3.1 The Dreary Corners of Philosophy: Against traditional and analytic epistemology

Stich attacks two pairs of three interrelated traditional epistemological projects, including reliability and relativist epistemology.

Ist project: The foundationalist model aims at the evaluation of methods of inquiry. It examines the ways of going about the quest for knowledge - which ways of building and rebuilding one’s doxastic house - are the good ones, which are the bad ones, and why.”¹ As the reasoning is central to the quest for knowledge, the evaluation of various strategies of reasoning often plays a major role in the assessment of inquiry. The epistemological writings of Francis Bacon (inductive method in science) and Descartes (method of inquiry from mathematics) undertake the project of evaluating and criticizing strategies of inquiry. Modern epistemological writers like Mill (inductive logic methods of experimental inquiry), Carnap (verificationism/
confirmationism) and Popper (falsificationism using modus tollens) have also emphasized this aspect of epistemological theory.

1. Verificationism tells us that all synthetic statements are statements about the world.

2. All synthetic statements are to be verified to be true or false with reference to the world.

3. Confirmationism: all synthetic statements are confirmed/disconfirmed with reference to experience.

4. Modus Ponens: used in covering law model.

5. Reconstruction of the Empirical Knowledge of the world (Constitutions systems a la Carnap)

They also developed the accounts of good reasoning and proper strategies of inquiry. This leads him further on to cast aspersion on the very idea of scientific rationality as ensconced in the covering-law model (hypothetico-deductive method) and substitute a heuristics of reasoning as a substitute.

II\textsuperscript{nd} Project: This epistemological model aims to understand what knowledge is and how it is to be distinguished from other cognitive states like mere opinion or false belief. This project has been reinterpreted as a quest for the correct definition of the word ‘knowledge’ or for the correct analysis of the
concept of knowledge, with the linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy. Gettier attacks the view that knowledge can be defined as ‘justified true belief’ developed by the analytic enterprise.

**III\(^{rd}\) Project:** It is the anti-skeptical model. Skeptics deny that we have knowledge or certainty or some other epistemologically valuable commodity. This model focuses on devising replies to the argument of the skeptics. A good illustration here is Moore’s Reputation of Idealism. These three projects are linked together in a variety of ways. Stich views the latter two projects to be the ‘Dreary Corners of Philosophy’\(^2\).

Later on the second critique is expanded to cover another three projects which are either analytical or off-shoots of such an epistemology.

**IV\(^{th}\) Project:** The project has been advanced by Alvin Goldman, in his *Epistemology and Cognition*. His theory of epistemic justification is called ‘bare-bones’ reliabilism. Reliabilism was developed in a response to the definition of epistemology as given as

\[
\text{Knowledge} = \text{Justified/Certified true belief}
\]

The above definition was wrecked by the famous counter example advanced by Edmund Gettier, who proved that the above definition is neither analytic (a priori) or conceptual analysis alone nor synthetic (aposteriori)\(^3\). The above equivalence is not *a priori* in a very obvious sense,
but it is not a posteriori because it is countered by a case of justified true belief that is not knowledge.

The cognitive states of the former is in doubt because it is limited to conceptual explication whereas the cognitive status of the latter is shattered by the lack of relation between ‘justification’ and ‘truth’.

**Project**: Reliabilism enjoins justification rules and takes epistemology in the direction of secondary epistemics were social determinants of knowledge are allowed a key role rather than in the direction of primary epistemics where it is said to be related to one’s own cognition.

Goldman maintains that both classical and contemporary epistemology is to have been developing theories of epistemic justification. They were interested to say which cognitive states are epistemically justified and which are not. So, their major project was to enunciate a system of rules or principles evaluating the justificatory status beliefs and other cognitive states to make a theory of justification. Goldman calls these rules justificational rules or J-rules. In his own words, J-rules “permit or prohibit beliefs directly or indirectly, as a function of some states, relations, or processes of the cognizer.”

\[ J\text{-rules} = \text{df. Necessary and sufficient conditions for justification (truth-ratio meets high threshold - greater than 50).} \]
But there could be more than one set of J-rules. So we need a criterion of rightness which is given as:

\[
\text{criterion of rightness} = \text{df. set of conditions that are necessary and sufficient for a set of J-rules to be correct.}
\]

This is a higher order justification. Thus according to Goldman, there may be an illuminating taxonomy of epistemological theories such as:

a. Coherentist theories

b. Truth-linked reliability theories

c. Reflective Equilibrium theories

The correctness is to be decided by ‘conceptual analysis’ or ‘conceptual explication’. There is therefore a proper way to decide among ‘competing criteria of rightness’. This is conceptual because it has conform to ‘every day thought and language’, despite its vagueness. Thus there is a cluster of alternatives to choose from. So our concept of justification occupies a small region in large space of more or less similar concepts (many possible worlds). We are under constraint to choose one among many possible alternative notions so as to make our belief in question as intrinsically valuable. This is nothing but an epistemological chauvinism.

Stich produces a battery of arguments to prove that the analytical enterprise of epistemology leads either to ‘epistemic chauvinism’ or to
downright vagueness of coherentist variety. Thus analytic epistemology gives rise to a family of project and hence it becomes a non-starter⁵.

VIth Project: The former was proposed to overcome this by means of ‘reflective equilibrium’ test. This reflective equilibrium test needs to be strengthened by newer criteria of justification. Sometimes one hears of notion of ‘weak’ and ‘wide’ reflective equilibrium that are grafted on from practical reasoning in ethics (Cf. Goodman/Rawls)⁶. Similarly the so-called Goodman’s equilibrium test is likely to play hostage to our ordinary concepts. If so, different people mean different things when they call a cognitive process justified. Even if we discount interpersonal differences, we never reach any exemplar. Empirical research on psychology of reasoning shows that we think differently. It is called reflective equilibrium test as this is also an attempt to explain what is called deduction or induction by relating it to a theory of good reasoning. Reflective equilibrium according to Goodman’s understanding is constitutive of justification in the sense that to call a system of inferential rules to be justifies is for them to be in reflective equilibrium and hence it is known a priori (i.e. a conceptual truth)⁸. So also Rawlsian wide equilibrium, in it’s modified form cannot pass the test because it is constrained by other considerations. Stich comments that it requires our system of inferential rules to cohere with our semantic or epistemological or metaphysical or psychological convictions, just as Dummett’s views on alternative logic is constrained by his semantic. So he concludes:
1. that reflective equilibrium, both in its narrow and broadened form, is not the touch stone of normative principles about cognitive processes\textsuperscript{9}.

2. that the decision among alternative systems is embedded in ordinary language, it is not likely to interest any one than an epistemic chauvinist\textsuperscript{10}.

An illustration of (2) is found in Strawson’s justification on inductive reasoning. He argued that inductive reasoning is part of what we mean when we say that an empirical belief is reasonable\textsuperscript{11}. To which Salmon reacted by asking that this whether this pushes inductive method itself as ‘intrinsic good’.\textsuperscript{12} There is a parallel complaint about epistemologies.

But on Stich’s view, this raises a question about

‘how are we to decide between various criteria of justification\textsuperscript{13}?’

Since no answer is forthcoming, one has to recourse to a new sense of analytic epistemology. In Stich’s words, such an epistemology is to be defined as:

“an epistemological project that takes the choice between competing justificational rules or competing criteria of rightness to turn on conceptual or linguistic analysis.”\textsuperscript{14}
The novel use of analytic epistemology is to be taken as part of normative enquiry (some sort of virtue epistemology as it has been come to be called later).

So Stich lays his emphasis squarely on cognitive diversity as against cognitive uniformity.

The monistic stance enjoins: all people exploit the same cognitive mechanism. The pluralistic stance denies the above. The question is how best the host of analytic epistemologies will meet the challenge from cognitive diversity. The failure to meet this will ultimately lead to cognitive pluralism, cognitive relativism or simply genetic diversity. Stich defends a position which is ‘floridly pluralistic’: different systems of reasoning may be normatively appropriate for different people. The question before him: how to escape from the inherent relativism?

From Stich’s point of view, our epistemologies are culturally conditioned. The beliefs we acquire are “culturally acquired and vary from culture to culture”\textsuperscript{15}. The novel use of analytic epistemology should tell us how the notions of evaluation prevailing in one culture differs from that of others. In other words, the question is: if we have true beliefs, whether they are intrinsic or instrumental, how much should we care for them. More pointedly, the question is whether we should really care for true beliefs in preference to false beliefs. That is, “a cognitive process is sanctioned by the
venerable standards embedded in our language of epistemic evaluation or that it is sanctioned by the equally venerable standards embedded in some quite different language, is no more reason to value it than the fact that it is sanctioned by the standards of a religious tradition or an ancient text.”

Moreover, such standards may be idiosyncratic ‘ad hoc’ or ‘arbitrary’. The notion of justified true belief may generate alternative justification - like notions within which it is impossible to make a choice. This leads to epistemic chauvinism.

So long as such standards are the basic of a small linguistic community (as Austin used it in a particular way), we have no means by which we can evaluate intrinsic or instrumental beliefs. Stich concludes saying that even such notions as reflective equilibrium.

(1) “is not the touch-stone for normative principles about cognitive processes.”

(2) “when it comes to deciding among alternative systems of cognitive processes,” it will be of no interest to anyone else than the epistemic chauvinist.

The case against beliefs is extended to cover the case against one’s own beliefs, when they come to occupy a common set of beliefs and thence forward to suggest that they are “reasonable.” Even Strawson’s escape hatch to recoil inductive generalizations under the meaning of
what we say when we say that an empirical belief is reasonable, cannot save us. Because as Salmon tells us that if Strawson is right about the meaning of reasonable, then

‘It is not at all clear, why every one should want to be reasonable.”¹⁹

Stich’s critique is thus gradually extended to cover other aspects of rationality finally to propose a heuristic method of rationality in the place of scientific rationality. This is what he calls minimal rationality.

For Stich, the term analytic epistemology denotes “any epistemological project that takes the choice between competing justificational rules or competing criteria of rightness to turn on conceptual or linguistic analysis.” And he continues, “it is my contention that if an analytic epistemological theory is taken to be part of the serious normative inquiry whose goal is to tell people which cognitive processes are good one or which ones they should use, than for most people it will prove to be an irrelevant failure.”

According to Stich, evaluative epistemic concepts are culturally acquired and vary from culture to culture. “The analytic epistemologist offers us no reason whatever to think that the notions of evaluation prevailing in our own language and culture are any better than the alternative evaluative notions that might or do prevail in other cultures.” Stich thinks that pluralism about intrinsic value is vastly
more plausible than monism and will assume that people can and do intrinsically value a variety of things. For an analytic epistemologist, our choice between alternative cognitive processes should be guided by the epistemic evaluative concepts embedded in everyday thought and language.

To consider intrinsic value, there are a pair of assumptions.

Other languages and cultures invoke concepts of cognitive evaluation that are different from our own (Assumption I). We may have quite different concepts of epistemic evaluation and their concepts we have are quite arbitrary and idiosyncratic (Assumption II).

According to Goldmans’ “reliabilist” account of justification, the rightness of a system of justificational rules is determined by the percentage of true beliefs that would be produced using the psychological processes sanctioned by those rules. It has a cluster of alternatives.

1. The account relativizes the criterion of rightness to the world in which the system is operating.

2. It has rightness conceptually tied to the actual world.

3. It has rightness conceptually linked to worlds with certain specified characteristics.
There is nothing logically incoherent about the sort of Epistemic Chauvinism. Most of the people don’t say that they find having justified beliefs to be intrinsically valuable. If we are pluralists about intrinsic value we get a negative conclusion. To support such a conclusion Stich offers two lines of argument.

(1) A first line of argument for the instrumental value of beliefs sanctioned by our ordinary notions of epistemic evaluation appeals to the evolution of those notions (Biological).

(2) The processes involved are more social than biological (social).

The conclusion is that neither biological nor social evolution can be relied upon to produce the best of all possible options. So our intuitive notions of epistemic evolutions are the product of an extended process of social and biological evolution. But it is not enough to show that they are more conducive survival or thriving.

3.2. Against Logic: Heuristics?

While passing, we must note that the efforts to sustain logic or analytic philosophy requires us to more in the direction of bringing them approximately to ‘normative’ type of reasoning, as exemplified in ethics. Characteristically Stich discusses ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ beliefs which is quite relevant in the context. It is the singular target of Stich’s overall
enquiry. Eliminativism is only a stepping-stone towards an approach to deconstruct ethics, that while rejecting universalism, embraces relativism or cultural differences.

Stich presents Cohen’s account of logical reasoning which makes an attempt to smoothen over the above quandary by having recourse to Chomskyan account of grammar. Cohen assigns the notion of competence to the underlying mental or psychological part of reasoning (inferential canon) and assigns the notion of performance to the way we commit ‘errors’ in reasoning that could be called ‘performance errors’\(^{20}\). Thus Cohen’s understanding operates the following scheme:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{competence} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{performance} \\
\text{[internalized rules]} & \quad \quad \quad \text{[violation of rules of grammar]} \\
\text{psycho-logic} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{performance-errors} \\
\text{[internalized rules]} & \quad \quad \quad \text{[violation of rules of inference]} \\
& \quad \quad \quad \text{[amended rules]}
\end{align*}
\]

There is no reason why Stich can find a way out of the above though the schema. He is ready to concede that Cohen acknowledges that people make inferential errors. But Cohen however insists that performance errors reflect nothing about the underlying normative rules which are
‘unimpeachable’. They are impeachable and thus posing a challenge to Stich. Stich locates the ‘paradox’ which enjoins that systematically irrational cognition is impossible because people’s competence is normatively impeccable. But it does not follow that the idea systematic irrationality is ‘demonstrably incoherent’.

According to Stich, the case against belief must therefore be examined a-fresh from the psychology of reasoning where experiments were conducted with a purport to show that we more often think irrationally than rationally. This is what is altered to by Watson - Johnson Laird Selection Task and what has come to be called the ‘conjunction fallacy’ discovered by Tversky and Kahneman. Collectively they are all addressed to what is called the Nisbett problem. Nisbett’s problem is stated as:

‘how a subject is a particular experiment on psychological reasoning could be shown to by reasoning badly?’

In other words, how could we diagnose that someone is reasoning correctly according to correct rules of reasoning, which takes us straight to the logical procedures of correct reasoning (deduction, induction, abduction, inference to the best explanation and what not).

The experiment designed by Tversky and Kahneman to test the probability of logically compound events or state of affairs from two instances, where the likelihood of a compound events or state of affairs must
be less than or equal to the likelihood of the component events or state of affairs. They are schematized as

(a) If the components are probabilistically independent, then probability of the compound is equal to the probabilities of the components (supported by probability theory).

or else,

(b) If the components are not probabilistically independent, matter are much more complicated.

The experiment is discussed as follows:

Linda is 31 years old, single, outspoken and very bright. She majored in philosophy. As a student she was deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice, and also participated in antinuclear demonstrations.

Please rank the following statements by their probability, using 1 for the most probable and 8 for the least probable.

(i) Linda is a teacher in an elementary school.

(ii) Linda works in a bookstore and takes Yoga classes.

(iii) Linda is active in the feminist movement.

(iv) Linda is a psychiatric social worker.
Linda is a member of the League of Women Voters.

Linda is a bank teller.

Linda is an insurance salesperson.

Linda is a bank teller and is active in the feminist movement.

In this experiment, 89 percent of the subjects ranked (viii) as more likely than (vi). Moreover, the result turns out to be very robust. Concerned that subjects might tacitly suppose that (vi) really meant Linda is a bank teller and is not active in the feminist movement.

Tversky and Kahneman placed (vi) with

(vi’) Linda is a bank teller whether or not she is active in the feminist movement and tried the new material on a second set of subjects. The results were essentially the same. But perhaps subjects were distracted by all the other options and failed to notice the relationship between (vi) and (viii). To test this, 142 subjects were given the original problem with all the alternatives except (vi) and (viii) deleted and asked to indicate which of the two alternatives was more likely. Eighty-five percent said that the conjunction was more likely than the conjunct.

This is called the ‘conjunction fallacy’. Stich and Nisbett (1980) has demonstrated that no amount of smoothening through ‘Goodman’s method which enjoin that it is done via ‘mutually adjustment,’ will work because it
will entail that some very strange inferences are justified. Even a fine tuning
to Goodman’s Criterion will not escape counter-intuitive consequences. So
Stich is ready to substitute a neo-Goodmanian project which is based on the
distinction between ‘narrow’ and ‘wide’ reflective equilibrium. The latter
notion is understood to broaden the scope in that it must entail rules that
cohere with our semantic or epistemological or metaphysical or psychological
views. But if what is said above is correct, it cannot cohere.

The neo-Goodmanian line visualises that when our current procedures
of inferential practice do not adequately capture the processes of justification,
then we must revise them. A rough and ready distinction between
conservativism and revisionism is what it entails. A giant step like this in
epistemology will have immediate bearings on cognitive diversity.

For once we have of clear specification of what justification amounts
to, we can go on to ask whether our own cognitive processes are justified or
whether, perhaps, those of some other culture come closer to the mark.

As Stich acknowledges, this only opens up a problem without solving
it.
He concludes:

‘Neither the neo-Goodmanian programme nor any alternative programme that proposes to analyze or explicate our pre-systematic notions of epistemic evaluation will be of any help at all in deciding whether and how then cognitive processes or those of others might be improved (revised)?

Having established that the notion of reflective equilibrium in all its various forms is a ‘non-starter’, Stich indulges in some introspection: are we not using something like this neo-Goodmanian strategy in our assessment of justification in the context of the different schools of epistemology. It might be that different people mean different things when they call a cognitive process as ‘justified’ because there are different notions of justification. This criticism can be met, according to him, by stipulating that we have some sort of ‘prototype exemplar. If so, it might be a mistake to look for the common notion of justification. It will not be the case that there is any single test passed by all cognitive processes we judge to be justified. He endorses a Wittgenstenean idea that there might be a common sense notion of justification. No convincing case could however be given in support of this.

The final difficulty with the Neo-Goomanian project is that it is not an exhaustive one. Rather it might be the case that our procrustean conception is an amalgam composed of both folk psychological as well as scientific epistemology. In which case the notion of justification would turn out to be a
‘cluster concept.’ So one should be forced to conclude that in the face of many alternative notions of justification, the theory of mental representation of concept will turn out to be a ‘very messy business’. This happens especially when we do not know how to make a choice upon rational considerations. Stich is inclined to admit that it is true that there are many alternatives, but then there is nothing also common between them. So what transpire from the above is that we cannot separate the commonsense concepts from the folk theories in which they are enmeshed. A good response to the plurality of theories is to hold that there is no possibility of separating the wheat from the chaff. So no neo-Goodmanian reflective equilibrium test may succeed in their endeavour. Two apparently contradictory conclusions emerge.

(1) There are alternative notions.

Now (1) admits plurality but (2) it is an amalgam of singularity and plurality. But this will not serve as a point of refutation of (1). The only way out is to arrange them on a spectrum, and grading them so that we can choose the one which is less coloured by folk psychological admixtures.
3.3 A Typology of Cognitive Pluralism.

One offshoot of analytical epistemology is the way it considers alternative conceptual schemes as an answer to cognitive pluralism. Stich distinguishes the following variants of cognitive pluralism.

1. Descriptive cognitive pluralism: different people form or revise beliefs (and other cognitive states) in significantly different ways;

2. Descriptive cognitive monism: all people exploit the same cognitive mechanisms (2 is the denial of 1);

3. Normative cognitive pluralism: it is a claim about how different people ought to use their cognitive processes. There is no unique system of cognitive processes.

4. Normative cognitive monism: it is a claim that people use their cognitive mechanisms with minor variations of one another.

The (1) and (2) appear to be empirical theses. They are not really empirical. (3) represents a minority view. This is because one of the premises in this argument where monism aims at the pluralism is a conceptual claim about rationality. Stich’s efforts lie to show that none would prove the falsity of (1)
This is what is true of Davidson’s theory of ascription of content, which lies close to Dennett. Both seem to undermine the empirical exploration of irrationality.

(3) Represents a minority view.

Stich wants to defend a thesis according to which different systems of reasoning may be normatively appropriate for different people which is opposed to (4).

5) Relativism: different systems of reasoning may be normatively appropriate for different people.

6) Instrumentalism or pragmatism: it holds that all cognitive value is instrumental or pragmatic. (6) is called the normative theory of cognition.

7) Evolutionism (Evolutionary Panglossianism): Even if we assume that innate cognitive systems are optimally designed by natural selection to be rationally the same, still it would not follow that all normal cognitive systems are innately the same; (it would not follow that our system of inferential strategies is also optimally well designed)

8) Innatism: The mere fact that your cognitive processes and mine are innate would not establish that they are the same: there is no parallel
between language acquisition and inferential systems, and so there is no universal grammar.

9) Jamesian pragmatism: There are no intrinsic virtues.

10) Simulationism: Through out, Stich wants to add strength to the thesis that there must be some theory of mental mechanism that would help us to say that we can ascribe believes to others in much the same way as to ours.

11) Relativism leads to ‘anything goes’ (Feyerabend). The relativist is just like the nihilist or a skeptic.

It boils down to the claim that none of the claim can be empirically supported. Stich’s main argument is directed against the following version of Davidson

Davidson theory of ascription of content: for propositional attitudes

Davidson’s basic question is: how to ascribe truth values to proposition we hear from other people’s utterances. This is not possible without having a theory - like mechanism we have. It consists of

Presumption : Human beings are optimally rational (others are rational as per charity view: they normally don’t lie)
Explanans : 1. Initial condition observation of others token utterances
to Anomalous Laws (in lieu of Causal laws/ Bridge laws)

(Non - equivalence of psychological and physical predicate

Explanandum: Conclusion: It occurs at to the way it does so we can attribute truth to other people utterances

Following is the idea of a Alternative Conceptual schemes:

‘It is impossible to be irrational’

So, in a sense, Stich might favour alternativism but in the same sense he may also deny it. This is the nub. There is a certain ambiguity about the position which begins to manifest towards the end of the book where he discusses cultural relativism.

His argument exploits Quine’s maxim of translation28 towards this end:

Stich takes Quine’s commonsense precept about silliness, as supporting his maxim of translation. He wants us to suppose that our interlocutor, S, sincerely asserts a sentence, ‘q’. From this we can infer S believes that P, where ‘p’ is replaced by the sentence which we take to be the (possibly homophonic) translation of ‘q’ into our language. Now let us further suppose the ‘p’ is so patently false that believing that p would be absurdly silly. Quine’s precept against silly belief tells us that silliness of this magnitude is very unlikely. But if it is so very unlikely that s believes that p,
we have no option but to impugn our translation. Quinean argument is parallel to Schiffer’s argument.

Stephen Schiffer holds that an ordinary person has a huge, transparent head in which two boxes are plainly visible – one marked ‘Belief’, the other ‘Desires’. Having adopted this myth, stich asks that “how we would go about interpreting or determining the content of the various mental inscriptions in our hyper-cephalic subject’s Belief Box. How must a mental inscription be related to other mental sentences, to behaviour, and to objects and events outside the head in order for the sentence to count as a token of the belief that Socrates is wise?” Stich’s answer is that two boxes work similarly to each other. So,

‘I desire that p’ may be more or less similar to ‘I believe that p’ and both contain similar predicates. He further suggests that ‘simulation’ will provide an appropriate answer. Stich concludes with a stronger vein : the persons cognitive states to be intentionally characterizable, the states, the interactions among them, and their interaction with the environment must be similar to our own.

Incidentally we must note that we can turn the argument into a positive case for translation or (alternative schemes)

To say that  
\[ \text{S asserts that } q \]
\[ \text{\ldots \ldots} \text{S asserts that } p \]

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we need,

S asserts that p.

\[ \frac{p \equiv q}{\therefore S \text{ asserts } q} \] (homophonic translations are positive)

P is ‘absurdly silly’

We attribute silly belief or even a silly logic than we cannot draw the above conclusion. What we do; we impugn our translation\textsuperscript{29}.

‘We impugn our translation’ here means that we have to moderate the translate so as to fit into this scheme.

Look at the other argument which deals with Quine’s strictures on silliness.

Suppose our translation manual (or our scheme of interpreting mutual sentences) leads us to attribute to a person the belief that is P, then q (where again p and q are replaced by perspicuous sentences). Suppose further that some perceptual experience causes the person to believe (and perhaps sincerely assent) that p. And suppose finally that from these two beliefs, he infers (or is led to believe) that not - q.

We are not likely to rest content with the translation or interpretation scheme that entails these irrational characterization of our subject’s sincere assertion and beliefs.
So what to do; can we smoothen out the translation?

Let us reformulate Quine’s argument as follows in tune with Stich’s criticism:

1. We need a translation manual
2. The translation manual must be acceptable.
3. We can avoid ‘silliness precept’.
4. We can ascribe $p$ and $\neg p$ to others (ascription of silly belief).
5. So, acceptable translation cannot give acceptable scheme of intentional interpretation.

Can we accept it as such? No

Stich clarifies a few pages later an elaboration on the structure of propositional attitude:

1. When we use a sentence of the form ‘$S$ believes that $p$’, we are making a pair of interrelated claims about $S$. First, we are attributing to $S$ a kind of cognitive state, a belief this category of state can be distinguished from other categories by the role such states play in the subject’s overall cognitive economy. Believes are the sorts of states which interact with desires, perceptions, and behaviour in certain systematic ways. Thus intentional description presupposes that the
cognitive economy of the organism whose states we are describing can be carved more or less smoothly into categories of states which play belief-like and desir-like roles.\textsuperscript{32}

2. We are, using the content sentence, ‘p’, to identify the particular belief we are attributing. The way this works, I argue, is by first picking out a hypothetical belief state that we ourselves might have - the one which in this setting we would express by uttering ‘p’ and then by attributing to S a belief state which is similar to this one. To say ‘S believes that p’, then, is to say S has a belief state similar to the one which would underlie my own assertion of ‘p’ were I (just now) to have uttered ‘p’ in earnest of course, any two things will be similar to one another in some respect or another. Own my account, as on Quine’s, both the relevant respects and the requisite degree of similarity are largely determined by context, though in typical contexts similarity of inferential pattern and similarity of the surrounding set of beliefs are of great importance. Plainly this account of intentional description requires a fair amount of polishing to make it precise and a fair amount of argument to make it plausible. I have attended to both tasks at some length else where.\textsuperscript{33}

Our search was not complete without considering the question whether there are arguments for evolutionary accounts to prove that we are designed
or selected to behave like rational individuals. According to Stich’s assessment, human’s reasoning is not that much bad, if evolutionary considerations weigh with us. It is not conceptually possible for us to maintain that widespread systematic irrationality. So, this is conceptually impossible. Evolutionists content that it is empirically impossible that all of us are irrelational. As Dennett states, natural selection guarantees that most of the organism’s beliefs will be true, most of its strategies, rational.

Or Fodor remarks:

Darwinian selection guarantees that organisms either know the elements of logic or become posthumous. But we have no clear argument to establish that from the facts of evolution that irrational systems of inference is unlikely to be impossible. We set a modest goal to prove that evolutionary consideration cannot impose restrictions upon our rationality. But the onus is on those who dispute to prove the contrary.

There are two key ideas that we can consider in this section.

1) evolution produces a good approximation of optimally well-designed system.

2) that well-designed system is a rational one.

3) that system can improve rationality by cognitive enhancement. They are ‘fitness enhancing’
(1) and (2) can yield a conceptual truth that a well-designed system can be optimally rational. (3) upholds that such a fitness could be enhanced over a period of time. According to Stich, both of these assumptions could be questioned.

One way of questioning this is to ask whether our inferential system is the by-product of evolution or it is some thing close to it. The main reason that gives against this is that there is no good reason to suppose that all normal cognitive systems are alike. We are not genetically endowed or genetically programmed in a way that we should behave exactly similar ways. What we call gene is a biological category but it is an abstraction. As Sober calls it is a ‘cyber-netic abstraction.’ The geno-types are programmed to generate phenotypes of varied character through internal and external fitness. The distinction between internal and external fitness cannot be drawn on a hard and fair ground. It will serve only as a heuristic device.

Stich proposes the following argument:

1. Let $G_1$ and $G_2$ be two genetically programmed inferential systems.

2. $G_1$ is more reliable.

3. Nonetheless, $G_2$ can exceed $G_1$, both in internal and external fitness.

4. So, natural selection prefer $G_2$ and $G_1$, despite $G_1$’s greater reliability.
This argument leads to what is called “evolutionary Panglossianism to absurdity”. The argument which holds that evolution will insure rationality could be understood to go through the following motions:

1) Evolution is caused by natural selection.

2) Natural selection will choose the best designed (i.e. fitness enhancing system).

3) There is a huge and varied set of options for natural selection to choose from.

∴ 4) Systems, so chosen, are expected to be as well designed as it is possible to be. Stich doubts the premises (1), (2) and (3) and remarks that we need the following premise (5) to make argument to work.

5) Our inferential system was produced by evolution.

The above argument can be applied mutatis mutandis to language:

1) Consider inference as analogous to language.

2) Assume that there is one single inferential system.

3) We can not conclude that this system is fitness-enhancing.

(3) is not a valid conclusion because just as a single language may spread throughout a population that has nothing to do with evolution, so to a
single inferential system could have become universal for reason quite independent of how well it does at enhancing fitness. The weakness of the argument is that since we do know which inferential system is optimal or near optimal based on empirical evidence. This is what worries Stich throughout. His worry is that we cannot know how a particular Bildung will enhance the character of the human being to the optimal level. In other words, we do not have any metanarrative (standard) by which to assess the standard of any inferential systems.

A similar parallel can be drawn about Chomsky’s account of grammar. Just as we know next to nothing about the way people come to have their inferential system. (For Carruthers, science is innately channelled and reaches its level with the faculty for doing science. Chomsky calls this as science-forming faculty). Likewise, given what little we know, it might be the case that language acquisition and inferential system are parallel. So what Stich is harping on is genetic diversity and cognitive diversity.

Stich puts forward a simple argument to prove this:

1) Just suppose that your cognitive processes are as ‘mine’ as my cognitive systems.

2) That is, your cognitive systems are as much innate as my own (similarity of content).
From (1) and (2), it does not follow that

3) They are the same (the sameness of the capacity cannot be derived from the above).

So one had to admit cognitive pluralism without demur. This brings us to the question: how to evaluate alternative cognitive systems which is addressed in the last chapter.

3.4 The Case for Minimal Rationality: Fixed Bridgeheads v/s Floating Bridgeheads

Stich offers a critique of perfect rationality which is called Fixed Bridge Head. The term floating bridge head\(^{34}\) is used in the sense that there are some specific inferential principles and stimulus-belief links that are presupposed in all translation and interpretation. Hollis is an advocate of this but his view of \textit{a priori} universals is dubious, if what Quine says is correct. Stich’s aim is to show that the fixed bridge head view is false.

1\textsuperscript{st} Answer:

D.C. Dennett offers that the intentional description requires “perfect rationality”. In his words, “there is no coherent intentional description” of a person who “falls short of perfect rationality and avows beliefs that either are strongly disconfirmed by the available empirical evidence or are self-contradictory or contradict other avowals he has made”\(^{35}\). But Gilbert Harman
points out, “the laws of logic do not tell us how we ought to go about revising our beliefs. Suppose that you already hold beliefs of the form ‘if p and q’ and ‘not-q’, and suppose further that as a result of your observations you come to believe that p. Logic suggests that something will have to go. But what? Should you change your belief on q? or give up your belief in the conditional? Or perhaps concludes that despite appearances p is false? The laws of logic offer no guidance.”

Harman strikes a congenial chord with Quine by saying that even laws of logic bear revision (e.g., law of excluded middle). Revisionism suffers constraints and hence it is ‘legalistic’ according to Quine.

Dennett considers consistency and closure under logical implication as the two necessary features of perfect rationality. But perfect rationality is not a necessary condition for intentional description.

2nd Answer:

We can weaken the above requirement. The consequent view may maintain that subjects may infer irrationally but insists that there are limits to that irrationality. A staunchest defender of this view Martin Hollis views, “the identification of beliefs requires a ‘bridgehead’ of true and rational beliefs”. For Hollis this is a ‘fixed’ rather than a ‘floating’ bridgehead. And these are ‘universal among mankind’ and a priori universals.

3rd Answer:
The third, still weaker, one is what Cherniak called the ‘minimal rationality’ view. Against Davidson, he views that there is no one inference nor any specific set of inferences that a person’s mental states must manifest in order to qualify for an intentional description.

The Minimalist Rationalist View = df: there is no one inference (nor any specific set of inferences) that a person’s mental states must manifest in order to qualify for an intentional description. A corollary follows from the above. That is, what is required is that the mental states manifest some reasonably subset of the inferences that would be required of a perfectly rational cognitive agent.

The minimal rationality idea can be divided into two different ways: The first is to suppose that questions about the intentional characterizability of mental states always deliver a clear answer at least in principle. This gives: “for any cluster of inferences, whether they were rich enough to pass the minimal rationality test - with an affirmative answer indicating that the person whose beliefs manifested these inferences would satisfy a necessary condition for intentional description”\textsuperscript{38}. The second idea is to reject the notion that questions of intentional characterizability always have a clear yes or no answer. On this view, intentional characterizability is a matter of degree. When the distance between perfect rationality and the rationality displayed by the system increases the intentional characterizability of the system decreases.
In his recent book *Minimal Rationality*, Cherniak develops a pair of arguments against the Perfect Rationality and Fixed Bridge Head views.

I. Argument The finitary predicament view: The core idea against the perfect rationality is the observation, supported by both theory and commonsense, that for all of us some inferences are harder than others. For Cherniak, our brains and our lifetimes are finite, and any finite system will be able to handle at best a finite number of inferences. Cherniak calls it the “finitary predicament.” Our brains and our lifetimes are lamentably finite, and we would expect that any finite system will be able to handle at best a finite number of inferences. With reference to the idea of working out the truth table for a proposition, this is presented as follows: supposing each line could be checked in the time that it takes a photon of light to travel the diameter of a photon, then even after 20 billion years, the truth-table for a set of 138 prepositions still would not have been completed (Cherniak, 1986). Stich is not in agreement with this entirely.

1. Intentional description do not presuppose perfect rationality. It does not follow from the above (1) that

2. None of us has intentionally characterizable states.

   Rather the conclusion should be

3. We cannot ascribe perfect rationality to intentional descriptions

   Such a conclusion will not seem ‘absurd’
II argument: It is against the fixed bridge head view. It maintains that for each of us some inferences are harder than others. Cherniak asks that we imagine a variety of hypothetical people whose inference feasibility ordering is very different from our own. The most radical case holds that the hypothetical subject’s feasibility ordering is inverted.

Against the second argument, Stich proposes that if we allow translation, we can not feel ‘overwhelming’ intuitive resistance to a scheme of intentional characterization.

In fact this is the summary of Hollis’s protest against the above view. He uses the line of fixed bridge head. Without the fixed bridge head view, the Quinean field linguist or the field investigator would never discover which native consideration to translate has conjunctions, conditionals, and so forth. Thus even the ‘clearest and most persuasive’ arguments that prove the relation between perfect rationality and intentional description calls for fresh review.

Following is a case for inverted order of inferential feasibility:

For a person whose feasibility ordering of inferences is inverted, inferring ‘Socrates is male’ from ‘Socrates is an uncle’ and ‘If socrates is an uncle, then Socrates is male’ would not be possible, though inferences like determining the independence of the axiom of choice “would be an easy task, performed reliably and without prolonged investigation.”40
Cherniak claims that despite the peculiarity in the inferential behaviour of this imaginary subject, we would not find it totally beyond the bounds of intuitive plausibility to translate his sentence ‘If Socrates is an uncle, then Socrates is male.’ He maintains that the homophonic translation would not be possible. According to Charniak, we have to start with simple bridge head inferences and stimulus-belief links. Without the aid of the fixed bridge head, the field investigator would never discover which native constructions to translate as conjunctions, conditionals and so forth.

If it is implausible that anyone would have the belief that Socrates is wise and Socrates is not wise, it is equally implausible, or nearly so, that anyone would have the belief that Socrates is wise and also have the belief that Socrates is not wise.

Suppose our translation manual (or our scheme of interpreting mental sentences) leads us to attribute to person the belief that if p then q (where again ‘p’ and ‘q’ are replaced by perspicuous sentences). Suppose further that some perceptual experience causes the person to believe (and perhaps sincerely assert) that p. and suppose finally that from these two beliefs he infers (or is led to believe) that not-1. We are not likely for rest content with the translation or interpretation scheme that entails these intentional characterizations of our subject’s sincere assertions beliefs.
A direct consequence of the above illustration is some thing like the principle of charity (Davidson) or the principle of humanity (Grandy). Stich calls them as the principles of Intentional Chauvinism.

Davidson’s principle of Charity determines who frequently invokes the principle of translation and intentional interpretation. Davidson insisted, “charity is not an option, but a condition on having a workable theory (of translation).” He continues, “charity is forced on us.” According to this principle, when we translate a speaker’s language most of this sincere assertions turn out to be true and most of his inferences turn out to be rational.

Grandy interprets the principle as an admonition to choose a translation that maximizes agreement between ourselves and our interlocutors, at least on obvious truths. The principle of humanity holds that when we translate we should prefer the one on which “the imputed pattern of relations among beliefs, desires, and a world be as similar to our own as possible.” Grandy assumes that the principle of humanity is based on some pragmatic considerations dealing with the purposes of translation. For Grandy, the aim of translation is “to enable the translator to make the best possible predictions and to offer the best possible explanations of the behaviour of the translate. And he admits that the principles of charity and humanity will coincide often. No doubt these two principles help us to maximise argument. But both have counter examples.
The principle of humanity directs us to bear in mind that

1. The speaker is a person;

2. He has certain basic similarities to ourselves when we are choosing between translations.

Stich sketches a theory (rather than narrative) about the semantic properties of mental states in the penultimate chapter, where he addresses himself to the question whether we really care our beliefs are our beliefs. He concludes it in the Tasskistyle theory of truth, and as amended by Harty Field. He calls it a causal/functional rather than causal historical theory a la Putnam. Tarski’s equivalance is given as (a) S is true if ___ p.

Where S is replaced by a structural descriptive name of a sentence (a la Davidson) and p is replaced by a meta language. It is commonly agreed that the notion of truth that is used here is deflationist (i.e. truth is not a property. This is actually a limitation of Tarski-style truth-condition of a sentence. Thus one may claim that

\[ 1 + 1 = 2 \text{ iff Socrates is wise.} \]

The second limitation is derived from the listiform axioms like:

\[ 2(a) (x)x \text{ satisfies ‘is red’ iff } x \text{ is red} \]

\[ 2(b) \quad (x)x \text{ satisfies ‘is wise’ iff } x \text{ is wise} \]
3(a) ‘Socrates denotes Socrates

3(b) ‘Plato’ denotes Plato etc.

The limitation of the listiform theory is that Tarski does not tell us what makes the axioms right. In other words, he does not explain the exact relation between the ‘name’ and the ‘person’. Nor does he tell us what relation must obtain between a predicate and a satisfaction condition.

Now according to another interpretation, we can compensate the above by fitting a causal they of reference into the above theory. The whole apparatus can be grafted on the propositional attitude sentences, so as to see how we get semantics of mental states. This can be done by looking at the way they set truth-values. For this Stich asks we to consider two boxes as shown below, following Schiffer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Desire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The interpretation function is to specify the truth-condition for the sentences in these to boxes to make them true by making use of recursive rules governing such constructions. This is the line of argument taken by Field.

Field argued that Tarski had not provided a physically acceptable account of truth because Tarsky-style truth theories are only listiform theories after all. Now, Field’s proposal that what is needed here is a causal theory of
reference to fill the ‘gap’. But Soames and Stalnaker voiced their opinion that an entirely parallel problem arises for the quantifiers and connectives of a language. The recursive clauses simply ‘list’ quantifiers and connectives and satisfaction condition could be derived from them. The recursive clauses tell us how to build satisfaction condition of compounds in the basis of satisfaction condition of their parts. Tarski has not given any clue to how to make the clause right. Infact no one has attempted this before. Thus there is no adequate theoretic recursive clauses, after all.

Now the causal/functional theory also cannot tell us which system of mental/states are to be interpreted with reference to possible states. Then the theory becomes highly idiosyncratic making it obvious the existence of alternatives. Thus the processes of reference - fixing and reference - preserving transmissions are completely diverse. Thus,

Reference (1)*

Reference (2)**

Reference (3)***

signify alternative notions of reference within the system.

Thus the point that is obvious in the foregoing discussion in that there are alternative systems which are idiosyncratic and it is difficult to choose among them. This pluralism is a stumbling - block for making sense of
reference as well as recursive clauses. Stich does not say that recursive clauses become non-recursive clauses in certain contexts, as as to admit flexibility. But he worries whether the right choice could be made. In fact both standpoints are not very far from each other. The former stance is similar to the one we have adopted in the case of flexibility or plasticity which is not what he is concerned with. It is not clear whether Stich will agree with this particular amendment we have proposed here. This brings as to the final chapter when we confront a similar problem of evaluating different cognitive systems.

3.5. **Stich’s Alternative Epistemic Pragmatism**

Stich’s main question throughout has been: how to make an evaluation of alternative cognitive systems. His answer is formulated in terms of what he calls has Epistemic Pragmatism. Epistemic Pragmatism is presented as an alternative inter alia to the tradition of analytical epistemology.

Stich offers the pragmatic alternative rejecting analytic epistemology and those that tie cognitive evaluation to the generation of true beliefs. It is a perspective on cognition that grows out of the pragmatist tradition. Stich maintains that the cognitive processes supported by the pragmatists should not be thought of primarily as devices for generating truths. And, they should be considered an analogous to tools or technologies or practices to achieve a
variety of goals. And these systems of cognitive processes are to be evaluated by a rich and varied class of intrinsically valuable things.

Here, Stich views a first pass at a pragmatic account of cognitive evaluation. In the evaluation, the preferred system is the one which will achieve the intrinsically valued things by the person whose interests are relevant to the purposes of the evaluation. And the relevant person will use the system in most cases.

Value pluralism engenders relativism. The pragmatic account of cognitive evaluation is relativistic in a way that truth-generating accounts are not. Thus, “since relativism is widely viewed as a liability, I am doing myself no favor by assuming value-pluralism,” Stich maintains. Stich introduces the term normative cognitive pluralism. According to normative cognitive pluralism, there is no uniquely good system of cognitive processes - no single system that people ought to use. And it assumes that there may be various system of cognitive processes that are significantly different from each other, though they are all equally good.

To be relativistic, a pragmatic account of cognitive evaluation has two different reasons. These sources are the plurality of values and the consequentialist character. The former is the most obvious source and a pragmatic assessment must be sensitive to it. And the latter is less obvious source of the pragmatic evaluation. Epistemic Pragmatism claims a
consequentialist account of inferential virtue - “the goodness or badness of a system of cognitive processes depends on the likelihood of the system leading to certain consequences.” The consequentialist evaluations are potentially relativistic. The goodness or badness of a system of cognitive processes depends on the environment of the person using the system. Thus, the consequentialism in cognitive evaluation is capable of bringing relativism.

Based on the matters physical and metaphysical, cosmological, theological psychological, and social the consequentialist’s assessment vary significantly. Stich argues, “a consequentialist evaluation of cognitive processes is going to be actually sensitive to the cultural, technological and epistemic setting in which the processes are to function.”

Stich sketches a pair of arguments to establish that epistemic relativism is an ominous or unwelcome doctrine.

(a) The first charge is relativism is nihilistic because it doesn’t distinguish good cognition from bad and holds a Feyerabandian cognition libertinism - the doctrine that “anything goes.” Contrary to it pragmatism embraces the project of assessing cognitive processes.

(b) The second charge ascribes that it threatens the connection between cognitive inquiry and truth.
We have seen rationalism (a priori reasoning: method of doubt, geometrical method), empiricism (method of philosophical psychology, skepticism), the transcendental (Kant), the dialectical (Hegel), the hermeneutical, the phenomenological, and the existential etc. If relativism is sustained here, then skeptics will have won the day.

To meet the first charge, he suggests the epistemic pragmatism because this keeps us to care about belief structures. Epistemic pragmatism offers an account of cognitive evaluation that is both demanding and designed to produce assessments that people will care about. Such a pragmatic evaluation will rank one cognitive system higher than the others. Occasionally they may treat two cognitive systems on par with one another.

Thus one cognitive system may be ‘alternative’ to the other, and it is equally plausible that one is the ‘same’ as the other, relativism not with standing. This happens in the realm of culture. The prevailing, system of cognitive processes in one culture does not ensure that it is the best one for that culture. The given cognitive processes may be exchanged for one another without being the better. Or else, the other system may be doing good job, even though it looks ‘disaster’ to us. So, pragmatism demands that we need to assess alternative cognitive processes just as we examine alternative technologies.
With regard to the second charge, Stich complain that between two alternative systems of cognitive processes, both can not be true. This is especially true if two cognitive systems are incompatible with one another. They are not logically incompatible as such, but sometimes. They are ‘incommensurable’ with one another. They are not incommensurable because they cannot be translatable to one another. Thus relativism is the bane because there are two cognitive systems which are equally good, and each is as good as the other, but then each have a perspective on reality which excludes the other. The real clash is between ‘truth’ and incommensurability.

The very fact they are incommensurable entails that those cognitive systems have no truth-conditions and thus they are neither true, not false. We have to show why it is that they are incommensurable with our own have no truth-conditions. What it entails is that there are number of alternative cognitive processes which are belief-like but not really true at all. They all occur in a larger space of possible worlds. Thus if epistemic relativism is right, then there is no hope of showing that good reasoning leads to the truth. Thus we should be no more concerned about the fact that good reasoning may not lead to truth anymore than we are about the fact that good reasoning may not lead to truth, to put it bluntly, that good reasoning may not lead to beliefs sanctioned by same ancient texts like Upanishads or Gita.
So inevitably now we have come to “the impasse”. The impasse is given in terms of the circularity in which we define.

Pragmatism = df epistemic relativism.

The onus is on us to prove that relativism is either not circular or least harmful. Towards which we shall now move. So Stich considers the charge of circularity in more detail. According to the pragmatic account, one system, of cognitive processes is better than another if it is more likely to achieve those things that are intrinsically good, as valued by the relevant person.

Here Stich’s thought experimental takes new direction. Supposing I am that relevant person, who is trying to determine whether my own system of cognitive processes is better than some alternative systems.

(1) that given two systems of cognitive processes, the Indian and the Western, how to cognitively evaluate one system as better suited than the other.

(2) In order to do this, I must use my cognitive system.

(3) Suppose I conclude that my system is better than other.

(4) This leads to ‘vicious circularity’ because I have used my system to assess that my own cognitive system is better than the other alternative.
I have used the very stem which is better to assess the other alternative system which is not up to the mark.

Supposing we turn the other way to reach an opposite conclusion:

(5) The proposed alternative is better than mine from my point of view. But this also is based on the ‘meta-narrative’ of my own system, and hence it cannot escape circularity. Thus it appears that we are trying to pull ourselves by our own bootstraps.

What is meant by ‘pulling up with my own bootstraps?’ Stich gives four replies in this context:

**Reply 1:** Supposing we use the alternative system itself to find out such that system comes out best. That is to say, we re-run the enquiry by excluding my own system, and adopting the other to discover that it comes out best. This is one prime example of ‘bootstrapping’ in which it should sub-serve the larger project of cognitive improvement. This is essentially because, we run a given system and its proposed alternative to end up with the conclusion that one is better than the other. The cognitive improvement strikes us as good because we can equally finish saying that mine is better after the re-run. This looks like a case of begging the question. But then Stich concludes saying that “obviously not all attempts at pragmatic cognitive assessment need turn out this way, nor is there any reason to think that such cases are going to be particularly common”48.
Reply 2: What is wrong with the first reply is that I am using the very system as one of its premises to beg the very conclusion that says that mine is better. Instead, I use both systems to explore how they interact with my physical and social environment, without making this as a premise. Thus, I can use two systems to make a comparative assessment with a pair of non-cognitive tools. Such a comparison need not involve a premise about the efficacy of the cognitive system I am using and thus I avoid circularity. My interlocuter may retort saying that still my system is rather presupposed in a very tacit way. But now the onus is on the critic who waits to prove what I am actually presupposing. That is he should tell us, what exactly is meant by ‘tacit’ presupposition in this context. It is very likely that this can get an explanation along the following lines:

We are supposing we have before us an empirical argument to the conclusion that our cognitive system is pragmatically better than a proposed alternative. (Let’s call the alternative System A, and the conclusion Proposition A). It is claimed that because we are using our cognitive system in constructing and assessing the argument, the argument must tacitly presuppose Proposition A. But of course, we use our cognitive system in all our reasoning. So if the mere fact that we use our cognitive system in constructing and assessing an argument entails that the argument presupposes Proposition A, then all our arguments presuppose Proposition A, even those that have nothing to
do with the comparative merits of cognitive systems. Moreover, since proposition A is hardly unique, this is just the beginning of the critic’s list of ubiquitous presuppositions. Consider the claim (call it Proposition B) that our cognitive system is better than some other alternative, System B. Presumably, the critic would claim that in using our cognitive system to construct arguments for Proposition B, we tacitly presuppose Proposition B. But, once again, if the mere fact that we use our cognitive system in constructing an argument entails that the argument presupposes Proposition B, then all our arguments presuppose Proposition B. And so on, for Proposition C, Proposition D, and indefinitely many more. Yet surely there is something more than a bit absurd about any view entailing that all our arguments have infinitely many presuppositions. To summarize, my second reply sums as follows: In applying the pragmatic account there will be no explicit circularity, and the critic who insists that there is a tacit circularity owes us some account of the notion of presupposition that does not lead to absurd consequences.\textsuperscript{49}
Reply 3. Assuming the circularity has no problem, and presuppositions can be ignored, now we open up our evaluation to the third reply:

“my third reply is that this circularity is no special problem for the pragmatic account, since an entirely parallel circularity will beset attempts to apply any other account of cognitive evaluation. What motivates the charge of circularity in applying the pragmatic account is simply that we are using our cognitive system in the process of showing that it is pragmatically better than some proposed alternative. But now suppose that we reject pragmatic account in favour of some different account that says system A is better than system B if and only if A has property P and B doesn’t. For any P that is even remotely plausible, we are going to have to use our cognitive system in order to determine whether our system has it and the alternative does not. And if that use of our cognitive system is all it takes to convict an account of cognitive evaluation of circularity, then any remotely plausible alternative to pragmatism is going to be circular, too. So the “circularity problem” gives us no reason to reject the pragmatic account in favour of some other account of cognitive evaluation.  

This leads to the ubiquitous conclusion that all accounts of cognitive evaluations are circular. Therefore, one needs to exercise one more options.
Reply 4. The punching of the critic:

“Suppose we agree with the critic that pragmatism, along with all other accounts of cognitive evaluation, are “tacitly circular” when we attempt to apply them. Why is this circularity supposed to be a defect? The critic’s answer, presumably, is that we should want something more from an account of cognitive evaluation; we would want an account that can be applied without this sort of circularity. But let’s think a bit more carefully about this. The “tacit circularity” arises simply in virtue of the fact that we use our cognitive system in assessing cognitive systems. So according to the critic, what we should want is an account of cognitive evaluation that can be applied without any cognitive activity at all. Surely, at this juncture, the right reply to make is that this is a perfectly preposterous thing to want. The defect that the critic has discovered in the pragmatic account (and all the others) is simply that we can’t apply without thinking, and that, I submit, is not a defect that any sensible person should worry about.51

Does this, together with human finitude (Cherniak) belief perseverance (a belief is preserved even if the person no longer accepts the evidence), and memory compartmentalization (failure to make the connection some times in the web of interconnected beliefs) entail a bleak implication for human reasoning? It is here heuristics comes to our aid because of the multiple constraints on our reasoning. But it is not clear whether Stich is on a clear line of thinking on cultural relativism and its consequences.
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