In the Mental Fiction,
Mental Fictionalism is Fictitious

'I am not speaking' is a truth I cannot speak. Similarly, when 'I am not thinking' is true, I cannot think it without rendering it false. But consider a world where eliminativism obtains, where no one can strictly speak or think of anything at all. In that world, are there truths that I* (my counterpart) cannot speak or think? The answer may seem trivially "yes," since I* cannot speak or think anything. But suppose, as is plausible, that "truths" are representational items, meaningful sentences or thoughts. Then the answer is "no." For there would be no truths, hence no unspeakable or unthinkable truths. Though there would still be *facts* of which I* cannot speak or think.

In particular, I* would be unable to speak or think of the very fact I* cannot speak or think. Suppose I* nonetheless utter the sounds 'I am not speaking or thinking'. Imagine, moreover, that my* cohorts are behaviorally conditioned to respond with 'That's false, since you say that you are not speaking, yet you *are* speaking when you say that.' Still, in an eliminativist world, these things are meaningless, so none of it would be true or false.

But suppose we project the English meaning onto my* utterance 'I am not speaking or thinking.' Under that pretense, my* utterance would then be false. For according to that pretense, I* am indeed speaking. So if we impose the fiction that my* utterance has its English meaning, then I* speak *falsely* in uttering 'I* cannot speak or think anything'—even though I* cannot speak or think anything!

Eliminativism is often said to be self-refuting, much in the manner of 'I am not speaking'. But eliminativism may be self-refuting only if we adopt the "meaning pretense." And if eliminativism is false under that pretense, it does not follow that it is false. Or rather, it still could be a *fact*. My aim is to make all this clearer, but in doing so, I do not mean to endorse

eliminativism. My aim is instead to show merely that certain objections against eliminativism are nondemonstrative, once the very idea of "self-refutation" is seen as part of a pretense.

Nonetheless, there is a price incurred by such pretense-theoretic eliminativism or "mental fictionalism." The mental fictionalist must reject the language of mental fictionalism, and will be forced into a kind of quietism.

1. What is Mental Fictionalism?

Fictionalism, broadly speaking, is a nonrealist stance toward ontologically suspicious entities (numbers, possible worlds, morals, etc.) However, beyond the differences in entities, there is still a surprising variety among views that are called "fictionalist." (For a general overview, see Kalderon 2005a; Eklund 2011; Kroon 2011). Many apply the label 'fictionalist' even to van Fraassen's (1980) view of scientific unobservables. That is so, even though van Fraassen does not describe unobservables as "mere fictions;" he is rather agnostic about their existence.[1]

Even among nonagnostic fictionalisms, there are further key differences. Thus, Field's fictionalism regards mathematical discourse as *literally false* (even though mathematics remains a rational activity, insofar as it is useful). In contrast, a modal fictionalist (cf. Rosen 1990; Nolan 1997; 2002) regards some modal statements as *literally true* despite the rejection of possible worlds.[2] This is done by interpreting, e.g., 'I might have been a dentist' as saying that "According to the fiction, there is a possible world where I became a dentist." ("The fiction" here is an unflattering reference to [the closure of] Lewis's Modal Realism; see Lewis 1968; 1973; 1986.) Importantly, it is literally true that there is such a world *according to Lewis's view*. Yet Lewis's view is seen as mere fiction; so the modal fictionalist is still able to deny that such a world exists.[3]

The view I call "mental fictionalism" is modeled more after modal fictionalism.[4] Roughly, it adopts the modal fictionalist's stance toward *mentalistic discourse* (i.e., discourse that uses mentalistic terminology like 'belief', 'experience', etc.). Officially, mental fictionalism can be defined as the conjunction of the following two theses ("eliminativism" and "story prefix semantics," respectively):

(Elim)   The mental states posited by folk psychology do not exist.[5]

(SPS) Sentences of mentalistic discourse can be true in a fiction relative sense. More precisely: If 'm' is a term for a mental state and "Φ(x)" is a formula, "Φ(m)" is true iff, according to the fiction of folk psychology, there is a mental state m such that Φ(m).[6]

I am unable to say in general what "mental states" are. But the key examples are *representational states* like thinking that *p*, being afraid of the dog, etc. These states are distinctive in being *intentional*; they are "about" objects and states of affairs. And as such, they can be "true of" objects/affairs. ("Truth" as a folk-psychological notion shall be important later.)

As with other fictionalisms, mental fictionalism can be a "hermeneutic" or a "revolutionary" fictionalism (see Burgess and Rosen 1997). The difference lies in whether the view is a *descriptive* account of ordinary mentalistic discourse, versus a *prescriptive* program for regimenting the discourse. My focus here will be on hermeneutic mental fictionalism, though I believe much of what I say is applicable to a revolutionary view as well.

If mentalistic discourse has fiction relative truth conditions, its sentences can be true according to the fiction. (SPS) takes this a bit further, however, and says that "truth" within mentalistic discourse *just is* this type of fiction relative truth. (SPS) thus is a clear departure from eliminativists like the early Stich (1983). Although both accept (Elim), the early Stich seems committed to mentalistic discourse being untrue.[7] The mental fictionalist, however, hopes to soften the blow of (Elim) by retaining the truth of some bits of mentalistic discourse. For instance, (SPS) allows for the truth of 'Obama believes that mammals are animals' as follows:

(1) 'Obama believes that mammals are animals' is true iff, according to the folk-psychological fiction, there is a belief state that mammals are animals and Obama is in that state.[8]

Here, the mentalistic attribution to Obama is "true" iff the folk-psychological fiction implies that Obama has such a belief. Yet if its truth indicates merely what is true in the mental fiction, then to endorse the attribution is not to commit to the actual existence of the mental state. It is instead to assert merely that the fiction is so committed.[9] (Indeed, given

(Elim), the "fictional truth" of the attribution means the attribution is positively untrue if the story prefix is omitted.)

Like modal fictionalism, mental fictionalism must be refined further in light of the Brock-Rosen objection (see Brock 1993; Rosen 1993).[10] The Brock-Rosen objection, if applied to mental fictionalism, would first note the following consequence of (SPS):

(2) 'There is a belief state that mammals are animals and Obama is in that state' is literally true iff, according to the folk-psychological fiction, there is a belief state that mammals are animals and Obama is in that state.

Suppose, as is plausible, that the latter half of the biconditional is true. Then, since the mental fictionalist assumes (2), her view entails the former half. But the truth of the first half indicates it is true that there is a belief state of such and such type. And that contradicts (Elim).

A fictionalist might reply that the first half of (SPS) applies to all mentalistic discourse, except for statements that assume the existence of mental entities. Yet such a move can look *ad hoc* (cf. Nolan and Hawthorne 1996, 27). So instead, one might adopt a more "timid" fictionalism (cf. Nolan 1997). The idea here is that biconditionals like (2) serve only to translate mentalistic discourse into a more serious idiom. (2) in particular conveys that, if the mental fictionalist asserts "There is a belief state . . . ," this should not be understood in an ontologically loaded way. Rather, it should be translated as the fiction relative claim that *according to the mental fiction*, there is a belief state, etc., etc. (See also Liggins [2007] and Woodward [2008] for similar proposals.)

A different response to the objection is to talk of "figurative" truth rather than truth tout court. (This is roughly what Yablo [2001] proposes in the case of mathematical fictionalism).[11] Applied to mental fictionalism, this would mean that 'Obama believes that mammals are animals' does not amount to a literal truth, but rather a figurative truth. Nonetheless, there remains a real difference in whether p is figuratively true or not; this lies in whether the mental fiction says that p.

Even so, "figuralism" and timid fictionalism are importantly similar. Namely, both deny that truth for mentalistic discourse can be anything more than truth in fiction. Regarding mentalistic discourse, timid fiction-

alism just interprets 'true' as expressing "true in the fiction." Figuralism, on the other hand, does this for 'figuratively true'. But both views end up with "true in the fiction" as the fundamental notion.[12] So there is no need to decide between timid fictionalism and figuralism. Ultimately, mentalistic discourse can be true only in the sense of "fictionally true." [13]

2. Worries about Self-Refutation

Why would anyone be a mental fictionalist? Well, *if* one is inclined toward eliminativism, then it is quite natural to talk of folk psychology as a "myth" (see Stich 1983, 2, 221).[14] Mental states would seem to be mere "projections" that have no basis in reality. But I shall not elaborate on the arguments for the view, since the more urgent matter is whether mental fictionalism even gets off the ground. This section identifies *five* ways in which mental fictionalism looks self-refuting.

It is a familiar worry that (Elim) alone looks self-refuting. For instance, one might ask the eliminativist "do you *believe* (Elim)?" If she answers 'yes', then she concedes the existence of at least one belief, contra (Elim). But if she answers 'no', then she is no longer an eliminativist.

However, the standard reply from Churchland (1981) is that the objection begs the question. For the objection presumes the legitimacy of folk psychology, insofar as it inquires after an eliminativist's beliefs. But the legitimacy of folk psychology is precisely what is at issue. Rejecting the question, moreover, does not mean surrendering eliminativism. After all, an eliminativist can still respond with 'no' to questions like 'Do beliefs exist?'[15]

This leads to a useful clarification. I have been talking of what the eliminativist believes, asserts, etc. But when eliminativists (including fictionalists) claim to "believe" that *p*, we can read this simply as "the eliminativist normally responds with the sound 'yes' when given the interrogative '*p*?' as stimulus."[16] This replacement is not intended to be equivalent to the belief attribution; it suffices to think of it as a "good enough" replacement for the attribution. The advantage, of course, is that this alleviates the self-refutation worry above, as well as worries about question begging. (For that matter, the eliminativist can also replace my utterances of the form "I believe that *p*" with "TP normally utters 'yes' as a response to the interrogative '*p*?'.") Similar replacements can be generated for attributions of other mental states—or at least, I shall assume as much for the sake of discussion.[17]

The mental fictionalist faces four more self-refutation worries, yet these should be classed differently from the one already mentioned. For these other worries concern not (Elim) in isolation, but rather (Elim) in conjunction with (SPS). For that reason, they are unique to the mental fictionalist; they do not bear on eliminativism *per se*.[18]

First, (SPS) speaks in earnest about a "mental fiction," yet the notion of a "fiction" itself seems to be a folk-psychological notion. On its face, a "fiction" is characterized by a certain attitude we take toward it. Normally, we do not believe what a fiction says; we merely *make believe* that what it says is true (Wallace, ms., 35–36). Or, what amounts to much the same, the act of fictionalizing that *a* is *F* consists in following the rule:

(*) Regard *a* as being *F*, regardless of whether *a* is *F*. (Woodbridge 2005, 163)

But to "regard" an object as being *F* is to adopt a certain attitude toward it, which again, is a mentalistic phenomenon. So here too, it seems that taking seriously the idea of "fiction" is to invest in folk-psychological posits, contra (Elim).

A *second* self-refuting worry is this. Given that a mental fictionalist accepts (Elim), a *semantic* account like (SPS) seems out of place. After all, the very idea of a "semantics" seems part and parcel of folk psychology. For a semantics is a theory which aims to describe what various expressions *mean* in a language—and that assumes that the expressions have meanings in the first place. If a sentence is meaningful, moreover, then speakers use it with specific *intentions*, so to express a *thought*, in order to *communicate* with each other, etc. (Churchland 1981, 89). So to pursue semantic inquiry in earnest seems to commit the inquirer to a folk-psychological enterprise.

There is a *third*, related issue. Besides (SPS) itself, the motivation for accepting (SPS) sits uncomfortably with (Elim). The aim, recall, was to preserve the truth of some statements within folk psychology. This was to mollify the shock of (Elim), where mentalistic discourse looks completely devoid of truth. Even so, "truth" seems to be a folk-psychological notion; a sentence S is true iff *p*—where S *means p* (or where "*p*" is the metalanguage *translation* of S). So the mental fictionalist drive to preserve "truth" seems at odds with (Elim).

A *fourth* worry follows on this immediately. (SPS) determines truth in mentalistic discourse according to the fiction, i.e., by what the fiction says. But this ideology is also semantic, hence, folk psychological. Whether *p* is something the fiction "says," or whether *p* is true "according to the fiction," is determined by whether the fiction *entails p*. And 'entailment' is a truth-theoretic notion. (A set of sentences entails a sentence S iff it is not possible for all sentences in the set to be true and S to be false.)

These last points assume that truth and falsity are borne by *sentences*, though this is not always agreed to. Even so, if *thoughts* are truth bearers instead, then the folk-psychological nature of truth is even more apparent—truth would be instantiated by folk-psychological posits *par excellence*. Yet what if truth is instead a property of "propositions," where these are understood as abstract objects, akin to numbers? Then, the notion of truth (and related notions like entailment) might not be folk-psychological notions; such things might instead be more of a mathematical nature.

However, abstract propositions would remain posits of folk psychology, insofar as they are seen as the *meanings* or *thoughts* expressed by declarative sentences. (Paradigmatically, 'schnee ist weiss' and 'snow is white' have the same meaning in virtue of expressing the same proposition.) So if truth is a property of propositions, and propositions are folk-psychological posits, then truth remains part of folk psychology. Abstract propositions as truth bearers, then, do not divest truth of its folk-psychological moorings.

Given that, the self-refutation concerns about truth persist for the mental fictionalist, independently of whether sentences, thoughts, or abstract propositions are the bearers of truth. But for simplicity, I shall henceforth suppose that sentences are the truth bearers. In light of the foregoing, a different choice of truth bearer would only affect the formulation and not the substance of the issues.

3. Semantic Ascent

In light of the self-refutation criticisms, it thus may seem that mental fictionalism is hopelessly incoherent. The trouble owes to mental fictionalism (and its motivation) being articulated in mentalistic discourse—even though such discourse is indicted by mental fictionalism itself. This can be illustrated succinctly by applying (SPS) to the mentalistic vocabulary used to articulate mental fictionalism. (One might call the outcome "meta-mental fictionalism.") In very abbreviated form, the result is:

(MMF)   Mental fictionalism is true iff, according to the mental
              fiction, mental fictionalism obtains.

As it stands, (MMF) follows from mental fictionalism, yet it is also incon-
sistent with it, given that the right-hand side of (MMF) is false. After all,
mental fictionalism does *not* obtain according to folk psychology. Folk
psychology says mental states exist, but mental fictionalism rejects that.

This calls to mind a standard fix to self-refutation problems, familiar
from Tarski on the Liar, namely, *semantic ascent*.[19] In this instance, the
idea would be that the left-hand side of (SPS) concerns truth only in some
object language OL, whereas the language of mental fictionalism itself is
a different language, a metalanguage ML. In such a case, the mental
fictionalist's mentalistic terms like 'true' and 'fiction' can be taken as
falling outside the scope of mental fictionalism. On this tack, (SPS) would
then be better expressed as follows:

(SPS$_{OL}$)   If 'm' is a term of OL for a mental state and "$\Phi(x)$" is a
                   formula of OL, "$\Phi(m)$" is true in OL iff, according to the
                   fiction of folk psychology, there is a mental state m such
                   that $\Phi(m)$.

This will not entail (MMF), since the mental fictionalist's own language
is not OL, i.e., it is not the language targeted by the theory. And thus, none
of the earlier four self-refutations arises: A mental fictionalist can be con-
cerned with "truth" in OL and give a "fictionalist semantics" for
mentalistic discourse in OL, since these things are formulated in a lan-
guage other than the target language. Call the view that targets OL
"mental fictionalism$_{OL}$."

However, semantic ascent is not a cure-all in this case. It turns out
that the resulting hierarchy of languages is ω-inconsistent. To get a sense
of this, consider what happens when we expand the fictionalist's target so
that it also includes mentalistic discourse from ML. Call this view "mental
fictionalism$_{ML}$." Then, since our earlier formulation of mental fictionalis-
m$_{OL}$ is a piece of ML mentalistic discourse, mental fictionalism$_{ML}$ will
bear on that articulation of mental fictionalism$_{OL}$. Specifically, in a very
abbreviated form, mental fictionalism$_{ML}$ will imply:

(MMF*) Mental fictionalism$_{OL}$ is true iff, according to the mental fiction, mental fictionalism$_{OL}$ obtains.

But the problem here is akin to that of (MMF). For it shows that mental fictionalism$_{ML}$ falsifies mental fictionalism$_{OL}$. After all, (MMF*) is a consequence of mental fictionalism$_{ML}$, and the right-hand side of (MMF*) is false. That's because folk psychology does not imply that mental fictionalism$_{OL}$ obtains. It thus follows from (MMF*) that mental fictionalism$_{OL}$ is also false.

This pattern holds generally. For any language of order *n*, *n*-order mental fictionalism is provably false, on the assumption that *n* + 1 order mental fictionalism is true. Hence, since every language L in the hierarchy has a metalanguage, it can be shown that for every L, mental fictionalism$_L$ is false. But of course, the hierarchy was introduced by the fictionalist, on the hope that mental fictionalism$_L$ might be true at some level *n*. And indeed, the stratification at least dispels the threat of self-refutation. But although *self*-refutation is avoided, *n* + 1 order mental fictionalism will entail that *n*-order mental fictionalism is false.[20] And since *n* is arbitrary, this just means the semantic hierarchy is ω-inconsistent with the truth of mental fictionalism.

4. Primitivism

But here is a question: Why should a mental fictionalist feel compelled to ascend the hierarchy ad infinitum? She may instead just take the relevant terms of ML as *primitive* or unanalyzed. In this manner, if she is asked what the mentalistic terminology of ML means, she can just decline to answer. And that may be fair; after all, her present view is restricted just to the mentalistic terminology of OL.

This version of mental fictionalism parallels closely a prominent sort of modal fictionalism. As noted by Rosen (1990), a modal fictionalist may treat the story prefix 'according to the fiction' as primitive, in lieu of providing the standard possible worlds semantics (from Lewis [1983]). Naturally, one wants to stave off primitives as long as possible. But interpretation has to end somewhere, and further analysis would invoke the very worlds that the modal fictionalist hopes to avoid. In like manner, the mental fictionalist might take as primitive the story prefix on the right side

of (SPS_{OL}), and ditto with its truth term on the left. After all, we understand these terms well enough *sans* interpretation; they are part of our native English. (Even a child knows how to talk of what is true "according to the story" as opposed to what is true tout court.)

In the case of modal fictionalism, however, primitivism is contentious in at least two respects. For one, Lewis thinks a fictionalist primitivism offers negligible explanatory advantages regarding modal discourse—especially compared to his modal realism (1992, 222). Relatedly, Proudfoot thinks there is little reason to favor such primitivism, as opposed to just taking the modal operators themselves as primitive (2006, 10). And analogous points might be made against primitivism *vis-à-vis* mental fictionalism. The primitivist mental fictionalist may not attain the same explanatory prowess as the mental realist, nor is it clear why we should favor the view over a general primitivism about mentalistic terms. (One might also say there is something hypocritical about fictionalist primitivism. Apparently, it amounts the declaration "only *my* use of target discourse is theoretically legitimate!")

I would further suggest that although interpretation must end somewhere, primitivism at this point seems a bit too convenient. There are proper and improper ways to select primitives, and the fictionalist's selection seems illicit.

In general, what would make for a proper selection of primitives? Consider here a physics which takes causation (or causation talk) as primitive. Such a theory is limited, but theory builders have only limited time and resources, after all. Now it is uncontroversial that normally this is unobjectionable. But that is because normally the primitives of the theory are not chosen merely to elude problems. Indeed, physicists themselves may fervently wish to extend the theory to gain a deeper understanding of causation. It's just that there are only 24 hours in a day. And for the present, the causation terminology may work just fine as a resting spot.

Contrast this with a different sort of case. Suppose that a Newtonian decided to take the perihelion of Mercury (or talk thereof) as primitive, and assumes that Newtonian mechanics applies only to the rest of the universe. Of course, the deviation in Mercury's perihelion is just one manifestation of a non-Newtonian law, so we know that the Newtonian will face further problems down the road. But bracketing that, the Newtonian still seems to be gerrymandering her theory in an inappropriate way.

Why is it inappropriate? First, exception clauses on mechanical principles strain the idea that they correspond to genuine laws of nature. Or in the currently prominent terminology, it becomes dubious whether the principles "carve nature at the joints." But what's more, the Newtonian will favor an odd constriction on scientific inquiry: Qua Newtonian, she is better off *opposing* an extension of the theory to the perihelion. After all, if the exception clauses were deleted, then the extension would be immediately falsified. Or, if the exception clauses are retained, then a separate set of principles must be generated for the exception case—and that looks *ad hoc*.

This is admittedly brief, but it suggests that it is undesirable to regard your primitives as *fixedly* primitive. Normally, having primitives in your theory merely reflects that your time is limited. Expansion is normally supposed to remain possible, indeed, desirable. Yet for our Newtonian, expansion is ill advised. And truth be told, this reflects that her choice of primitives is a mere dodge, a way of brushing off the problems.

Similarly, if the OL mental fictionalist takes her own folk-psychological terminology as primitive, she has a vested interest in keeping it primitive. For as we saw at (MMF*), OL mental fictionalism is immediately falsified if ML mental fictionalism is introduced. Granted, there may be "logical space" for one to be an OL fictionalist and also adopt some other view of ML mentalistic discourse. But this would be akin to introducing a separate set of mechanistic principles for the perihelion of Mercury. It would be a case where the language of mental fictionalism is treated differently from other mentalistic discourse, in a way that looks unmotivated or *ad hoc*.

5. *Mental Fictionalism* cum *Quietism*

Beyond all this, however, there is more intriguing response to the self-refutation charges. The folk-psychological nature of "truth" is a key source of self-refutation worries. Yet in the end, the mental fictionalist may be able to reorient this to her advantage.

Consider: The objections from section 3 concern whether mental fictionalism is *self-refuting*. But "self-refutation" is *a truth-theoretic notion*; a thesis is "self-refuting" if its falsity can be demonstrated under the supposition it is *true*. So apparently, to take seriously a question about "self-refutation" is already to assume a folk-psychological backdrop which the mental fictionalist rejects. Asking whether mental fictionalism

is "self-refuting" apparently commits the fallacy of complex question. The mental fictionalist should simply reject the question, much like how any decent human being should reject the question "Have you stopped beating your wife?"

Even so, this rejection of "truth talk" takes a bizarre turn. For it also bears on the more basic question "Is mental fictionalism *true*?" The rejection of that question indicates that, oddly, the mental fictionalist is not committed to the *truth* of mental fictionalism. To say that the she is committed to its truth is much like insisting that the eliminativist believes (Elim).

But how can one be a mental fictionalist without committing to the truth of mental fictionalism? One can instead say "mental fictionalism is a fact." That utterance is free of the truth term—and if the question of its truth arises, the mental fictionalist can reject it as a case of complex question.[21]

One problem, however, is that the mental fictionalist view itself is a piece of truth talk—(SPS) cannot be formulated if truth talk is *verboten*. So if you are a mental fictionalist, then your advice to yourself is, apparently, not to express mental fictionalism. This is not exactly self-refutation; mental fictionalism could still be a fact even if the mental fictionalist keeps it to herself. But it is a case of *self-silencing*, as it were. It is a case where mental fictionalism collapses into a kind of quietism. Mental fictionalism becomes akin to the claim "I am not speaking or thinking." Yet in both cases, even if the claim is unsayable, it is still possible that the relevant fact obtains.

The mental fictionalist can thus claim one sort of victory: *She has countered the self-refutation charges as formulated.* She may well grant that, in the mental fiction where truth and falsity exist, mental fictionalism is self-falsifying. Yet if *p* is false in fiction, it does not follow that ~*p*. So oddly, even granting such "self-refutation," it remains possible that mental fictionalism is a fact. "Self-refutation" may just be an event in the fiction (although that too probably cannot be said.)[22]

Perhaps rejoinders are available. E.g., instead of "self-refutation," perhaps the issue could be phrased in terms of metaphysical impossibility: "There is no possible world where mental fictionalism is a fact," since it would require a world that contains and does not contain a contentful fiction. This way of putting things avoids question begging on its face. Although, there is a case to be made that modal talk is really covert semantic talk (see, e.g., Quine [1951; 1960]). I do not want to engage that

dispute, however. Suffice it to say that if truth talk is folk-psychological talk, then a mental fictionalist can reply to "self-refutation" charges as formulated, even though the problems could resurface in a different guise. But granted, perhaps the mental fictionalist should have just kept quiet in the first place.[23]

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NOTES

1. I have also witnessed, though not in print, the 'fictionalist' label applied to Dennett's (1975) view of the mental. Yet when it comes to propositional attitudes, Dennett (1991a) is something of a realist, since attitude ascriptions at least capture "real patterns." (Moreover, he is merely agnostic about the "hyper-realist" language of thought hypothesis, cf. Fodor [1975].) Still, the 'fictionalist' label may be apt for Dennett (1991b) on the self and on conscious experience; see Block (1994) and Schwitzgebel (2007), respectively.

2. In general, I shall be assuming throughout that any "fictionalist" view (not just modal fictionalism) is an actualist view, meaning nonexistent or nonactual objects shall be ignored.

3. This is a kind of "metafictionalism," in Yablo's (2001) terminology. Yablo similarly distinguishes this from Field-style and van Fraassen-style antirealisms, and also from his "figuralism" (discussed below).

4. But unlike modal fictionalism, the present mental fictionalism does not insist on *literal* truth in the discourse. Literal truth is not ruled out, but "figural truth" is allowed as alternative as well; see below.

5. Boghossian (1990a, b) argues that (Elim) is better formulated as the metalinguistic thesis that 'true' does not denote a substantive property. Otherwise, (Elim) looks like an inconsistent negative existential: "There are mental properties such that there are no such properties." However, as we know from Quine (1948), this is a problem whenever one wishes to be an antirealist about *x*. (If *x* does not exist, then you are not an antirealist about *anything*.) Hence, since the issue is not unique to (Elim), I shall pass it by.

6. Writers sometimes suppose that the story-prefix semantics is all there is to being a "fictionalist," strictly speaking. (The denial of the suspicious entities, represented here by (Elim) would not be part of "fictionalism" *per se*.) However, I earlier bracketed the "agnostic" fictionalisms, and I assume that a story-prefix semanticist is not inclined toward realism. So here I make explicit that the mental "fictionalism" of concern is one that indeed includes a strict denial of mental states.

Also, n.b., the view described here is a kind of "content fictionalism," in contrast to a "force fictionalism" like the moral fictionalism from Joyce (2002; 2005). (The terminology comes from Eklund [2011].) Joyce does not want moral truths to be relativized to a story; this would undercut the normative force that they are meant to have. Instead, he holds that although moral dictates are false as stated, we undertake a "pre-commitment" to regarding them as true. (A content/force distinction is also found in Lewis [2005].)

7. Calling folk psychology "untrue" is meant to be neutral between the theory being false—and it being neither true nor false (where there is no "content" for the theory to have in the first place.)

8. For ease of exposition I assimilate sentences of the form "S believes that *p*" with those of the form "there is a belief that *p* such that S has it."

9. Such mental fictionalism has been defended by Wallace (ms.). Also, Balaguer (1998), Crimmins (1998), Demeter (2009a, b), and Woodbridge (2005) are close cousins, if not in the same immediate family.

10. The Brock-Rosen objection is originally directed at modal fictionalism, but as noted by many, the worry seems pertinent to any view that adopts a story prefix semantics. The other major objection to modal fictionalism is from Hale (1995). Yet Hale's point has no clear analogue for other fictionalisms.

11. This is an oversimplification of Yablo's view, but it will suffice for our purposes. Nolan's (1997) "broad fictionalism" is a similar view where 'true' is understood as "true, loosely speaking." (There is also Menzies and Pettit [1994] who add a story prefix to *every* quantifier in the discourse.)

12. In the case of the modal fictionalist, there are other responses to the Brock-Rosen objection, most notably Noonan's (1994). Here, the objection is that "necessarily, there are many worlds" is literally true by the fictionalist's own lights. In reply, Noonan proposes using Lewis (1968) instead of Lewis (1986) as the relevant fiction, since the former does not entail the necessary existence of multiple worlds. However, Noonan's point has no clear analogue in the case of mental fictionalism.

13. This is neutral on Joyce's (2002) distinction between *reporting* on the content of a fiction, versus *pretending* that the content of the fiction is true. For the present view offers only (fiction relative) truth conditions of mentalistic discourse. Nothing from that follows on whether speakers pretend-assert 'Obama believes that mammals are animals' or instead fully assert it as a report of what the mental fiction says. For (SPS) is only a *semantic* view, and is neutral on which *speech acts* occur with mentalistic discourse.

14. Still, it is dubious whether Stich meant this talk of "myth" seriously in a way that would render him a mental fictionalist. I assume throughout the paper, if only for convenience, that Stich (1983) prefers (Elim) over the conjunction of (Elim) and (SPS).

15. There are other arguments against the coherence of (Elim); see Baker (2004) and Boghossian (1990a, b). See also Devitt (1990) and Devitt and Rey (1991) for rejoinders to Boghossian. But I omit this material for brevity. Yet one issue from the Boghossian-Devitt debate is worth noting, namely, that *deflationism about truth* might help with self-refutation worries. Both sides of the debate offer compelling points, yet oddly, Boghossian's most powerful argument against deflationism (on p. 178 of his [1990]) is never addressed.

16. For simplicity's sake, it is assumed that the eliminativist has an appropriate history of using English expressions (whence she intuitively counts as "competent" in the language). Some eliminativists may want to recast the talk of "belief" differently; they are free to do so according to their preferences.

17. I take it that this partly addresses Baker's (op. cit.) worries about "cognitive suicide."

18. I thus disagree with Wallace (ms.) who suggests that self-refutation is less of an issue for the mental fictionalist than for the eliminativist. Indeed, since (Elim) is part of mental fictionalism, any self-refuting worries with (Elim) would automatically apply to mental fictionalism as well. (Granted, Wallace allows for the possibility of "agnostic" views— meaning that (Elim) is not strictly part of her brand of mental fictionalism. Still, her

tendency is to talk of the fictionalist as a type of eliminativist, and it is precisely there that the threat of self-refutation has to be *at least* as bad.)

19. The term 'semantic ascent' is from Quine (1960).

20. If preferred, one can put the point in terms of "non-truth" rather than falsehood (cf. n. 8). The upshot would not be w-inconsistency (since the latter is defined with respect to falsity) but instead something like "w-non-consistency."

21. In line with Baker's (2004) second "pragmatic incoherence," one might object that the response still requires mental fictionalism to be *formulated*, in the sense that one must *describe* a possible state-of-affairs where mental fictionalism is *true*. Yet the mental fictionalist might reject this requirement as question-begging, thanks to the mentalistic terminology it deploys. Granted, if mental fictionalism has not been formulated, it is hard to see how one can properly understand her utterance. But a worry about "understanding" is also a folk-psychological worry, and so is of no real concern to the fictionalist!

22. Given the general parallels between modal fictionalism and the present mental fictionalism, this quietism might call to mind Divers's (2004) view about possible worlds. Divers is an agnostic about worlds: He does not accept Realism about possibilia, but nor does he trumpet some alternative. (My thanks to Bryce Huebner for raising this.) However, the two views are not parallel in many respects. For instance, our mental fictionalist is not merely agnostic; she is an eliminativist about the mental. More, eliminativism is what *forces* her to be a quietist, given that (SPS) is a piece of truth talk.

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