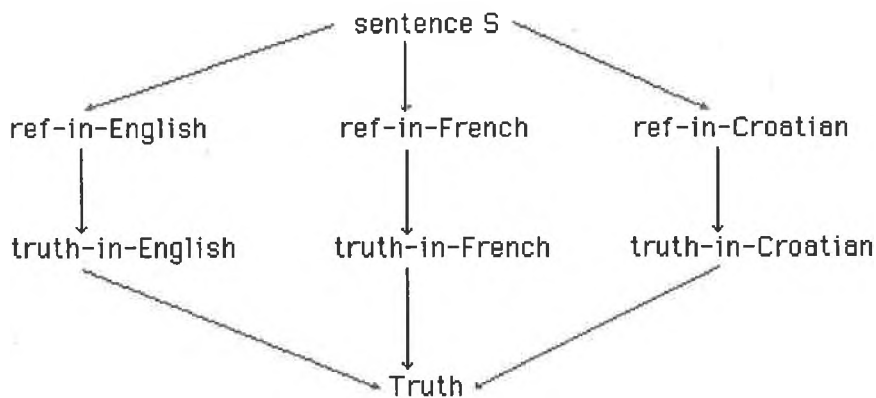
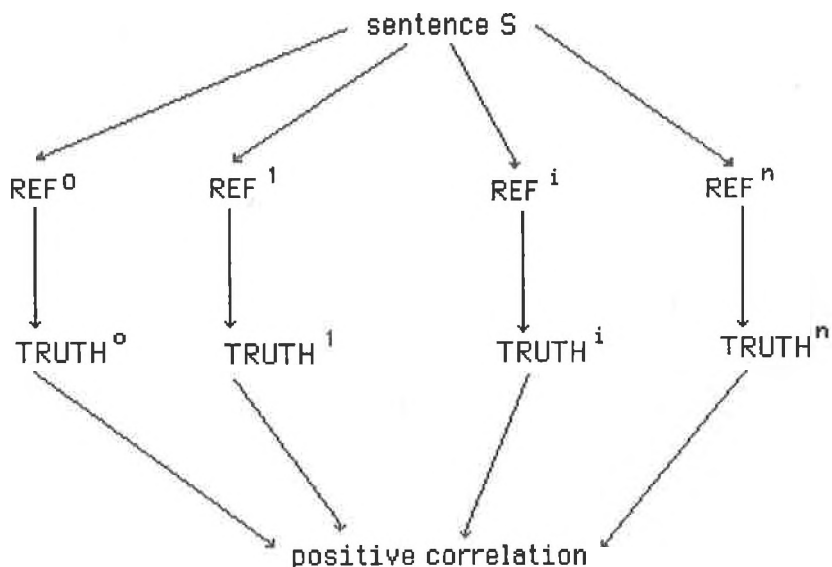
Further, tehe commonsense judgment does not consider the practice of a native speaker of English using his native language to state what he thinks is the case as idiosyncratic or conservative. The mere existence of other languages (and truths in that languages) does not make the use of one of them in any way suspect.

To repeat:

When I speak English and want to be truthful, I do care that my English sentences turn out to be true, so, in a way I care for truth-in-English. But of course, this is not in the sense in which it would be contrasted with truth-in-Croatian. I care for the right positive correlation of my sentences with the world; given that in the particular case the correlation is given through the "theory of truth-in-English", I care for my English sentences, but my aim is more general: positive correlation with the world. So, the analysis of truth in terms of truth-in-L although perhaps ideal for the semanticist does not attain the right level of generality to characterize with precision speakers cognitively oriented goals (transmission of true information, etc.).

Now how about difference in the schemes of referenc and different types of positive correlation of sentences with states of affairs? Here ther are no entrenched general views, so we should tread carefully.

I shall argue that the case with differnt TRUTHs is analogous to case with different languages.



Stich seems to think that different types of correlation define essentially different types of epistemic goal, and that commonsense is wedded to a certain

type, TRUTH<sup>0</sup> (in our notation) which then dictates its epistemic goal. We humans regard other TRUTH<sup>X</sup> seekers as inquirers which do not aim at truth, but at some essentially different goal, or at least we should regard them as such.

“Whatever the explanation, it is clear that our intuitions do not result from a systematic and critical assessment of the many alternative interpretation functions and the various virtues that each may have. One way or another we have simply inherited our intuitions: we have not made a reflective choice to have them. Those who find intrinsic value in holding true beliefs (rather than TRUE<sup>X</sup> ones, or TRUE<sup>XX</sup> ones....) are accepting unreflectively the interpretation function that our culture (or our biology) has bequeathed to us, and letting that function determine their basic epistemic value. In so doing they are making a profoundly conservative choice; they are letting tradition determine their cognitive values without any attempt at critical evaluation of that tradition”. (p.245)

Let us suppose that our notion of reference is REFERENCE<sup>C</sup> (so REFERENCE<sup>C</sup> = REFERENCE<sup>0</sup>), and that we are after TRUTH<sup>C</sup> (so that TRUTH<sup>C</sup> = TRUTH<sup>0</sup>). Now we meet a biblical scholar who is working on the legend of Jonah, our D-scholar, from the earlier example, He tells us that he is not interested in who did actually first carry the name of Jonah, but that he is interested in the fellow who was in the belly of the fish, and who preached in Nineveh. When he writes “Jonah” he means that fellow. In our notation, his notion of reference is REFERENCE<sup>D</sup> and not our REFERENCE<sup>C</sup>. Further, he informs us that he has spent ten years of his life trying to find out in historical record, whether his Jonah (the referent of “Jonah” by REFERENCE<sup>D</sup>) was a Moabite.

Technically speaking, our scholar wants to know whether the sentence “Jonah was a Moabite” is TRUE<sup>D</sup>.

Given that TRUTH<sup>D</sup> is different from TRUTH<sup>C</sup> which is our truth Stich-s hypothesis predicts the following:

1. We would normally say that our scholar is not interested in truth.
2. We would claim that he is interested in something radically different from truth, and his interest is “wrong or inappropriate”.

Stich-s hypothesis is wrong on both counts. The scholar is of course seeking the truth about a certain fellow, and his interest is of completely respectable kind. The way he has of identifying the fellow is irrelevant to the question at hand.

The sceptic might now protest:

“Look, the difference between TRUTH<sup>C</sup> and TRUTH<sup>D</sup> is so insignificant, that our intuition yields an unusual verdict. We should look at more exotic interpretation functions, and then it will become obvious that inquirers with goals

defined in terms of those functions are certainly pursuing different epistemic goal than we do”.

Suppose then that you meet members of the Martian academy, capable of speaking English. They explain to you that they want to know about members of a certain natural kind K, whether they have an important property P which is very important according to their biology. You ask them about the kind K, and they explain that there is a very complicated way of identifying certain natural kinds, and of referring to them, which is well beyond your grasp (until you have learned a lot about Martian science), but that he sincerely believes that K stand for a very definite natural kind. He seems to be very much taken in with his task, and keeps talking about bits of evidence which points to the possibility that K-members have S. He informs you that the whole system of referring to objects and kinds in Martian is essentially different from the one in the languages on Earth.

Now, if the fellow seems sincere to you, would you not say that he is after the truth about K? What possible relevance for the question whether he is a truth-seeker could his exotic way of referring to K have?

On the other hand, we could justifiably expect from the Martian fellow to admit that our ways of referring and our interpretation function, TRUTH<sup>0</sup> is not in itself an impediment to our cognitive enterprise.

Now, the fact that we speak in a traditionally given language and that the semantics of our thoughts is shaped by our culture (let us agree on this point with Stich), does not make our attachment to truth conservative. Our choice of topics might be less liberal than it would be desirable, our choice of relevant properties in the world might be arch-conservative, but, once the choice is made, the fact that we prefer truth to falsehood is itself neither conservative nor liberal.

We can generalise a bit. Suppose God or evolution wants the sentences in the head to indicate the states of the changing world, for the further purposes of its owner. Then, given that the world is changing, it would be reasonable first to link, “words to things”, by suitable interpretation function, and then let the combinations (sentences) get their truth-value the way the world decides. There will be nothing intrinsically conservative or idiosyncratic about such procedure.

I take it that the general moral of the discussion so far is the following:

When people profess that they care about the truth, their notion is not adequately captured by TRUTH<sup>0</sup> if this is taken to imply that they would regard attachment to other varieties of positive correlation as falling out of the domain they care about, or as being perverse and inappropriate. The cognitive attachment is best captured by more general notion like positive correlation, the different interpretation functions being simply subspecies of the same thing. Although difference between interpretation functions and

TRUTH<sup>x</sup>s are semantically highly relevant, they are epistemically uninteresting. So, Stich-s "Account of Truth" fails to capture the most important features of our cognitive aim, because it fails to attain the right level of generality.

People care about positive correlation, and not about particular.

Let me say few more words in connection with health-analogs.

Suppose that you have a detailed breakdown of the notion of health-form humans HEALTH<sup>0</sup>, in terms of functioning of every organ. It will have a form of specification what every organ "should be doing" in highly technical medical vocabulary. Call it Health Chart.

Now a person ignorant of the Chart, but careful about food, dedicated to jogging, etc., aiming at not falling ill, at being fine, etc., cares for her health. She directly contributes to such a state of her organism as proscribed by the Chart.

Take now an intelligent extraterrestrial, built out of sillicion, and take the corresponding specification of his healthy state. Suppose he cares a lot about being physically fit, only extraterrestrials do it by exercises in meditation, by continuous practice of telekinesis and by reading comics. There is nothing in his specification which would even remotely resemble the human Health Chart.

If he and our jogging human could communicate, they might engage in conversation concerning fitness, illnesses, and similar topic. They would discover that they care, intuitively speaking, about the same thing. The human could be puzzled about the relation of telekinesis and comics to health, she may even laugh at the extraterrestrial but there is no reason for her to doubt that he is after being healthy, though in odd ways.

Nothing in the whole situation would licence the following conclusions:

The human is not interested in her health, because health is a very exotic thing described in Health Chart, and if she read Health Chart she would not say that she cared about what was described there.

The human is conservative and idiosyncratic in her attitude about her health, because she uncritically accepts a very specific notion of HEALTH<sup>0</sup>.

The human would not possibly: think that the extraterrestrial has the same goal - at the level of generality appropriate to coffee-shop talk - as herself.

Here is the discussion in the nutshell:

Stich thinks that we are not really interested in truth, because we are wedded to parochial and idiosyncratic interpretation function TRUTH<sup>0</sup>. But how does he prove that? By claiming that we see the inquirers wedded to other interpretation function as not seeking the same thing we seek.

Now, the examples indicate the following:

1. We intuitively see the inquirers seeking the positive correlation, but wedded to different interpretation function as seeking the same thing we seek.

2. So, we are not conservative (in a bad sense) or discriminatory in the matter.
3. But then, by 1. we are not only seeking specifically TRUTH<sup>0</sup>, but also something more general, attainable through TRUTH<sup>0</sup>
4. This more general goal is common to all correlation seekers.
5. The only goal common to all correlation seekers is positive correlation, so this is what we are after.

But now Stich seems to have a counterargument and new proposal. He seems to think that the following is true:

If person P really cared about the positive correlation and not for her parochial

interpretation function, P would impartially compare candidate interpretation functions

and choose the one which maximises correlation.

Given that people don't do that, it follows that they are not correlation seekers, but only

favourite-interpretation-function-seekers.

This is not even *prima facie* strong argument, as the analogy with natural languages suggests. The inquirer might well stick to her native interpretation function, and try to get her beliefs positively correlated with facts by paying attention to the facts, not by pondering interpretation functions. However, I think that the real source of the implausibility of the argument lies deeper, so I shall spend some time on it.

Stich is very brief about his positive views. As I have mentioned earlier, the positive proposal can be extracted from his remarks, but I would not venture to attribute it to him with any certainty. So, let me introduce a kind of Stich-inspired fantasy about two inquirers, and two alternative approaches to inquiry.

The first approach is suggested by Stich's remarks. We can imagine an inquirer impressed by Stich's reasoning, who decides to be impartial to different interpretation functions, call him the Impartial Inquirer. He takes notice of the fact that the same string of marks, call it S, will receive different valuations under different interpretations. He is also aware of the fact that a set of such strings, say S<sub>1</sub>, . . . , S<sub>n</sub> will contain different number of positively valued strings, depending on which interpretation function he uses. He might then choose the interpretation which maximises the value of S<sub>1</sub>, . . . , S<sub>n</sub>.

We can picture the Impartial Inquirer as a person who starts the inquiry by having a long inscription (in his head, in the book, engraved on the stone), and then trying to find such a meaning for the inscription which will give it most value. (Like an archeologist deciphering a text in an unknown code, and trying to correlate the inscription with some event, such that, if we suppose that it is about

the event, it comes out true and informative).

The Impartial Inquirer will probably merit the approbation of Stich. The Inquirers— methods are not “idiosyncratic”, wedded to a particular interpretation function. He would be a genuine “truth-seeker” if the word “truth” were a proper term of epistemic evaluation. Or, should we say, that he is a genuine correlation-seeker.

However, from the usual stand point of a human inquirer, there is something odd about the way the Impartial Inquirer proceeds. On naive level one would say that Impartial Inquirer cares more for the inscription than for the world. He does of course, want to have the inscriptions successfully corrected, but not because he is particularly interested in some worldly topic but because he wants to maximise the value of the inscription he already has.

The second approach is the usual or ordinary approach, practised by the Common Inquirer.

The Common Inquirer first fixes the interpretation function, or has it fixed for her. She does not start with any given inscription, but with a topic of inquiry. Suppose she wants to know whether Mary name “Mary” to its REFERENT Mary, and the predicate to the set of rooms (or whatever). Now, this function is certainly only one of the many available ones. Next, she has function which maps Not p into “False” if p is mapped into “True”. This makes it possible for her to question, or to entertain the alternatives: Mary is in the room/Mary is not in the room. The aim of the inquiry will be to find out which of the alternatives is true.

Now, why does our Inquirer proceed in such a fashion, instead of starting with the string “Mary is in the room” and then looking for a meaning which will make it TRUE, or TRUE<sup>x</sup> or TRUE<sup>x...x</sup> ?

Well, possibly because she is interested in the whereabouts of Mary, and not of someone else, the would-be REFERENT of the name “Mary”, and because she is interested in Mary—s whereabouts, as opposed to her looks or her boyfriends.

Less commonsensically, the important constraint for the Common Inquirer is the following: in order to formulate a question, to single out a topic of inquiry, one should first select an interpretation function. If one wants to say (believe) something true about O, one has to have some means to introduce O into discourse (thinking). Only having done that, one can proceed to decide whether a given string under the selected interpretation gets positive value (is TRUE).

The deeper difference between the Impartial Inquirer and Common Inquirer is the difference in their motivation. While they both care about the positive correlation between their favored sentences and their “targets” (TRUTH<sup>x</sup> - makers), their care is not motivated in the same way.

The Impartial Inquirer has as his goal to change the value of the set of strings (inscription, sentences) he happens to have. The Common Inquirer has as her goal

to (happen to) have as much positively valued, i.e., true strings concerning the given topic as possible. Suppose the Impartial Inquirer has got a set of strings which look like formulae of some branch of mathematical physics, has tried to interpret them as referring to entities dealt with in this branch of science, and has found no positive correlation with their TRUTH<sup>x</sup> makers. You point out to him that if he should try another interpretation in which his set of strings will refer to the nineteenth century German operas, most of the strings will get positively correlated with events concerning German operas (to state it in more ordinary parlance, if they are about opera, they will be true, or plausible about it). The Impartial Inquirer should be very happy about this new possibility, and he should accept it. If not he will be by his own (or Stich's) light guilty of conservativeness, of an unjustified idiosyncrasy.

The Common Inquirer however, has already made her choice of problem area. Her sentences were assigned their meanings in advance of inquiry into their truth value. She will be indifferent to hear that her sentences would come out marvelously confirmed if they meant something very different. (You have just got million dollars" is true if "dolars" mean "punches". So what?)

But why all this? I conjecture that the Common Inquirer is simply more interested in things than in words, more attached to the world than to any given, preexistent set of symbol strings. Her primary interest is in how things happen to be outside, in world.

We have come full circle. To be interested in the truth of a (possibly mental) sentence "It is raining" is primarily to be interested in whether it is raining or not. We need true beliefs for the same reason we need faithful photos, accurate maps and reliable tv-reports - to learn something about people, things and events.

L i t e r a t u r a :

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*Nenad Mišćenić: ČEMU BRINUTI O ISTINITOSTI*

S a ž e t a k

Raspravlja se teza pragmatiste-relativiste (Stich) da se u istraživanju ne treba brinuti za istinitost. Pokazuje se da teza počiva na zabludi. Posebno se analiziraju semantički argumenti za tezu i odbacuju kao neosnovani.