

Defending the Defense

BRYAN FRANCES

My hunch has always been that in the end, Fregeanism will defeat Millianism. So I suspect that my (1998) arguments on behalf of Millianism are flawed. Peter Graham (1999) is confident he has found the flaws, but he has not. I hope that some clarification will encourage others to reveal the errors.

The criticisms most easily refuted are those targeting my folk psychological argument for Millianism (Frances 1998, Sc. 4). Here is the argument's structure.

1. The British "Edna believes that Bigfoot is real" is obviously true.
2. By (1) "Edna believes that Sasquatch is real" is true in Canadian.
3. By (2) "Edna believes that Sasquatch is real" is true in US English. Edna believes that Sasquatch is real.
4. By (1) "Edna believes that Bigfoot is real" is true in US English. Edna believes that Bigfoot is real.
5. By (3) & (4) Edna believes that Bigfoot is real and she believes that Sasquatch is real.
6. Thus, by (5) Edna's belief that Bigfoot is real is identical with her belief that Sasquatch is real.
7. Anyone who believes that Bigfoot is real has the same belief as Edna has—they each believe that Bigfoot is real. Similarly for Sasquatch.
8. Thus, by (6) & (7) the belief that Bigfoot is real—the belief that Edna and many others have—is identical with the belief that Sasquatch is real—the belief that Edna and many others have.
9. The Bigfoot case is not relevantly different from the Cicero case: if the "Bigfoot" and "Sasquatch" beliefs are identical, then the "Cicero" and "Tully" beliefs are too. So contrary to the Fregean one cannot believe that Cicero (Bigfoot, Twain, etc.) was *F* without believing that Tully (Sasquatch, Clemens, etc.) was *F*. The cases meant to refute Millianism fail to do so.

I think the key move is from (5) to (6); others examine (7) or (9).¹ Here are two of the inferences.

¹ Many experts on belief ascription have offered penetrating comments on this argument, and no two of them have agreed on the point(s) at which it goes wrong. This is one of the argument's strengths. If I remember correctly, none of them made any of Graham's criticisms.

1 2: If in British “Bigfoot” is the only name of Bigfoot, in Canadian “Sasquatch” is the only name of Bigfoot, English in England and Canada is otherwise relevantly the same; in England Edna’s conception associated with “Bigfoot” sufficiently conforms to British use of “Bigfoot”; Edna is not in any relevant Lois Lane-type situation or other odd circumstance; and “Edna believes that Sasquatch is real” is the perfectly proper Canadian translation of the true British “Edna believes that Bigfoot is real”; then “Edna believes that Sasquatch is real” is true in Canadian. 1 4 and 2 3 are similar but much more plausible.

5 6: If an agent has just one ordinary conception associated with each term in a sentence “ x is F ”, she uses “ x is F ” in just one language to express her belief B_1 and her belief B_2 , she would honestly assert that she expresses just one belief with that sentence, and she is not in any relevant Lois Lane-type situation or other odd circumstance, then $B_1 = B_2$.

Graham seems to claim that my argument is invalid because it assumes that “Bigfoot” and “Sasquatch” have the same meaning. The reader can verify that the argument is valid and the question-begging assumption is never made (see Frances 1998, p. 717). He seems to claim that I am trying to undercut Disquotation and that I fail because Disquotation does not apply to Alice, who assents to “Bigfoot is real” and “Sasquatch isn’t real”. (Roughly put, Disquotation says that if you assent to “ P ” then you believe that P .) He also characterizes my argument as purporting to offer a case where Substitutivity is permitted even though Disquotation fails. My argument never even uses or targets Disquotation. He then writes that Substitutivity (roughly, if names a and b are coreferential then you believe that a is F iff you believe that b is F) does not apply to the Bigfoot case because “Bigfoot” is empty. I never claimed or implied otherwise. The fourth criticism is that the anti-Millian’s explanation of the Bigfoot story is better than the Millian’s. I agree, but that hardly matters. Graham does not understand the argument at all.

Graham also criticizes my analysis of the Fregean’s reaction to Kripke puzzle cases. My first argument is that Kripke puzzle cases refute the conjunction of Disquotation and Consistency (roughly, you cannot believe that P and that not- P). Since the traditional argument against Substitutivity relies on this conjunction, that argument is unsound. My second argument is that the Fregean will probably want to reject Consistency anyway. Here is the argument. The Fregean says that Mary associates sense Cicero₁ with “Cicero” and sense Cicero₂ with “Tully” and assents to “Cicero was bald” and “Tully wasn’t bald”. By Disquotation she believes that Cicero was bald and that Tully wasn’t bald. The Fregean thinks that since Cicero₁ Cicero₂, her “Tully” thought the negation of her “Cicero” thought. So the Fregean concludes that Mary’s beliefs are not contradic-

tory. Jan is just like Mary in that she uses names to express her beliefs containing (on Fregean theory) Cicero₁ and Cicero₂. But she uses just “Cicero”. She assents to “Cicero was bald” when employing Cicero₁; by Disquotation she believes that Cicero was bald. She assents to “Cicero wasn’t bald” when employing Cicero₂; by Disquotation she believes that Cicero wasn’t bald. Exactly as in Mary’s case, the Fregean insists that Jan’s beliefs have contents that are not contradictory since they contain these distinct senses. But the Fregean realizes that Disquotation entails that Jan believes that Cicero was bald and that Cicero wasn’t bald. The Fregean can hardly deny that these beliefs are contradictory in some perhaps superficial linguistic sense.² (This is not, pace Graham, to assume that this linguistic or shared content is Millian.) So the Fregean rejects Consistency.

Graham asks why I think the Fregean is forced to give up on Consistency in Jan’s but not Mary’s case. Well, we have *not* seen that Mary believes that Cicero was bald and that Cicero wasn’t bald. However, we have seen that Jan has those beliefs. So Jan but not Mary forces the Fregean to reject Consistency and then move on to endorse some other Consistency-like principle, one that is intended to apply to the inner, mental belief contents somehow standing behind the linguistic contents. I suggested Consistency_F: roughly, you cannot believe a thought and its negation—where the thought contents here are those that are most intimately part of our cognitive makeup and not necessarily given by “that”-clauses. The Fregean will claim that Jan’s beliefs are not related as thought and negation—at least for the inner mental contents somehow most relevant to her cognitive makeup.

Graham claims that the Fregean will endorse Consistency while admitting that Jan believes that Cicero was bald and that Cicero wasn’t bald. This is absurd. Disquotation entails that (a) Mary believes that Cicero was bald and that Tully wasn’t bald, and, as Graham admits, (b) Jan believes that Cicero was bald and that Cicero wasn’t bald.³ Consistency transparently entails that Jan does *not* believe that Cicero was bald while believing that Cicero wasn’t bald; that is all there is to it. I suspect that what Graham wants is an *alternative* Disquotation-like principle for the Fregean, one which when applied to Jan’s case will result in a pair of beliefs that are not

² Graham (1999, p. 558, fn.3) asserts that my argument “feels like a sleight of hand” because the Fregean is supposed to agree that Jan has contradictory beliefs but then loses any non-question-begging argument against Millianism. Graham (1999, p. 558) claims that “it cannot be that something ‘superficial’ should run so deep”. I agree with the latter claim, but I think that is a problem not with my argument but with Fregeanism, since it suggests that the sense in which Jan’s beliefs are contradictory may not be superficial.

³ Unlike Graham, one might try to argue that it is false that she believes that Cicero was (wasn’t) bald (see Frances 1999).

obviously contradictory *even though they get ascribed with contradictory sentences*. I agree, and in my article I offered Disquotation_F: If *S* is as rational as one can realistically get, then if *S* honestly assents to a sentence $\langle \text{that } P \rangle$, where *S*'s assents to $\langle \text{that } P \rangle$ express thought *P*, then *S* believes thought *P*. The contents are stipulated to be those that are most intimately part of our cognitive makeup; it is thereby left open whether *S*'s assents to $\langle \text{that } P \rangle$ and not-express thoughts that are both central to our cognitive makeup and contradictory. The Fregean thinks that in Jan's case these cognitive contents are not straightforwardly given by the corresponding "that"-clauses (which ascribe contradictory linguistic contents) and are partly constituted by the distinct Cicero₁ and Cicero₂, so there is no contradiction; the Millian disagrees. The problem then arose that the Fregean's new argument against Substitutivity and Millianism using Disquotation_F was question-begging (see Frances 1998, Sc. 3).

I suspect that we must admit that when we utter truly "Jan believes that Cicero was bald" and "Jan believes that Cicero wasn't bald" we are using just one name, "Cicero", each time. At least that is what *I'm* doing. *Prima facie*, when I say that Bob believes *P* and Fred believes that not-*P*, I am attributing contradictory beliefs; I am saying that Bob believes what Fred disbelieves. Whether or not Bob or Fred is in a Kripke puzzle or whether or not I am aware of their being in a Kripke puzzle has no effect on the truth value or meaning of my utterances. In Jan's case I will most probably not be aware of her confusion but will be able to truthfully utter "Jan believes that Cicero was bald". Considerations like these (there are many more) suggest that we do not need to use "Cicero" in two ways when attributing beliefs to Jan, as Graham appears to claim.

Department of Philosophy
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455
USA
stew0020@msn.com

BRYAN FRANCES

REFERENCES

- Frances, Bryan 1998: "Defending Millian Theories". *Mind*, 107, pp. 703–27.
- 1999: "Contradictory Belief and Epistemic Closure Principles". *Mind and Language*, 14, pp. 203–26.
- Graham, Peter 1999: "Defending Millianism: A Reply to Frances". *Mind*, 108, pp. 555–561.
- Sosa, David 1996: "The Import of the Puzzle About Belief". *Philosophical Review*, 105, pp. 373–402.