Mental Fictionalism As an Undermotivated Theory

Abstract

Our paper consists of three parts. In the first part we explain the concept of mental fictionalism. In the second part, we present the various versions of fictionalism and their main sources of motivation. We do this because in the third part we argue that mental fictionalism, as opposed to other versions of fictionalism, is a highly undermotivated theory.

1. What is Mental Fictionalism?

We can distinguish between realist and antirealist approaches regarding each type of entity. You are a realist if you think that the entities of the type in question exist, and you are an antirealist if you think that they do not. You can be a realist about universals, physical objects, abstract entities and so on, while you remain an antirealist for example about God, scattered objects, or finkish dispositions.

However, we need to distinguish how the realist or the antirealist approaches the ontological-metaphysical issues from how he approaches *discourse*. The focus of this latter distinction is not on the existence or non-existence of some entities, but on the features of our mode of speech about these entities.

According to Kalderon (2005, 95–113), three distinct conditions have to be satisfied in order to be a realist about a discourse. (1) The sentences of the discourse express propositions about the putative subject matter of the discourse. (2) In uttering these sentences, we assert the truth-conditions of the appropriate propositions. (3) At least most of these propositions are true—you are justified in accepting them.

In accordance with orthodoxy, we call the discourse about the mental 'folk psychology'. So, the three conditions of discourse about folk psychology are the following: (1) Sentences of folk psychology express

"Mental Fictionalism As an Undermotivated Theory" by Miklós Márton & János Tözsér, *The Monist*, vol. 96, no. 4, pp. 622–638.

propositions about mental facts. (2) In uttering sentences of folk psychology, we *assert the truth-conditions* of the appropriate propositions, namely the obtaining of mental facts. (3) Most of these propositions represent mental facts correctly, so they are mostly *true*.[1]

You are antirealist about folk psychology if you deny the satisfaction of at least one of the above conditions. Consequently, there are three possible antirealist positions.

Mental nonfactualism denies the first criterion. According to this position, sentences of folk psychology do not express propositions. One could argue for this claim from some semantic and ontological considerations. Maybe you accept some form of verificationism, and you think there are no exact verificational criteria in the case of these sentences, so they are meaningless. Or maybe, you simply think there are no mental entities and consequently, the referring terms of folk psychology are empty, which means that a component of the putative proposition is missing, and therefore, there is no proposition. Again, you can think the same about the predicates of folk psychology: since mental properties are not instantiated, there are no semantic counterparts of these predicates.

Eliminativism denies the third criterion. In contrast to the nonfactualist view, eliminativism says that the sentences of folk psychology express propositions, but these propositions are systematically false. In other words, propositions of folk psychology have representational content, but this content represents our minds falsely. So, eliminativism is an error theory of mind; it renders our beliefs about the mental definitely incorrect. Eliminativism is obviously not ontologically innocent either; it is committed to the nonexistence of mental facts posited by folk psychology.

It seems to us that the difference between the nonfactualist and the eliminativist view heavily depends on some shaky semantic intuitions. Consider the famous debate between Bertrand Russell (1905) and Peter Strawson (1950) about sentences containing empty names or definite descriptions. If you have a Russellian intuition, you will claim that these sentences express false propositions, but if you have Strawsonian ones, you will take these sentences as expressing no propositions at all, because their existential presupposition is not satisfied. Likewise, if you think there are no semantic counterparts of at least one compositional part of a sentence about the mental, then you have two choices. If you have Russellian intuitions, you will tend to accept the eliminativist view, but if you have Strawsonian intuitions, you will find the nonfactualist view more compelling.

Mental fictionalism denies the second criterion. In contrast to nonfactualism, it claims that the sentences of folk psychology do express propositions, but when we utter these, *we do not assert* these very propositions. In other words, we do not use the sentences of folk psychology to assert the truth conditions of their propositional content, and when accepting these sentences, we do not express any cognitive attitude (belief) about their propositional content. Furthermore, in contrast to eliminativism, the mental fictionalist view does not deny the obtaining of mental facts. According to this view, it is *irrelevant* whether the facts posited by folk psychology obtain or not, since the purpose of this discourse is not to give an account of mental facts.

Prima facie, mental fictionalism is ontologically innocent: its goal is not to make commitments to the existence or nonexistence of any facts or entities. In contrast to the other two positions though, it makes no claim about the content of folk-psychological sentences or about the ontological status of their subject matter. Mental fictionalism makes claims only about the *use* or *role* of these sentences. More specifically, it claims that in uttering a folk-psychological sentence, we only *quasi-assert* the propositional content thereof, whilst actually doing something else.

What else do we do? There are four known answers to this question (see Eklund 2011; Kalderon 2005, 119–29; Yablo 2001). The first two answers claim that we do not assert anything when we quasi-assert such a sentence. The other two answers claim that we do assert some proposition in these situations, but not those ones which constitute the semantic content of these sentences.

The first nonassertive version is called *instrumentalism*. Instrumentalism claims that in uttering a sentence of folk psychology, we do not make any assertive speech acts. Maybe the instrumentalist states that we make speech acts with other illocutionary force, for instance, we evaluate our fellows' or our own behaviour; we express our emotions regarding somebody or something; we try to bring out some attitude in our audience, etc. (see Demeter 2010; Morton 2003). Or maybe, the instrumentalist does not characterize positively what kind of speech acts we make and only states that they serve some larger purpose (see Yablo 2001). In short, the sentences of folk psychology are just tools or instruments for achieving some purpose.

The second nonassertive version of quasi-assertion is *figuralism*. According to this view, in uttering a sentence of folk psychology, we do not make any literal, not to mention assertive, speech acts, but rather, we speak figuratively.[2]

That is, we do not assert or evaluate or express anything, we just "make as if to say something" (Grice 1989, 34), and while doing this, we characterize the subject matter of folk psychology with figurative representational aids.

Let's see the assertive versions, which all claim that we do assert something by uttering folk-psychological sentences, but this something is not their propositional content. The first one of these assertive versions states that in uttering a sentence of folk psychology, we make an assertion about the content of a fiction. So, in uttering a sentence like "She believes that *p*" or "She desires that *p*," we make the following assertion: "According to the fiction of mental states, she believes that *p* or she desires that *p*." This is the *metafictionalist or metalinguistic view* of quasi-assertions.

According to the second assertive view, in uttering a sentence of folk psychology, we do make an assertion, moreover, an assertion about the real world and not about a fiction, but not about the proposition expressed by the sentence. Rather, we assert those real-world conditions which make it true that according to the fiction, things are so and so (see Dennett 1987). Since from this point of view we make an assertion about the objects of the real world, it is called the *objectualist view.*

To sum up, if we commit ourselves to any of these theoretical positions about the nature of quasi-assertion, we are mental fictionalists in the following sense:

> Mental fictionalism $=_{df}$. In uttering a sentence of folk psychology, we do not assert the truth-conditions of the propositional content of the sentence.

On the other hand, in accepting these sentences, we do not express any cognitive attitude (belief) about their propositional content. In the course of such an utterance, we just quasi-assert the propositional contents of our folk-psychological sentences, while in doing so, we do not assert anything (but do something else), or we assert the truth-conditions of other propositions.

2. The Main Motivation for Fictionalism

A fictionalist interpretation can be suggested for all kinds of discourse concerning any kind of entity. The question is always whether it is *worth* being a fictionalist about discourse.

Our claim is the following: two conditions must be satisfied in order to motivate fictionalism about some discourse. (1) *We can doubt* the existence of the appropriate type of entity, and (2) nevertheless, due to some pragmatic considerations, *we do not want to give up* the discourse in question.

There can be more than one kind of doubt about the subject matter of a discourse. We can simply think that the relevant entities *do not exist.* However, we do not have to commit ourselves to this strong antirealism. It is sufficient that, according to the conclusion of the well-known Oracle-argument (see e.g., Eklund 2005, 559–61), *we can consistently uphold* that the antirealist ontology is true, but even that is not necessary: it is sufficient to proceed from the thesis that existential questions are too difficult to answer, so we have good reason to be *agnostic* about the existence of the relevant objects.[3]

Let's assume that we are committed to one of these sceptical attitudes. Let's also assume that we believe that we must hold on to the discourse in question for some reason. For example, it is so deeply rooted in our everyday use of language that it would be hopeless to give it up, or it has such irretrievable profit that giving it up would be explicitly damaging.

Now, if both conditions are fulfilled in connection with some discourse, fictionalism about it is well-motivated. Moreover, it is our only possibility.

It is obvious that we cannot be realists. One of the criteria of the realist interpretation of a discourse is that the sentences of it are mostly true, so realism is inconsistent with the acceptance of the sceptical attitude. Therefore, the first condition is not fulfilled.

This is not so with nonfactualism and error theory. Naturally, these are consistent with the sceptical attitude. What is more, as Kalderon (2005, 142–43) says: every antirealist approach about a discourse arises from some kind of scepticism. However, these two theories are not interested in preserving the discourse, therefore, the second condition is not fulfilled in their case.

This is quite clear. If you are an error-theorist, you will claim that the speakers of the relevant discourse are *always wrong* (or at least, we have good reason to suspect that they are), whenever they assert or accept a sentence of the discourse. According to the error-theorist, these speakers have *false epistemic intuitions*.

If you are a nonfactualist, you will claim that the relevant discourse is seemingly made up of fact-stating, propositionally contentful sentences,

but it is not. In other words, though the sentences of the discourse seem to be meaningful, they are really not, and they only express contentless pseudostatements. In short, the nonfactualist claims that the speakers of the discourse have *false semantic intuitions*.

In sum, the antirealist in these two cases holds that the sentences of the relevant discourse are either false or meaningless. Consequently, she is self-consistent only if, due to her sceptical attitude, she proposes to *give up* the discourse. She is prompted to do this for pragmatic reasons; one must not literally say something which one thinks to be false or meaningless. Remember Grice's famous maxims: "Do not say what you believe to be false!" (the first maxim of Quality) and "Be perspicuous!" (the supermaxim of Manner)! (Grice 1989, 27). It would be superfluous even if she would try to reform our—from her point of view—false intuitions about the discourse. This manoeuvre would make it even clearer that we should give up the discourse in question.

The fictionalist goes against both of these antirealist views. In contrast to the error-theorist, she does not commit herself to the falsity, or even to the queerness of the propositions about the subject matter of the discourse. Rather, she proposes to interpret the discourse in such a way that in uttering its sentences, we really do not assert any truth or falsity about the subject matter of the discourse. In contrast to the nonfactualist, she does not question our fundamental semantic intuitions. She can argue that, because the above-mentioned doubts are well founded, we should understand the discourse in such a way that we really do not use these fact-stating, propositionally contentful sentences for asserting any true or false statements about the subject matter of the discourse. Indeed, in opposition to the realist and the two rival antirealist theories, fictionalism is the only theory which can adhere to the preservation of a discourse while being sceptical about the type of entities the discourse postulates.

Let's see three examples. First, let us take the discourse about *possible worlds*. In this case, both conditions are apparently satisfied. We have strong doubts about the existence of possible worlds; we are unwilling to accept both genuine modal realism, according to which there are possible worlds and they are genuine worlds like ours (see Lewis 1973; 1986), and ersatz modal realism, according to which there are possible worlds, but they are just abstract entities which represent or correspond to the ways our world might have been (see, e.g., Plantinga 1974; 1976/2004).

However, even though we have these strong doubts, we do not want to give up the discourse about possible worlds, because it is the best heuristic device to model our ordinary modal intuitions. If we were to commit ourselves to an error theory about the possible world discourse, we would have to say the following: philosophers, logicians, and linguists literally go wrong every time they speak about possible worlds, therefore we cannot accept this discourse. But we cannot accept it either if we are nonfactualists. In this case, we would have to say that the speakers of this discourse produce meaningless strings of signs. Consequently, based on our common-sense doubts and the fact that we need the possible world discourse, our commitment to modal fictionalism is well motivated (see e.g., Rosen 1990, Nolan 2011). Accepting for example the metafictionalist version of it, we could say that "*According to the fiction* of possible worlds, there exists a possible world where Garry Kasparov is a composer."

Second, let us see the discourse of *mathematical* (arithmetical) statements. We have weaker intuitions about mathematical entities; however, the question of their existence or nonexistence is surely difficult to answer, so it seems reasonable to be agnostic about it.

On the other hand, we would like to give up mathematical discourse even less than we want to give up the possible world discourse. It is not just an excellent tool for achieving some purpose, but also an *integral part* of our ordinary language, so giving it up seems to be hopeless. However, only the fictionalist interpretation of this discourse can jointly accept the sceptic (or agnostic) motivation and the intention to preserve the discourse. Error theory and nonfactualism make it impossible to adhere to the discourse, just as it is in the case of the possible world discourse, and exactly for the same reason. Therefore, the fictionalist interpretation is well motivated in this case as well.

Our third example is *moral discourse*, where our sceptical intuitions are rather waxy. However, it is clear that one can coherently think of a possible world where no moral properties, facts, or values exist, and there are arguments for the claim that our world is such a world (see e.g., Mackie 1977).

So the sceptic attitude is also present in the case of moral discourse, but just as in the former two examples, we have good reason not to give up this discourse either. Moral speech is at least as integral a part of our ordinary language as the arithmetic one. The sceptic and the discourse-preserving motivation can be reconciled only by the fictionalist interpretation

in the case of this discourse, just as in the case of the former examples and due to the same considerations. So, the fictionalist interpretation is also well motivated here.[4]

As we noted earlier: you cannot rule out that fictionalism could be well motivated in the case of any discourse about any type of entity. For example, we can imagine *horrible dictu* that fictionalism about physical objects will emerge in the future—say, if more and more philosophers accept mereological nihilism and think that there are no mereologically complex objects, but only mereologically simple ones. According to this view, there are no tables just mereological atoms organized in a table-way (see e.g., van Inwagen 1990). As a matter of fact, we think that such a view will inevitably emerge sooner or later.[5] We would have strong enough doubts about the existence of complex objects, but we would be absolutely unwilling to give up speaking about physical objects.

3. Why Is the Case Different with Mental Fictionalism? Why Is Mental Fictionalism Undermotivated?

Let's have a look at the three plus one examples again. These examples show that the motivation for being fictionalist about various discourses has *degrees*. For example, it is *more* motivated to commit ourselves to fictionalism about the discourse of possible worlds than about the discourse of physical objects. It is more motivated, since while we are strongly *unwilling* to commit ourselves to the existence of possible worlds (whether they are concrete or abstract entities) because of our ordinary or common-sense ontological point of view, from the same point of view we have the basic *conviction* that well-known physical objects do exist. Therefore, while the mode of speech concerning possible worlds is in opposition to our everyday ontology, the one concerning physical objects is in line with it. Consequently, while the fictionalist interpretation of the possible world discourse is acceptable for common sense considerations (it is easy to see theoretical reasons why it is needed), the fictionalist interpretation of the physical object discourse is much less acceptable for these (at least presently).

We can gain a methodological principle from all of this. If the manifest picture of a discourse supports the realist interpretation, then the *burden of proof* is on the adherents of antirealist interpretations, including fictionalism. In other words, if an antirealist interpretation is in contrast with the manifest picture of a discourse, then the burden of proof is on the

antirealist. Focusing on fictionalism, if it contradicts the manifest image, then the adherent of this view has to persuade us that doubts about the existence of the subject matter of the discourse are so *serious* that we must free the utterances of sentences of the discourse from any ontological burden in order to preserve it. If she does not succeed in doing this, that is, she cannot raise serious enough doubts in us about the existence of the subject matter of the discourse, the fictionalist theory will turn out to be undermotivated.

Now, we take it to be evident that the manifest image of folk-psychological discourse is realist regarding mental entities. Our claim then is the following: the mental fictionalist cannot raise serious doubts about the existence of mental entities, therefore, in harmony with the fictionalist interpretation of the discourse about physical objects and in contrast to the fictionalist interpretation of the possible world discourse, the fictionalist interpretation of folk psychology is *undermotivated*.

Our argument is based on the following two theses:

(1) The existence of conscious experiences does not raise any difficult ontological questions.

(2) Conscious experiences constitute the totality, or at least the paradigmatic representative core of mental entities described by folk psychology.

Let's see (1). By conscious experiences, we mean kinds of events which have phenomenal character or subjective quality. To use a phrase introduced by Thomas Nagel (1974), they are events, in the case of which 'there is something it is like' to undergo them. There is without any doubt something it is like for us to undergo pain. There is without any doubt something it is like for us to perceive a red tomato, and it is not the same as perceiving a green salad. There is without any doubt something it is like for us to undergo anxiety, and it is not like fearing something. Our conscious experiences are constituted by these qualities (i.e., a conscious experience is none other than an event with a determinate phenomenal quality). Therefore, since it is a brute fact that there are events with such phenomenal character, the existence of conscious experiences is not doubted at all.

A further feature of conscious experiences is that in their case, it is impossible to distinguish between how they appear to us and what they

really are, because conscious experiences are constituted by the *way* they appear to us (see e.g., Kripke 1980, 144–55). So, neither the existence, nor the phenomenal nature of conscious experiences raises any doubt.

Obviously, the mental antirealist can say that our philosophical concepts about this likeness are confused (see Dennett 1990), but she can say only *this much*. However, it does not affect either the existence of conscious experiences (that we *have* conscious experiences), or their fundamental nature (the *way* they appear to us).

Now, conscious experiences are subject matters of folk-psychological discourse. We always speak about our pains, perceptions, anxieties, and other conscious experiences. Since, as we saw, the existence of conscious experiences and their phenomenal nature does not raise any doubts, our folk-psychological speech is, at least in this respect, completely in *order*.

Let's see (2). Of course, mental antirealists do not deny the existence of conscious experiences. According to them, the class of mental entities is wider than the class of conscious experiences. It also contains propositional attitudes (e.g., beliefs), which are not necessarily conscious.

The difference is the following. Let's take, for instance, pain as a conscious experience. To have a pain is to actually experience this pain, where this experience is like something for the subject. This experience has temporal parts; it begins at some point (even if its actual borders are vague), it lasts for some time and it terminates at some point (even if its actual borders are vague here as well). Concerning its metaphysical status therefore, it is, as we noted earlier, an *event*. Let's take, on the other hand, the propositional attitude that is belief. To have a belief is not to experience it, as in the case of pain. We can have a belief even if we are not actually thinking about it, that is, it does not appear to us in a certain way, i.e., it is not phenomenally conscious. Moreover, we can have beliefs which we have never thought of. For example, neither of us has ever thought that we live farther from Singapore than from Teheran, though both of us have this belief. So, concerning its metaphysical status, a belief is not an event, because we do not undergo it. It seems plausible to claim that a belief is some property of ours; some dispositional property which can be manifested under certain circumstances.[6]

It is reasonable now to say that there is a *difference in metaphysical category* between our conscious experiences and the kind of propositional attitudes such as a belief. The former are occurrent events (they have temporal parts), while the latter ones are nonoccurrent dispositional or other

properties (whilst to have one can be a state). Moreover, conscious events depend heavily on actual experiences, regarding their existence (they are *esse est percipi* type entities), while propositional attitudes are rather theoretical entities.

Most importantly, only the former ones can be called 'mental' in a fundamental and primary sense. According to our natural conviction, if a system or an organism, be it as complicated as you like, does not have any conscious experiences, that is, it does not undergo events that are something it is like for it to undergo, and so the world does not appear to it in any way, then we tend to treat this system or organism as an automat without a mental life. This conviction cannot be changed by the fact that we can explain its behaviour with the help of attributing propositional attitudes to it. Think about the following well-known sentences: "the mousetrap *perceives* the mouse and slaps", "the molecules *aim* to an equilibrium", "Deep Blue *wants* to capture Kasparov's queen", etc.

If we accept the view that conscious experiences constitute the paradigmatic cases of the 'mental', we only have two choices. Either we claim that "the mind is made up entirely of *occurren*t states and *conscious* processes" (Gertler 2007, 201, italics in original), so we deny that our beliefs, nonoccurrent desires, etc. are mental. Or, we claim that "other mental states [beside conscious experiences] count as mental only when, and insofar as, they bear the right relationship to phenomenally intentional states" (Horgan and Kriegel 2008, 60). For instance, "Some states have fairly immediate causal/inferential connections to phenomenally intentional states, and those will qualify strongly as mental states" (62). If we accept this latter conception, then we should say that nonconscious states "would fall into a grey area where their mental-state status would be vague" (63).

Let's take stock. Folk psychology is the discourse about the 'mental'. It is plausible to claim that the paradigmatic cases of the 'mental' are conscious experiences. We can speak (if we can speak at all) of other mental entities only because they are related to it in some way. Consequently, since no sceptical considerations can be taken into account concerning conscious experiences, there is no serious argument against the realist interpretation of folk psychology. Mental fictionalism is an undermotivated theory.

This can be made more specific. It is not that there are no sceptical arguments against the existence of conscious experiences, but, as Galen Strawson put it: "[conscious] experience is not only the first [. . .] natural

fact with which we are acquainted; it's also the most certainly known natural fact" (Strawson 1994/2010, xviii). So, maybe we can say the following: mental fictionalism is not just an undermotivated theory, but it is the *least motivated* version of fictionalism. As we see it, in the cases of all other, more or less motivated versions of fictionalism, there is an epistemological gap between us and the alleged subject matters of the discourse. In the case of abstract entities and possible worlds, even if they exist, we are causally isolated from them, so we have no appropriate evidence about their existence. In the case of moral properties and composite physical objects, our evidences causally underdetermine their existence. All of our experiences can be the same without them. In contrast to all of this, we have the most certain evidence about our conscious experiences and we are in the most direct causal relationship with these.

This is not the end of the story. The mental fictionalist can argue in the following way: in order to decide between the realist and the fictionalist interpretations of folk psychology, we have to consider the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches in all their *complexity* and *generality*, too (see Yablo 2001). The existence or nonexistence of mental entities is just *one* element in this matrix. Alluding to this, the mental fictionalist can say that her motivation does not necessarily rely on the doubts about the subject matter of folk psychology, but on the weaknesses of folk-psychological *explanations*. To wit, these explanations are *wrong*; they cannot describe the *role* of mental entities in our mental economy correctly. In other words, folk psychology is not wrong about the phenomenology of our mental life, that is, about judging how mental phenomena *seems* to the subject or about what kind of mental entities there are, but about how the mind *works*. Since the adherent of the realist interpretation takes folk-psychological explanations about the working of the mind at face value, she is committed to false explanations, which is obviously a disadvantage of her interpretation. In contrast, the mental fictionalist can preserve the folk-psychological discourse without taking these explanations at face value, because she thinks that we do not *assert* the sentences of these explanations. So, mental fictionalism can be well motivated in this way.

For example, following Ryle and Wittgenstein, the fictionalist can say that the causal explanations of folk psychology are wrong, because Hume's dictum for the logical-conceptual independency of the *relata* of causal relations is not satisfied here. We cannot individuate a mental state

without alluding to the behavioural pattern and to other mental states which standardly go hand in hand with it. Folk psychology therefore represents the real causal processes behind our behaviour, that is, the real mental processes falsely.

Or, following Davidson, the fictionalist can claim the following: according to folk psychology, we attribute mental states to our fellows and to ourselves with the help of the norms of *ideal rationality*. However, rationality is *normative*; it refers to what kind of beliefs or desires a subject *has to* have in order to make her behaviour meaningful according to some principles of ideal rationality. Consequently, all of this has nothing to do with the *actual* processes of the subject's mind. In other words: propositional attitudes and physical states have different identity conditions. The former can be determined by the constitutive principles of ideal rationality, while the latter can be determined by the constitutive principles of empirical generalization. Therefore, folk psychology introduces entities in its explanations in a way that violates an important methodological requirement of empirical science.

Moreover, the principle of ideal rationality does not only govern the attributions of mental states, but also the interpretations of those very behaviours which are supposed to be explained by these states. As Demeter puts it:

> It seems that behavioural patterns cannot be identified without the mental states that are supposed to be ascribed on their basis. [. . .] Classifying behaviour, i.e. which bodily movement counts as an action and is relevant to which mental states, belongs to the realm of folk psychology. [. . .] [D]ifferent interpretations reveal different behavioural patterns." (Demeter 2009; see also Dennett 1991, 49)

This leads to serious trouble: the observed behaviours cannot constitute *independent evidence* to the explanations of folk psychology. These explanations therefore also violate an all-important methodological requirement of empirical science.

These are well-known and much debated features of folk-psychological explanations, and we think that some of them could be plausible in the case of nonconscious, nonoccurrent propositional attitudes. From the alleged fallacy of these kinds of explanations, you may argue in the following way: In these explanations propositional attitudes play a crucial role, and some of them may be nonconscious or nonoccurrent ones. More-

over, our only reason to postulate these nonconscious propositional attitudes is the fact that they take part in folk-psychological explanations. However, these types of explanations draw a bad picture of the real causal pattern of our behaviour, so we have good reason to doubt the existence of nonconscious, nonoccurrent propositional attitudes. Nevertheless, for one reason or another, we do not want to give up talking about nonconscious beliefs and desires; maybe this would be explicitly impossible. So, contrary to your argument, it is reasonable to accept a *limited form* of mental fictionalism, one that is *restricted* to the part of folk psychology that concerns nonconscious, nonoccurrent propositional attitudes.

We do not think this reply has much plausibility. As we mentioned above, we think nonconscious, nonoccurrent propositional attitudes could count as mental phenomena only if they bear some proper relation to conscious events. Our argument depends on the fact that you cannot doubt the existence of conscious events. So, if you can explicate the proper relationship which connect nonconscious attitudes to conscious experiences, then you cannot doubt the existence of those attitudes, too. For example, if you think that nonoccurrent propositional attitudes are nonoccurrent precisely because they are dispositional properties, the manifestations of which are conscious events and *vice versa*: some conscious events are manifestations of nonconscious attitudes, then why would you doubt the existence of the latter? In other words, it is implausible to claim that the only reason to believe in the existence of nonconscious propositional attitudes is that they play their role in bad folk-psychological explanations.

Of course, you can insist that nonconscious, nonoccurent propositional attitudes can be postulated independently of their relation to conscious experiences, so it is indeed reasonable to doubt their existence and be fictionalist about them. But then it would not be *mental* fictionalism. Therefore, we have no quarrel with it, as we have no quarrel with 'thermostat-state fictionalism', which claims that we use the discourse of the propositional attitudes of thermostats only fictionally.

In contrast to the case of nonconscious propositional attitudes, in the case of occurrent, *event-like* conscious experiences, none of the explanatory weakness mentioned above are plausible. Simply due to the fact that they are actual, nondispositional entities with determinate temporal properties, they can be individuated without reference to any behaviour or other mental states, and simply because there is something it is like to undergo them, they can be directly observed without the help of some constitutive principle.

Let's take pain as our example once more. In the case of pain, neither of the suspect features mentioned above have any plausibility. (1) Since we directly experience pain, the 'attribution' of it *does not require* any rational or other constitutive principle or theoretical consideration. (2) Furthermore, if due to pain someone makes a snatch at the suffering part of her body, then an event (the feeling of pain) *causes another* (the movement of the hand). This is quite simple; there is no logical or conceptual connection between the felt pain and the movement of the limb. (3) And finally, purely due to this conceptual independency, the individuation of the observed behaviour is absolutely *independent* from that of the pain which causes it; from any other mental states; and from any constitutive principle (except the ones which govern perceptual experiences). Of course, you can describe the bodily movement as some kind of pain-behaviour (in some cases this will be rather mannered), and you can establish the logical-conceptual connection with this manoeuvre, but this can be done with every causal relationship. What matters is that you can give an adequate description of the behaviour that is free from any reference to the pain itself, or to other mental states.

Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that the mental fictionalist will give us other, more plausible arguments against the realist interpretation of folk psychology, but we cannot see any possibility to doubt the existence of the subject matter of folk psychology, just as we cannot think that explanations and descriptions of this discourse raise such serious problems that we would have good reason to abandon the realist interpretation.[7]

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Notes

1. Naturally we mean that *general* propositions of folk psychology are mostly true. The realist should not commit herself to the view that most particular mental-state attributions based on folk-psychological generalizations are true or correct. She can hold for example that it is difficult to make correct attributions, so most people are wrong in it—with the possible exception of psychologists.

2. Yablo (2001) defends such a view in the context of mathematical discourse.

3. According, e.g., to Nolan, Restall and West (2005, 3). van Fraassen's constructive empiricism is thus agnostic about unobservable physical objects.

4. It is possible to make a further distinction in all cases of fictionalism. According to the degree of discrepancy between the common sense intuitions of the users of the discourse and the theoretical intuitions of the fictionalist philosopher, a fictionalist can either propose *hermeneutic* or *revolutionary* fictionalism (see: Stanley 2001; Eklund 2011). If the degree of discrepancy is rather small, then even hermeneutic fictionalism could be plausible, which claims that because the speakers of the discourse also have sceptical or agnostic attitudes about the subject matter of the discourse, it is reasonable to think that they have *always* used the discourse in a fictionalist spirit. On the other hand, if the discrepancy of the intuitions is large, then the fictionalist should propose the revolutionary version: though the speakers of the discourse have used the discourse in a realist spirit, we have to stop this practice and use the discourse in the fictionalist spirit *from now on*. We think the hermeneutic kind of fictionalism could be plausible in the case of possible worlds and maybe mathematical discourse, while in the case of moral discourse, the revolutionary one seems to be more attractive. Nevertheless, this distinction plays no part in our argument, since it concerns of various versions of fictionalism only insofar as all kinds of them depend on some kind of sceptical reasons, at least on the part of the theorist. So, we will not mention it in the foregoing.

5. What is more, it has already emerged. See Dorr and Rosen (2002).

6. The difference between 'nonoccurrent and occurrent entities' is naturally not the same as the difference between 'propositional attitudes and nonpropositional mental entities'. A conscious experience can eventually have propositional nature; *S* actually desires to *p*, *S* actually thinks that *p*, and so on.

7. For comments we would like to thank Zsuzsanna Balogh, Gábor Bács, David Mark Kovacs and two anonymous referees for *The Monist*.

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