

A Test for Theories of Belief Ascription¹

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If publication rates are an accurate guide to popularity, then these days the two most popular approaches to belief ascription are Millianism and Contextualism. The former approach is inconsistent with the existence of ordinary Frege cases, such as Lois believing that Superman flies while failing to believe that Clark Kent flies. The Millian holds that the only truth-conditionally relevant aspect of a proper name is its referent or extension. The latter approach, as I will define it for the purposes of this essay, includes all theories according to which ascriptions of the form ‘*S* believes that *a* is *F*’ and ‘*S* believes that *b* is *F*’, where ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’ are coreferential proper names, may, depending on the context, differ in truth-value even though in those very contexts each ascription relates the same believer to the very same proposition. What the two theories have in common is the claim that names are Millian, so the two belief sentences relate the same proposition to *S*. What separates the two theories is what they say about belief contexts.

The primary reason Millianism and Contextualism draw the most attention is the common opinion that they are the least bad approaches to belief ascription. Everything else, Fregeanism in particular, is so loaded with apparently insurmountable problems that most philosophers have given up digging in those mines. This may be a pretty good reason for focusing on Millianism and Contextualism; after all, what else are we to do when puzzling about belief ascription? But it’s clear that the historical facts don’t justify *believing* the disjunction of Millianism and Contextualism. All we have justification for is our research choice.

In this essay I present a proof of that disjunction. More accurately, I prove that either names are Millian, so the two belief sentences relate the same proposition to *S*, or our intuitions regarding belief ascriptions are hopelessly inaccurate. If it’s the latter option that’s correct, then philosophers should simply stop working on belief ascription entirely, as their reliance on such intuitions is enormous. Thus, we have the final conclusion: if you want to work on belief ascription at all, then you simply must be a Millian about names and many general terms.

I present the argument by altering, elaborating, and examining a puzzle that I introduced in a rough-and-ready way in earlier papers (1998, 1999). If the reader has had enough of puzzles about belief or belief ascription, I can empathize: in virtually every case the puzzle scenarios philosophers

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describe in order to adjudicate among rival theories are so bizarre that it is tempting, though disappointing, to throw up one's hands and declare that the described situation is too bizarre to make any confident judgments regarding the mind of the protagonist. So the puzzle sheds no light on the issue it was intended to illuminate. Fortunately, this option is not available for this puzzle.

I begin with the relevant background, move on to an explanation of Contextualism, present the new puzzle in an intuitive way, explicate it rigorously, articulate possible solutions to it, and then close with a brief comparison of my puzzle with those made famous by Kripke.

1. Background: 1892 to the Present in Just Eight Words Per Year

Here's how it all began, with Frege in his 1892 "Über Sinn und Bedeutung."

- (1) Lois Lane believes that Kent flies.
- (2) Lois Lane believes that Superman flies.

The Fregean's *Master Argument* is as follows. (1) is false and (2) is true; i.e., Lois's situation is a *Frege case*. The difference in truth-value must come from a truth conditionally relevant difference in 'Kent' and 'Superman' (because that's the only difference in the two sentences). But 'Kent' and 'Superman' have the same referent (pretending the story is true). So 'Kent' and 'Superman' must differ in some truth conditionally relevant way other than referent. Let's say that 'Kent' has truth-conditionally relevant sense S_K and 'Superman' has truth-conditionally relevant sense S_S , where S_S isn't S_K and neither S_S nor S_K is the referent. Thus, there is a semantic, truth-conditionally relevant value to a proper name other than its referent. So Millianism (i.e., the thesis the only aspect of a name that is relevant to truth conditions is its referent) is wrong. Q.E.D.

It is important to see that the Millian does not reject the existence of senses (or "modes of presentation"). With her Master Argument the Fregean has argued for the existence of senses that matter to truth-conditions: sentences identical except for these senses can differ in truth-value. *Everyone* agrees that the two names 'Superman' and 'Kent' differ in many psychologically relevant ways. The Fregean argument is saying that the difference in the names makes for a *truth-conditional* difference. The Millian accepts the existence of psychological differences in the names but balks at the idea that there is any truth-conditional difference. She will agree that there are *psychological senses* distinct from referents, but she will deny that there are any *truth-conditional* senses distinct from referents. The Millian says that since Lois believes that Superman flies, she must believe that Kent flies. Most philosophers find this idea pretty distasteful (although, perhaps tellingly, many students do not).

I gave the Master Argument its name because it is probably the most influential argument ever given in the philosophy of language. Why is there such an enormous fuss over this issue? Very

briefly: one would think that at least when it comes to proper names, meaning would amount to reference. Names seem to be just about the simplest, most referential words we have, so if it turns out that even for *them* the notion of meaning is mysterious, especially in requiring non-referential meanings, then the whole idea of building a systematic theory of meaning would be hopeless. And, by the way, we want a theory of meaning because we want a theory of truth and a theory of thought; and we would like it to be systematic because we don't know what else a theory could be.

Despite the initial appeal of the Fregean Master Argument, even after an enormous amount of work that spanned decades no theory of such senses was remotely close to being accepted. People started to wonder whether there really were such senses. So the argument's conclusion became highly suspect. Since the argument looked valid and the conclusion was highly suspect, the premises became suspect. Another blow arrived in 1979 at the hands of Kripke. In the Master Argument it was assumed right off that (1) and (2) differ in truth-value. Fregeans had the following *Adjunct Argument* for that premise.²

- a. Lois is rational and competently assents to both 'Superman flies' and 'Kent doesn't fly.'
- b. Disquotation: If someone is rational and competently assents to '*P*', then she believes that *P*.
- c. So Lois believes that Superman flies and that Kent doesn't fly.
- d. Consistency: If someone is rational, then they do not have, upon reflection, occurrently held and compared beliefs that *P* and that not-*P*.
- e. If Lois believed that Kent flies, then by (c) she would have, upon reflection, occurrently held and compared beliefs that *P* and that not-*P*.
- f. So Lois doesn't believe that Kent flies.

The Adjunct Argument seemed very reasonable. However, Kripke's 1979 Paderewski story seems to show that if Disquotation is true, then Consistency is false. According to the story, Peter thinks that there are two famous people named 'Paderewski,' one a pianist with talent and one a politician without musical talent. In reality the politician is the pianist: there's just one person named 'Paderewski.' Here is Kripke's argument.

- i. Assume for the sake of argument the Fregean's principle Disquotation: If someone is rational and competently assents to '*P*', then she believes that *P*.

² One has to add all sorts of qualifications to make the principles in (b) & (d) plausible, and there are other ways to put the argument (including an interesting one in my 1998), but I have yet to see a way that can rely on premises that are anywhere near acceptable.

- ii. Peter is rational and competently assents to both ‘Paderewski [the pianist] is musical’ and ‘Paderewski [the politician] isn’t musical’.³
- iii. So Peter believes that Paderewski is musical and that Paderewski isn’t musical.
- iv. Therefore, someone is rational and has, upon reflection, occurrently held and compared beliefs that *P* and that not-*P*; Consistency is false.
- v. Thus, if Disquotation is true, then Consistency is false.

Thus, Kripke seemed to show that either Consistency or Disquotation is false. Since the Adjunct Argument relied on both principles, it’s unsound. So now the problematic first premise of the Master Argument, viz., that (1) is false and (2) is true, was left undefended.

The upshot of these arguments was that we didn’t know what to think anymore. Fregeanism had seemed about as solid as physicalism for rocks. But no one got anywhere with senses and then Kripke came along and showed that the Fregean argument for the existence of senses and against Millianism was no good. We were still stuck with our Fregean intuition that Lois believed that Superman flies while not believing that Kent flies, but we no longer knew what to do with it.

2. *The Rise of Contextualism*

Here is where Contextualism came in.⁴ Suppose we accept the first premise of the Master argument: viz., (1) and (2) differ in truth-value. Consider the Paderewski story again. Sometimes ‘Peter believes that Paderewski has musical talent’ seems true, other times false. Perhaps in order for ‘*S* believes that *P*’ to be true *S* not only has to believe the proposition that *P* but she has to believe it *in a certain way*. Just as you cannot grasp a thumb except from a certain direction, you cannot believably grasp a proposition except in a certain way. Perhaps there are lots of “ways of believing” a proposition, and a belief report is true only if the believer is grasping the proposition in the way the reporter was indicating.⁵ When a use of ‘Peter believes that Paderewski has musical talent’ seems true, that’s because somehow that use is saying correctly that Peter believes a certain truth in a certain way; but when a use of that very same sentence seems false, that’s because it’s saying falsely that

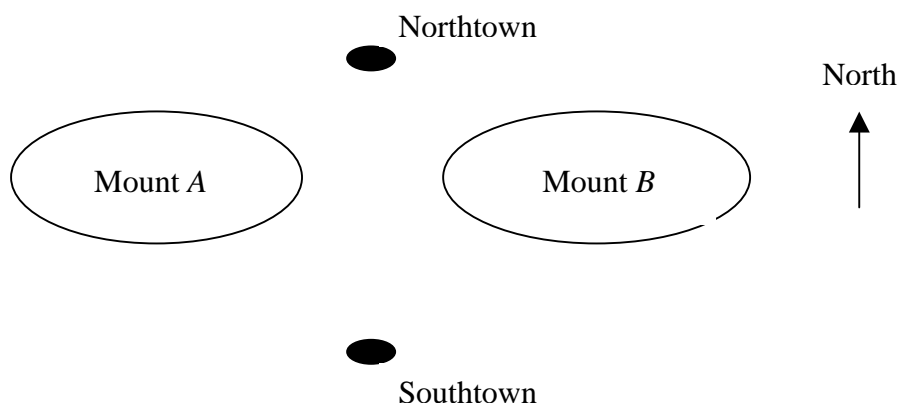
³ The brackets are included to remind the reader of the contexts in which the sentences without the brackets might be asserted. But even if we insert the bracketed material, Kripke’s argument isn’t blocked. ‘Paderewski, who is a pianist, has musical talent’ and ‘Paderewski, who is a politician, does not have musical talent’ have the forms ‘*Fa & Ga*’ and ‘*~Fa & Ha*’, which does not remove the contradiction. ‘The Paderewski who is a pianist has musical talent’ and ‘The Paderewski who is a politician does not’ may remove the contradiction by going metalinguistic, but either they have contents different from ‘Paderewski has musical talent’ and ‘Paderewski does not have musical talent’ (and then we could press Peter to assent to or dissent from those latter sentences) or we are dealing with an implausible metalinguistic analysis of proper names. This helps to show that there is no easy way around Kripke’s argument.

⁴ For presentations and evaluations of these theories, see Fodor 1989, Schiffer 1992, Crimmins 1992, and other works.

⁵ One can grasp a truth believably, doubtfully, disbelievably, etc. What we are considering is the possibility that these grasping genera admit of importantly different species.

Peter believes *that very same truth* in a different way, a way that he fails to believe the proposition. Peter believes the proposition in some ways, say when thinking of famous Polish people with artistic talent, but he disbelieves it in other ways, say when he is grumbling about the inadequacies of politicians. There's just one truth that Paderewski has musical talent, and Peter believes it in the pianist way but not in the politician way of believing. 'Paderewski' has the same semantic significance in both the true sentences 'Peter believes that Paderewski has musical talent' and 'Peter believes that Paderewski doesn't have musical talent', so there is no need to posit Fregean senses, but 'S believes that P' is really short for something like 'S believes (in *this* way) that P', where context does the work in picking out what the grasping way in question is. If the context picks out a way of believing that S uses to acceptingly grasp P, then the belief report is true; otherwise it's false. That's Contextualism. Roughly put, this theory is saying that 'S believes that P' really expresses a three-place relation between S, P, and a way of believing. 'S believes that P' looks like it picks out a two-place relation between S and P, but that's the mistake that has been confusing us no end. Instead, there is an indexical phrase, 'in *this* way', hidden in the sentence, so to speak, that picks out the third part of the three-place relation.

We can further clarify Contextualism by examining an analogous case. Suppose there are two towns, one called 'Northtown' and the other called 'Southtown'. Suppose further that there are two mountains, one called 'Mount A' and the other called 'Mount B'. Here is how they are geographically arranged:



If people in Southtown say 'A is to the left of B' they have spoken the truth and what they "really mean" in speaking that truth is something along the lines of *A is to the left of B with respect to us*, where context determines that 'us' picks out Southtown. If someone in Northtown were to say 'A is to the left of B', she would have spoken falsely and what she "really meant" in speaking that falsehood would be something along the lines of *A is to the left of B with respect to us*, where context determines that 'us' now picks out Northtown. 'X is to the left of Y' really picks out a three-place relation, even though on the surface it may look like it picks out a two-place relation.

Well, that's the way it is with '*S* believes that *P*', according to Contextualists. Thus, just as all of the following can be true about mountains *A* and *B*:

'*A* is to the left of *B*' (spoken by Southtownner) is true and is understood as '*A* is to the left of *B* with respect to *us*', where context determines that '*us*' picks out location L_1
'*A* is to the left of *B*' (spoken by Northtownner) is false and is understood as '*A* is to the left of *B* with respect to *us*', where context determines that '*us*' picks out location L_2
'*X* is to the left of *Y*' expresses a three-place relation but may seem to express a two-place relation,

all of this can be true about the believer *S* and the proposition *P*:

'*S* believes that *P*' (e.g., in a pianist context someone says '*Peter* believes that Paderewski has musical talent') is true and is understood as '*S* believes that *P* in *this* way', where context determines that '*this*' picks out grasping way W_1
'*S* believes that *P*' (e.g., in a politician context someone says '*Peter* believes that Paderewski has musical talent') is false and is understood as '*S* believes that *P* in *this* way', where context determines that '*this*' picks out grasping way W_2
'*X* believes that *Y*' expresses a three-place relation but may seem to express a two-place relation.

More specifically, and for reasons that we need not explore here, it is sometimes thought that '*S* believes that *P*' really means '*S* believes (in this *type* of way) that *P*', so the truth of the belief attribution turns not on a particular way of believing but on the subject believing the proposition in any of a contextually determined class of ways of believing. These ways of believing are called 'modes of presentation', taking a phrase from Frege. Therefore, a use of '*S* believes that *P*' made in context *C* is true if and only if there is some mode of presentation *x* such that it is a mode of presentation of type *T*, where *T* is determined by *C*, and the elements of $\langle S, P, x \rangle$ stand in some three-place relation that grounds belief (e.g., something like "*S* accepts *P* in way *x*").

Everything I've said here holds for just one form of Contextualism, focusing on belief as a three-place relation and belief sentences containing a special hidden indexical, but it clarifies the theory and shows how a theory that says the belief relation has more than two places can avoid the charge of being inconsistent.

Contextualism may look like a savior: we keep our Fregean intuition that Lois didn't believe that Kent flies and yet we don't have to fuss with mysterious Fregean (truth-conditional) senses. But no: Contextualism has plenty of faults as well. For one thing, it employs "ways of believing", which look a lot like Fregean senses. And despite the brilliant efforts of Millians, Lois just didn't believe

that Kent flew; neither did she *recognize* that she believed that as well as believing that Superman is taller than Superman—other counterintuitive Millian consequences. And even Millians often appeal to modes of presentation, just divesting them of their truth-conditional role. Since it looks as though we’re going to have to live with something like senses, maybe we should embrace Fregeanism again and swallow the existence of truth-conditional senses! Perish the thought: the new puzzle says otherwise.

3. *The New Puzzle*

As things actually stand today, ‘Bigfoot’ and ‘Sasquatch’ are two general terms for the same mythical, large-footed beast that’s commonly supposed to wander in parts of Canada and the USA. Suppose that in 1970 there is no name for Bigfoot in Canadian English except for ‘Sasquatch’. Furthermore, ‘Bigfoot’ isn’t part of any language and ‘Sasquatch’ is part of Canadian English only. Edna lives in Canada in 1970 and the Canadian English ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is true.⁶ By 1980 ‘Bigfoot’ has become part of American English only, via ‘Sasquatch’; ‘Sasquatch’ remains a part of Canadian English only. Maybe some children on the Canadian-American border started using ‘Bigfoot’ since it’s more descriptive. Pretend that otherwise the languages (dialects, whatever) are identical for all the sentences to be discussed here but otherwise as different as they really are.

So the Canadian English sentence ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is true. Now how would an American report Edna’s belief in 1980, when ‘Bigfoot’ has made its way into American English? Suppose an American reporter was trying to malign Edna in an American newspaper by picking on her beliefs in hidden hairy humanoids. The reporter cannot use the term ‘Sasquatch’ to write about Edna’s beliefs because her readers do not know that term of Canadian English. Since her readers are quite familiar with the term ‘Bigfoot’ the reporter will write the sentence ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’. Surely the reporter will have written the truth! This is standard practice; the reporter’s choice is correct if *any* translation about beliefs is correct. Since Edna’s situation is completely stable and normal one cannot object that Edna’s situation is so odd that ascriptions concerning her views on Bigfoot are abnormal in the way one can object that belief ascriptions are abnormal for individuals in Lois Lane-type situations, for example. All I have claimed thus far is that what the American reporter wrote in 1980 is *true*; in order to reject the first step of my argument one must insist that the reporter wrote *falsely* when she wrote, in American English, the sentence ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real.’ However, if the reporter has reported falsely, then an unbelievably many run-of-the-mill translations and expositions of people’s beliefs are just plain false. Interpreting Kant or Aristotle, for instance, may be difficult, but it would be outrageous to assert that none of us English

⁶ Of course ‘Bigfoot’ and ‘Sasquatch’ are empty terms; at least, that’s the natural thing to say. So one might very reasonably object right here at the start of the argument. I have done this deliberately, so as to have a persistent reminder that Millianism has trouble with empty names.

speakers ever say anything true about those philosopher's beliefs! What better grounds for the wholesale dismissal of philosophy teachers: even after a lifetime of trying they can't get *any* of Aristotle's views right! Seriously though, the translation of the Canadian 'Edna believes that Sasquatch is real' into the American 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' is just about as unproblematic a translation as there could be regarding someone's beliefs.⁷

This is *not* to say that the Canadian 'Edna believes that Sasquatch is real' and the American 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' have the same sense or meaning; neither am I claiming that the Canadian 'Sasquatch is real' and the American 'Bigfoot is real' ascribe the same content. All I have argued for is the mundane claim that if the Canadian belief ascription is true, then the American one is true as well.⁸ My argument does require that the two belief ascriptions in question retain their truth-values from ordinary utterance to ordinary utterance, but since Edna's epistemic situation vis-à-vis 'Bigfoot', 'Sasquatch', Bigfoot itself, and anything else of relevance is stable and normal, this condition is unproblematic. The fact that she isn't familiar with 'Bigfoot' is of course a lousy reason to assert that the American ascription is false.

My arguments that the American English belief ascription is true may seem like overkill, but they are not. Some philosophers have told me that even though the American belief ascription is entirely appropriate and the best that the reporter could do (short of introducing 'Sasquatch' into American English), the American ascription is really false. This would mean that zillions of ordinary translations about people's thoughts, even most of them, are downright false. At the very least, such a view is deeply revisionary. Let us see if we can avoid it.

So let us suppose that the sentence 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' is true in American English in 1980. By 1990 'Bigfoot' has migrated from American English to British English; 'Sasquatch' is still in Canadian English only. So by 1990 both American English and British English contain the sentence 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real'. Thus, since the American 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' *is the very same sentence* as the British 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real', it seems clear that the British 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' has got to be true in 1990. It's not an accident that the two languages have a word 'Bigfoot' that looks and sounds the same—any more than it is a coincidence that 'computer' is the same in both languages. Surely the term 'Bigfoot' could have

⁷ There is a diverse set of interesting cases in which translation is problematic, e.g., translating the American 'Bigfoot is so-called because of the size of his footprints' into Canadian English, but these sentences do not challenge the translation at issue.

⁸ Some people have suggested to me that since Edna doesn't know 'Bigfoot' (she knows 'Sasquatch' only), the American 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' will be true *de re* and false *de dicto*. However, and this is the reason I used an empty term 'Bigfoot', the sentence does not admit of existential generalization (unless Salmon 1998 is right that such terms refer to abstract objects on a par with fictional characters, fictional places and for that matter whole works of fiction) and Edna is not in any intimate relation with Bigfoot. So two ordinary ways of interpreting *de re* ascriptions won't help. Furthermore, Edna might not assent to 'The so-and-so is real', where we use an appropriate description in place of 'Bigfoot'; so 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' looks true *de dicto*.

moved from Minnesota to New York while preserving the truth of ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’; what’s to prevent it from moving from New York to Leeds?

Thus, since we have seen that ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ is true in 1980 American English, it’s true in 1990 British English too (remember that Edna isn’t changing her mind about Bigfoot during this period). Now pretend that by 2000 ‘Sasquatch’ has migrated from Canadian English directly to British English; so British English now has both terms. Thus, since the British ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is *the very same sentence* as the Canadian ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’, and the latter is true, it seems clear that the British ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ has got to be true too, in 2000. As before: the term ‘Sasquatch’ could have moved from Winnipeg to Québec while preserving the truth of ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’; so it can move from Québec to Leeds. Thus, a British reporter would be correct in reporting in 2000 Edna’s belief with the British ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’. So in 2000 Edna believed that Sasquatch is real. (I’m writing in British English and you’re pretending to be British, so we get to disquote.)

We already said that in 1990 the British ‘Edna believed that Bigfoot is real’ is true. It seems pretty solid that her beliefs haven’t changed in those ten years since nothing has changed with either her, her language, Bigfoot, or anything else of relevance. So in 2000 she believed that Bigfoot is real. And we saw in the previous paragraph that in 2000 she believed that Sasquatch is real.

It’s completely reasonable, but tough to establish, that Edna’s belief that Bigfoot is real has just one belief content. She has just one language (Canadian English), she expresses that belief of hers with just one sentence from that language (‘Sasquatch is real’), and that language has just one sentence for that belief. Suppose her belief had two belief contents. What are they? How do they differ? Which one is causally relevant and on which occasions? Most importantly, if another English dialect were around, would she thereby have yet *another* content—three contents? Does she get a new belief content every time some non-Canadian dialect—that she does not have any part of—develops a new synonym for ‘Sasquatch’? That seems absurd. The reader could hardly have thought that his or her belief contents multiply due to how languages develop in other countries! I assume that the same holds for her belief that Sasquatch is real; it has just one belief content too.

Another intuitive but hard to defend premise: If a belief that Bigfoot is real has just one belief content, then the content is the proposition (falsehood) that Bigfoot is real. Isn’t this pretty solid? What else could the content be? Suppose I’m wrong: Edna’s belief has one content, but it isn’t the falsehood that Bigfoot is real. Kent Bach urged this in conversation. He says we really don’t believe propositions. His reasoning is that Kripke and Frege-type puzzles force us into this weird position (Bach 1997). Maybe so; perhaps we’ll be forced to say such things. But for the time being let’s see where common sense leads us. I say that the belief content of her belief that Bigfoot is real is the falsehood that Bigfoot is real and the belief content of her belief that Sasquatch is real is the falsehood that Sasquatch is real. If this is wrong, then any adequate theory of belief ascription will have to be revisionary in a fairly radical manner.

It follows from what we've said in the previous two paragraphs that the content of Edna's belief that Bigfoot is real is the proposition that Bigfoot is real; similarly for her belief that Sasquatch is real.

But of course it's perfectly obvious (!) that the belief content of her belief that Bigfoot is real *just is* the belief content of her belief that Sasquatch is real. How on earth could they be different, really? Remember, she has just one language, she expresses that belief of hers with just one sentence from that language, that language has no other coreferential general term, and she's not in a Frege puzzle or anything else strange. Suppose that the content of her belief that Bigfoot is real were different from the content of her belief that Sasquatch is real. What on earth are these differing contents of hers? How do they differ? Which one is causally relevant and on which occasions? Most importantly, if another English dialect were around with another synonym, would she thereby have yet *another* content—three contents? Absurdity again.

We've seen that the content of Edna's belief that Bigfoot is real is the proposition that Bigfoot is real; the content of Edna's belief that Sasquatch is real is the proposition that Sasquatch is real, and the belief content of her belief that Bigfoot is real just is the belief content of her belief that Sasquatch is real. It follows that the falsehood that Bigfoot is real is identical with the falsehood that Sasquatch is real. Which is probably what you already knew anyway.

Last premise: If the proposition that Sasquatch is real is the proposition that Bigfoot is real (as we just saw), then 'S believes that Bigfoot is real' and 'S believes that Sasquatch is real' have the same truth-value—after all, it's the same belief content-proposition in each case. Hence, no 'Sasquatch'/'Bigfoot' Frege cases. But of course "everyone knows" that you can believe that Cicero was *F* without believing that Tully was *F*, or believe that Bigfoot is *F* without believing that Sasquatch is *F*. So something has to give in what I just wrote; *something above is false* (which you knew anyway).

4. The Argument's Structure and Possible Views Regarding It

In sum, the argument goes as follows.

- (1) By 1970 'Sasquatch' is a part of Canadian English only; 'Bigfoot' is not a part of any language.
- (2) By 1970 the Canadian 'Edna believes that Sasquatch is real' is true.
- (3) By 1980 'Bigfoot' has become part of American English only, via 'Sasquatch'; 'Sasquatch' remains a part of Canadian English only.
- (4) From (2) & (3) by 1980 the American 'Edna believes that Bigfoot is real' is true.
- (5) By 1990 'Bigfoot' has migrated from American English to British English; 'Sasquatch' is still in Canadian English only.

- (6) From (4) & (5) by 1990 the British ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ is true. So by 1990 Edna believes that Bigfoot is real.
- (7) By 2000 ‘Sasquatch’ has migrated from Canadian English directly to British English; so British English now has both terms.
- (8) From (2) & (7) in 2000 the British ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is true. So by 2000 Edna believes that Sasquatch is real.
- (9) Edna still believes that Bigfoot is real, now in 2000.
- (10) From (8) & (9) Edna now believes that Bigfoot is real and that Sasquatch is real.
- (11) Edna’s belief that Bigfoot is real has just one belief content; and her belief that Sasquatch is real has just one belief content.
- (12) If a belief that Bigfoot is real has just one belief content, then the content is the proposition that Bigfoot is real. Similarly for the belief that Sasquatch is real.
- (13) From (11) & (12) the content of Edna’s belief that Bigfoot is real is the proposition that Bigfoot is real; similarly for her belief that Sasquatch is real.
- (14) But the content of her belief that Bigfoot is real *just is* the content of her belief that Sasquatch is real.
- (15) Thus, by (13) & (14) the proposition that Bigfoot is real is identical with the proposition that Sasquatch is real.
- (16) If the proposition that Sasquatch is real = the proposition that Bigfoot is real, then ‘S believes that Bigfoot is real’ and ‘S believes that Sasquatch is real’ have the same truth-value—that is, no ‘Sasquatch’/‘Bigfoot’ Frege cases.
- (17) By (15) & (16) ‘Sasquatch’/‘Bigfoot’ Frege cases are impossible.

Accordingly, the most straightforward views regarding the argument are as follows.

- A. Eliminativism—Belief ascriptions aren’t true; no one really believes anything (deny 2).
- B. Anti-Translationism—Although the Canadian ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is true in 1970, the American ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ is false in 1980 (deny 4; Sam Rickless and Peter Markie in personal communication).
- C. Anti-Migrationism (1)—‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ is true in 1980 American English but false in 1990 British English (deny 6).
- D. Anti-Migrationism (2)—‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is true in 1970 Canadian English but false in 2000 British English (deny 8).
- E. Anti-Migrationism (3)—Edna believes that Bigfoot is real in 1990 but not in 2000, probably because in 2000 the British English ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ trumps the British English ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ (deny 9).

- F. Content Proliferationism (1)—At least one of Edna’s Bigfoot is real and Sasquatch is real beliefs has more than one content (deny 11).
- G. Non-Propositional Contentism—At least one of Edna’s beliefs has exactly one content, but the content isn’t the falsehood (deny 12; Kent Bach 1997).
- H. Content Proliferationism (2)—Edna’s Bigfoot is real and Sasquatch is real beliefs have different contents (deny 14).
- I. Contextualism—‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ can be true while ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is false even though they relate Edna to the very same belief content (deny 16; Stephen Schiffer 1992 (with qualification), Mark Crimmins 1992, Jerry Fodor 1989, and many other works).
- J. No-Frege-Casesism—Accept everything (Nathan Salmon 1986, Scott Soames 1987).

To my mind, the only way to quarrel with the argument before step 16 is to adopt some very radical and highly counterintuitive theory of belief ascription; so it’s an excellent argument for (15) and the disjunction of (I) and (J). Furthermore, if you think that both Millianism and Contextualism must deny important ordinary principles regarding belief, then you should conclude that any adequate theory of belief ascription will have to be significantly revisionary.

If (15) is true, then names are Millian; so if intuitions about belief reports are even remotely reliable, then we have a proof that names are Millian. In addition, the argument can be extended to general terms quite easily. All we need are two terms and three languages with the translation relations indicated in the ‘Bigfoot’/‘Sasquatch’ story. Therefore, the argument has a very wide range of application. In any case, my hope is that the puzzle and corresponding argument provide an important test case that theorists of belief reports will use to evaluate their theories.

What you would like next is some argument in favor of either (I) or (J). And then you would enjoy reading my preferred version of the favored disjunct. But I have neither the argument nor the theory—at least, not in convincing form.

5. Comparison With Kripke’s Puzzle

My puzzle was inspired by Kripke’s puzzles, the ‘London’/‘Londres’ one in particular. So a brief comparison is called for.

It is important to recognize first that Kripke did *not* use the Paderewski story (or the ‘London’/‘Londres’ story) to offer any positive argument for Millianism or against Fregeanism (cf. 1988: 134). Kripke starts out his puzzle cases by posing the question “Why do we think that anyone can believe that Cicero was bald, but fail to believe that Tully was?” (1988: 112); which is just the question of why we believe in Frege cases. He then proceeds to reveal the principles that back up this belief—primarily, Disquotation (very roughly, if you assent to ‘*P*’ you believe that *P*) and

Consistency (very roughly, you cannot rationally believe that P and that not- P). He argues that each of these principles has plenty of intuitive support. However, he then pulls the rug out from under us by showing that those principles lead to contradiction in the Paderewski story. His focus was the traditional Fregean ‘Cicero’/‘Tully’ argument for the existence of Frege cases. There is no positive argument here for Millianism, Disquotation, Substitutivity, any translation principle, or anything else of relevance; in that sense Kripke’s Paderewski argument is very modest.⁹ All he has tried to establish are (a) the conditional claim that *if* these principles (e.g., Disquotation and Consistency) are true, *then* we have a contradiction; and (b) the claim that those principles are premises of the traditional argument for Fregean (i.e., truth-conditional) senses. He does not assert or assume any part of the conditional’s antecedent as being true. So an argument against Disquotation, for instance, does *nothing* to weaken Kripke’s counter to the non-Millian. I emphasize this point because so many commentators on Kripke’s argument miss it entirely.

My Bigfoot argument has the virtue of having a protagonist in an ordinary situation. One cannot, as one can for Kripke’s puzzles (all but one; see below), throw up one’s hands and say that the epistemic situation of the protagonist is so bizarre that the relevant belief ascriptions are without truth-value. As we have seen my argument relies on one *translation premise* in inferring (4) from (2) & (3): since the Canadian ‘Edna believes that Sasquatch is real’ is true and ‘Bigfoot’ has become part of American English only via ‘Sasquatch’, the American ‘Edna believes that Bigfoot is real’ is true.¹⁰ I can’t think of any argument against that premise that relies only on claims more intuitive. The steps from (4) & (5) \rightarrow (6) and (2) & (7) \rightarrow (8) are not translations of one word into another but what should perhaps be called one-word *migrations*, the movement of the use of a word from one dialect to another with deference to the first dialect. Kripke’s Paderewski argument did not rely on any translations among different languages or dialects.

Jennifer Saul has recently revealed to me that Kripke’s ‘Ashkenaz’/‘Germaniah’ argument (1988: 134) is similar to mine. Here’s Kripke’s argument. Both Hebrew terms translate ‘Germany’. Take some Hebrew sentence containing ‘Ashkenaz’. We translate that sentence into English as ‘Germany is F ’. Now we can translate the English sentence back into Hebrew using ‘Germaniah’. Since translation preserves truth-value, the two Hebrew sentences have the same truth-value. (Kripke doesn’t *endorse* this argument; he is just demonstrating how various belief ascription principles go for and against substitutivity.) There are plenty of differences between this argument and mine, primarily because Kripke just doesn’t develop his Germany case beyond what I just presented.¹¹ However, with

⁹ Here I am following tradition by completely ignoring (!) the non-puzzle parts (1988: 102-12) of his brilliant article.

¹⁰ Kripke’s ‘London’/‘Londres’ case relies on an comparable translation premise, but he was able to use the Paderewski story to show that translation is not essential to casting doubt on the traditional Fregean argument.

¹¹ For instance, mine has temporal aspects meant to make the one translation unproblematic; Kripke’s has no such aspects. Kripke’s involves a translation and then a re-translation back into the same language, one that has two choices for the translation. Most importantly, Kripke doesn’t go over anything like steps (11)-(16), which

a lot of work, modification and analysis, Kripke's 'Ashkenaz'/'Germaniah' story *could* be worked out exactly as my 'Bigfoot'/'Sasquatch' story was. So be it; I am perfectly happy discovering that my argument is really just an elaborate footnote to Kripke's now classic article (just to phrase it in as unflattering a manner as possible!).

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seem to me the most interesting and controversial parts of the argument. Lastly, Kripke tries to get around the *de re* response by simply stipulating that he will confine his remarks to *de dicto* reports, but this seems a bit quick.