The One and Only Argument for Radical Millianism

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Abstract

Radical Millianism agrees with less radical varieties in claiming that ordinary proper names lack "descriptive senses" and that the semantic content of such a name is just its referent but differs from less radical varieties of Millianism in claiming that any pair of sentences differing only in the exchange of coreferential names cannot differ in truth-value. This is what makes Radical Millianism radical. The view is surprisingly popular these days, and it is popular despite the fact that, until very recently, there was not a single argument for it. Theodore Sider and David Braun (2006) have tried to provide the missing argument, but, I argue, their attempt fails. I conclude that we (still) have no reason to be Radical Millians.

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Not every philosopher of language who is convinced by the powerful antidescriptivist arguments of Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* is willing to adopt what I shall call Radical Millianism, a view on the semantics of names articulated and defended by Nathan Salmon (1986), Scott Soames (1987, 2002), and more recently by David Braun (1998) and Michael Thau (2002). Radical Millianism says that ordinary proper names lack "descriptive senses" and that the semantic content of such a name is just its referent, but also, and most radically, it says that any pair of sentences differing only in the exchange of coreferential names cannot differ in truth-value. It is a consequence of Radical Millianism that the following statements (1) and (2), for example, (must) share a truth-value:

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(1)   Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.

(2)   Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

There are, it would seem, many good reasons *not* to adopt the Radical Millianism of Salmon and company. There is, of course, the almost universal judgment that (1) and (2) do differ in truth-value. But there is also the fact that there are other, less radical ways of being an antidescriptivist. What I shall call Non-Radical Millianism says that names are not descriptive and that their semantic contents are just their referents, but does not follow Radical Millianism when it comes to substitutivity: An exchange of coreferential names might, according to the Non-Radical Millian, make for a difference in truth-value. Various versions of Non-Radical Millianism have been developed. Mark Crimmins and John Perry (1989) have argued that, although names are nondescriptive devices of "direct reference," belief reports like (1) and (2) implicitly refer to different contextually salient modes of presentation and that this difference explains the reports' differing truth-values. Similarly, Mark Richard's (1990) theory of names and belief reports allows, for reasons quite different from those offered by the "hidden-indexical" theory of Perry and Crimmins, that (1) and (2) may differ in truth-value, while concurring with Radical Millians on the nondescriptive nature of names. Why be Radical when there are plausible Non-Radical alternatives?

As far as I can tell, there is exactly *one* argument for going Radical. This argument, the Argument for Radical Millianism (ARM, for short), is due to Theodore Sider (1995) and is relatively new. Very recently, it has been re-presented in a paper coauthored by Sider and David Braun (2006). According to Sider and Braun, ARM shows that no correct theory of names and belief reports can allow the truth of both "*S* believes that *a* is *F*" and "*S* does *not* believe that *b* is *F*," where "*a*" and "*b*" are coreferential proper names. For example, ARM allegedly shows that (1), from above, and (3), below, cannot be true together.[1]

(3)   Lois Lane does not believe that Clark Kent can fly.

One clear target of ARM is descriptivism. By allowing that different descriptive senses may attach to "Superman" and "Clark Kent," descriptivist accounts of the semantics of names allow that (1) and (3) can both be true. More interestingly, however, ARM also targets Non-Radical Millianism. Just as Non-Radical Millianism allows that (1) and (2) may differ in truth-value, it also allows that (1) and (3) may be jointly true. But it opens the door to these possibilities without postulating a difference in descriptive sense between "Superman" and "Clark Kent." Non-Radical Millianism is thus a satisfying,

middle-of-the-road sort of view. If we adopt it, we get to agree with the antidescriptivism of *Naming and Necessity*, but we also get to trust our judgments about the truth-values of belief reports. But, if ARM is sound, Non-Radical Millianism holds out false hopes. For if ARM is sound, there is no such compromise position, our judgments about the truth-values of belief reports are simply wrong, and we must all convert to Radical Millianism.[2]

Although I am not, myself, at all attracted to Radical Millianism, it is, from a certain perspective, something of a relief that there is finally an *argument* for the theory. Despite its problems (the clash with pretheoretic judgment, the existence of more attractive seeming options), Radical Millianism has received a fair amount of good press and continues to attract converts, or at least those willing to expend some energy defending the view. For example, quite a lot of ink has been spilled recently detailing the ways in which the judgments that conflict with Radical Millianism might be "explained away," perhaps by appealing to "pragmatic factors." But why be attracted to the theory of Radical Millianism in the first place? Surprisingly little has been said about this. In fact, I think it is fair to say that, until now, not a single positive reason for endorsing Radical Millianism has ever been offered.[3] ARM, if sound, would remedy this situation.

1. The Argument

Sider has presented ARM twice, once in a critique of Mark Richard's theory of names and belief reports (Sider 1995) and, more recently, in the 2006 paper coauthored with David Braun, a paper in which the authors critically discuss Scott Soames's *Beyond Rigidity* (2002). The more recent presentation is easier to follow and less enmeshed in intricacies peculiar to Richard's theory, so it is this version that I will discuss here. But the earlier presentation is fuller in the sense that the argument's presuppositions are made explicit and certain objections are dealt with, so I will draw from the earlier presentation when helpful as well.

The more recent (Sider and Braun 2006) version of ARM specifically targets the possibility that (1) and (3) from above are both true. (Sider (1995) calls all theories that allow this possibility, including Non-Radical Millian theories, "Fregean," noting that the use is nonstandard, since some such theories are antidescriptivist. My own use of "Fregean" below should be interpreted in this Siderean, nonstandard way as well.) Here is how ARM appears in the 2006 paper.[4]

The Argument for Radical Millianism (ARM)

a. Superman = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly

b. Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that x can fly)

c. Clark Kent = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that Clark Kent can fly

d. Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that x can fly)

e. The superhero = the milquetoast reporter

f. Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that x can fly & Lois Lane does not believe that x can fly) (from b, d, and e)

Sider and Braun claim that the argument's final line, **f**, is contradictory (2006, 678). In support of this, they point out that "the more nearly English rendering" (678) of **f** is given by **f***:

f* Therefore, there is someone who is the superhero, and is such that Lois Lane both believes that he can fly and does not believe that he can fly.

Sider and Braun say that **f*** "cannot be interpreted as expressing anything other than a contradiction" (2006, 679). Let's suppose —though we will return to the issue below—that they are right about this: **f/f*** is a contradiction. How does its derivation from **a**–**e** show that (1) and (2) cannot be true together?

(1) is the second conjunct of **a** and (3) is the second conjunct of **c**. It is common ground that (in the context of the stories) Superman = the superhero and that Clark Kent = the milquetoast reporter, and so common ground that the first conjuncts of **a** and **c** are true. Hence, if the contradiction is ultimately traceable to **a** and **c**, it is their latter conjuncts, that is (1) and (3), that are to blame. *Is* the contradiction ultimately traceable to **a** and **c**? It certainly looks that way: **e** is also common ground, and the move from **b**, **d**, and **e** to **f** involves the substitution of one description for another, codenoting description in a non-intensional context—a valid move, surely. That leaves the moves from **a** to **b** and from **c** to **d**, but these seem perfectly legitimate. In each case, the inference is from an instance of a certain existential generalization to that generalization itself. How could such inferences fail to be valid? As Sider puts it, "[o]ne wonders why existentially quantified sentences like [**b** and **d**] make sense at all if they never follow from particular instances; after all, one teaches the use of the existential quanti-

fier by pointing out that any instance whatsoever is logically sufficient for the truth of an existential sentence" (Sider 1995, 511). And thus it seems that ARM is just what it purports to be: a *reductio* of the claim that (1) and (3) can be true together.

2. There Must Be *Something* Wrong with ARM

It is tempting to reply to ARM by insisting that, despite initial appearances, there must be some misstep in it, since it is plain—plainer, even, than the validity of the straightforward-seeming inferential principles on which ARM relies—that (1) and (3) can be, and are, both true. But this is question begging at worst, and at best it shows merely that there is a clash of intuitions regarding names and belief reports: On the one hand, we intuit that (1) and (3) can be true together, but, on the other, we intuit (or so Sider and Braun would say) that ARM is valid, and thus that (1) and (3) *cannot* be true together. Nevertheless, ARM *does*, I think, "prove too much," even if pointing to the fact that it "proves" that (1) and (3) are inconsistent is not the fairest way to show that it does.

A more effective way to make the "proves too much" point is to note that nothing in ARM seems to limit its scope to belief reports containing proper names (and other alleged devices of "direct reference") in their "that-clauses." In particular, nothing in the argument seems to bar us from using codenoting definite descriptions to play the same role as that played by coreferential names in the original version. Hence, if ARM has a valid form, we ought to be able to use it to prove that the reports (4) and (5) below, which contain codenoting definite descriptions instead of coreferential proper names in their that-clauses, cannot be true together:

(4) Lois Lane believes that Lex Luthor's nemesis can fly.

(5) Lois Lane does not believe that Perry White's lackey can fly.

But if ARM proves that (4) and (5) cannot be jointly true, then it really does prove too much. That (4) and (5) can both be true is more than a mere intuition, and every actual theory of descriptions and belief reports (and every remotely plausible possible theory of such things) allows for such a possibility. Certainly, any theory that claimed that descriptions function like Millian names, contributing only their denotations to the meanings of belief reports containing them (thus ruling out the possibility that (4) and (5) are both true), would be rejected by any sensible theorist. Different descriptions, even if codenoting, typically and obviously differ in their semantic contribution to their containing sentences, and hence can, if interchanged, make for a

difference in the truth-values of those sentences. But, as the **i–vi** variant on ARM below shows, ARM appears to "go through" even if we replace the coreferential "Superman" and "Clark Kent" with the codenoting "Lex Luthor's nemesis" and "Perry White's lackey."[5]

ARM: Descriptions Version

i.   Lex Luthor's nemesis = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that Lex Luthor's nemesis can fly

ii.   Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that x can fly)

iii.   Perry White's lackey = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that Perry White's lackey can fly

iv.   Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that x can fly)

v.   The superhero = the milquetoast reporter

vi.   Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that x can fly & Lois Lane does not believe that x can fly) (from ii, iv, and v)

For reasons similar those described in the discussion of the original ARM, in this Descriptions Version, the apparently contradictory **vi** (which is just **f**, renamed) appears to follow from the seemingly unobjectionable **i–v**. And for the same reasons that, in ARM, the contradiction appeared to stem ultimately from lines **a** and **c**, in the variant, the source seems to be **a** and **c**'s analogues, namely **i** and **iii**. But it is common ground that (in the stories) Lex Luthor's nemesis = the superhero and that Perry White's lackey = the milquetoast reporter; hence, it seems that the second conjuncts of **i** and **iii**, that is (4) and (5), respectively, are to blame. However, we know already that this cannot be right; (4) and (5) clearly *can* both be true. What the Descriptions Version shows, then, is that something, somewhere, has gone awry—both in it and in ARM.

3. But *What*?
Part 1: Contradictions and Intuitions

ARM must be flawed. But *how* is it flawed? One problem is that, despite what Sider and Braun say, it is not obvious that the ARM's final line, **f**, expresses a contradiction.[6] Sider and Braun, remember, say that **f**'s contradictoriness is plain when we consider its "more nearly English rendering," **f***:

  f* Therefore, there is someone who is the superhero, and is such that Lois Lane both believes that he can fly and does not believe that he can fly.

But whether **f/f*** is contradictory depends on the semantic interpretation of the occurrences of the variable, "*x*," in **f,** and the pronoun, "he," in **f***. Perhaps the proper interpretation of the variable/pronoun involves a process whereby variables, or their natural language equivalents (e.g., pronouns), have descriptive meanings attached to them.[7] Perhaps, for example, the only sense in which **f** follows from **a–e** is a sense according to which **f** means roughly what **f**** does.

  f** Therefore, there is someone who is the superhero and is such that Lois Lane both believes that he, the superhero, can fly and does not believe that he, the milquetoast reporter, can fly.

But **f**** sounds true, not contradictory.[8] So if **f**** is all that follows from **a–e**, then **a–e** do not imply that (1) and (3) are not possibly true together.

  What could rule out a descriptive interpretation of the variable/pronoun in **f/f***? Presumably only an antidescriptivist theory of the semantic content of variables and pronouns would do the trick. But the trouble with adopting such a theory in the context of presenting an allegedly theory-independent argument against *all* Fregean theories of names and belief reports—and thus, in particular, against Fregean descriptivism—ought to be obvious: The descriptivist's descriptivism about names will presumably extend to variables and pronouns (just as the Millian's Millianism typically extends from names in this way).[9] In other words, if someone, Sider or Braun perhaps, were to insist that the variable/pronoun in **f/f*** does *not* have a descriptive interpretation, then what looked to be an interesting argument against all Fregean theories of names and belief reports, and looked not to make any explicitly anti-Fregean assumptions of its own, would turn out, upon closer inspection, to depend on a kind of anti-Fregeanism about variables and pronouns. And that, of course, would make ARM far less interesting than it initially appears.

  However, Sider and Braun say very little by way of explaining *why* we ought to view **f/f*** as a contradiction. They do say that it "cannot be interpreted as expressing anything other than a contradiction" (2006, 679), but this is not a clear endorsement of anti-Fregeanism about variables and pronouns, and given that such an endorsement would considerably weaken their argument, perhaps we ought to consider other interpretations of their claim.

  Sider and Braun's case for **f/f***'s being a contradiction may be simply that it would strike an ordinary speaker (or hearer)

as such. If this is what Sider and Braun mean when they say that **f*** cannot be interpreted as anything other than a contradiction, then, although it is not really a matter that can be settled from the armchair, my guess is that they are mistaken. My guess is that ordinary speakers would even sometimes fail to judge (6), below, as a contradiction.

(6)   Lois believes that Superman can fly and Lois does not believe that Superman can fly.

One reason they might fail to so judge is that, even given a Millian construal of names, (6) is ambiguous, and on only one reading is it contradictory. (6)'s latter conjunct is a "negative belief report," that is, a sentence of the form "*A* does not believe that *p*." In general, such reports suffer from *scope ambiguity*: The negation in them can take large scope—"It is not the case that: *A* believes that *p*"—or small—"*A* believes that not-*p*." Small scope readings of negative belief reports do not contradict the corresponding positive belief report; the conjunction "*A* believes that *p* and *A* believes that not-*p*" attributes contradictory beliefs to *A* but is not itself contradictory. Hence, even granting Millianism for names, (6) has a reading according to which it says that Lois both believes that Superman can fly and that Superman cannot fly. This reading is not inconsistent; it says merely that Lois has contradictory beliefs. The fact that (6) has this reading suggests that ordinary speakers will not always judge (6) to be contradictory, or even false.

It ought to be fairly obvious how the issue of scope ambiguity bears on the question of how ordinary speakers will judge **f***. **f***—"Therefore, there is someone who is the superhero and is such that Lois both believes that he can fly and does believe that he can fly"—is a (quantified) conjunction, one conjunct of which is (something close to) a negative belief report, namely, "Lois does not believe that he can fly." Hence, even if the pronoun in **f*** is interpreted in a Millian way, **f*** is semantically ambiguous, and on only one of its disambiguations is it contradictory. If the negation in its latter conjunct takes small scope over the belief operator (in that same conjunct), then, assuming Millianism for pronouns, **f*** says (roughly) that there is a superhero about whom Lois has contradictory beliefs: she believes that he can fly and that he can't. Saying *that* is consistent. So it is possible, likely even, that many ordinary speakers would *not* take **f*** to express a contradiction. They might hear only its noncontradictory, negation-gets-small-scope reading.

Suppose we first train those we ask about **f***'s contradictoriness to recognize scope ambiguities, and we insist that they take the negation in its latter conjunct as having scope over the belief operator (in that conjunct). Would they then find **f*** contra-

dictory? My guess is that they would not. My guess is that even when given analogous instructions for interpreting (6), many ordinary speakers would balk at the claim that (6) is a contradiction. Many ordinary speakers know that Superman keeps his secret identity hidden from Lois, and, for such speakers, describing one result of Superman's deception by uttering (6), even when instructed on how to interpret the negation in its latter conjunct, would probably seem perfectly consistent— accurate even. The same, I suspect, is true of **f***. Even if taken to be the claim that there is someone who is the superhero and is such that Lois both believes that he can fly and *fails* to believe that he can fly, **f*** will strike many as perfectly consistent.

However, to the extent that the intuitions of the ordinary speaker are to be trusted about such issues, what matters is not an intuition about **f***'s contradictoriness (or lack of it) considered, as it were, in isolation. Considered in isolation, there are, as I have been stressing, many ways to interpret **f***. What we ought to be curious about is an intuition about **f*** contradictoriness (or lack of it) *given that it follows from **a**–**e***. That is, *if*, as Sider and Braun suggest, the ordinary speaker will intuit that ARM is valid (and this, I think, is a very big "if"—see the next section) will they also intuit that its conclusion, **f***, is a contradiction? Again, this is an empirical matter, but I'm fairly confident that the answer will be "no." The reason, of course, is that most ordinary speakers will intuit that **a** and **c**— "Superman = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly" and "Clark Kent = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that Clark Kent can fly"—are both *true*. But **a** and **c** are ARM's only genuine assumptions, the lines from which all the other lines follow. So if the ordinary speaker intuits that **a** and **c** are true and intuits that the argument is valid, then the ordinary speaker will, if he or she genuinely understands the notion of validity, conclude that **f*** must be not only noncontradictory, but true![10]

4. But *What*?
Part 2: The Failure of
Existential Generalization

Even if we were to grant that **f/f*** is, and is intuitively, a contradiction, there would still be a serious flaw in ARM. The argument is not valid: **b** does not follow from **a**, and, for the same reason, **d** does not follow from **c**.

a. Superman = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly

b. Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the superhero & Lois Lane believes that x can fly)

c. Clark Kent = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that Clark Kent can fly

d. Therefore, $\exists x$ (x = the milquetoast reporter & Lois Lane does not believe that x can fly)

b and **d** are existential generalizations of **a** and **c**, respectively, but *existential generalization*, a rule of inference that, if unrestrictedly valid, would license the moves from **a** to **b** and from **c** to **d**, is known to fail on terms within the scope of an intensional operator like "believes-that."[11] Indeed, part of what it is *to be* an intensional operator is for existential generalization to fail on terms within the operator's scope. Of course, one potential reason for the failure of existential generalization in intensional contexts is the possible "emptiness" of the instantial term. "Someone is such that Ann believes that he is a spy" follows from "Ann believes that the present king of France is a spy" only if "the present king of France" is nonempty.[12] But this reason does not apply to the inferences from **a** to **b** and **c** to **d**; both "Superman" and "Clark Kent" (we are pretending) refer.[13] Still, even adding the condition that the relevant terms be nonempty, existential generalization is not valid in intensional contexts. The issue here is similar to the old issue of when, if ever, a "*de re*" belief report can be inferred from the corresponding "*de dicto*" one. Even given that there exists a unique shortest spy, the *de re* (8) does not follow from the *de dicto* (7).

(7) Ann believes that the shortest spy is a spy.

(8) The shortest spy is such that Ann believes that he is a spy.

As David Kaplan would put it, (8) expresses information that would be of interest to the FBI: It implies that there is a *particular* someone whom Ann believes to be a spy. (7), on the other hand, carries no such implication. Indeed, (7) might be true simply because Ann arrived at the belief it ascribes to her via the general beliefs that spies exist and that no two of them share a precise height. Ann's reasoning in this way is not, however, sufficient grounds for the truth of (8). The same points would seem to apply to (9), which is the existential generalization of (7), and the question of whether it follows from (7).

(9) Someone is such that Ann believes that he is a spy.

Like (8), (9) implies that there is a particular someone whom Ann believes to be a spy. As is the case with (8), (9)'s truth is not a trivial consequence of Ann's reflections on general truths about spies and their heights. Hence, even granted that there exists a unique shortest spy, (9) cannot be inferred from (7). The

more general lesson, then, is that existential generalization fails on terms within the scope of an intensional operator, even if that term refers. A consequence of the general lesson would seem to be that it is true neither that **b** follows from **a** nor that **d** follows from **c**, and, hence, that ARM is not valid.[14]

Nonetheless, I can imagine at least two reasons why someone sympathetic to ARM might find the discussion in the previous paragraph not quite relevant to the question of the argument's success. First, one might complain that all that the previous discussion shows is that existential generalizations of belief reports do not follow from those reports themselves. It does not show that *de dicto* belief reports *in combination with certain auxiliary assumptions* do not entail their generalizations. And, the complaint might continue, there is no reason to suppose that these auxiliary assumptions, whatever they may be, could not be true in the circumstances in which **a** and **c** are true (and thus that, given **a** and **c**, and given these auxiliary assumptions, **b** and **d** follow). Second, one might complain that the examples of the previous paragraph involve a definite description and that what we say about existential generalization and *de dicto*-to-*de re* inferences might be different when the examples involve proper names. Perhaps inferring the existential generalization, "Someone is such that Lois believes that he can fly," or the *de re*, "Superman is such that Lois believes that he can fly," from the *de dicto*, "Lois believes that Superman can fly," is unproblematic in a way in which analogous inferences from a *de dicto* belief report with a definite description in its "that-clause" are not.

This second complaint comes dangerously close to begging the crucial question. Take the issue of *de dicto*-to-*de re* entailment (a.k.a. the issue of "exportation" in belief contexts). It has been pointed out by some of Radical Millianism's defenders that *if Radical Millianism is true*, then there is no *de dicto/de re* distinction with respect to belief reports containing proper names in their that-clauses.[15] The *de dicto* report, "Lois believes that Superman can fly," and the *de re* report, "Superman is such that Lois believes that he can fly," ascribe a belief in one and the same "object-involving" "singular" proposition to Lois; hence, the reports' truth-conditions and content are exactly the same. So the answer to the question of whether the former report entails the latter is, trivially, "yes." As stressed, the reasoning here depends on *assuming* Radical Millianism. Analogous reasoning for the conclusion that there is a trivial deductive connection between name-containing *de dicto* belief reports and their existential generalizations would presumably require the same assumption. But that assumption is obviously not available to the proponent of ARM. ARM is meant to be an argument *for* that assumption.[16]

The first complaint—that there may be certain auxiliary assumptions that, when true, would allow an inference from a

de dicto belief report to its existential generalization—would amount to the second, if it were accompanied by the claim that the relevant auxiliary assumption is just that the instantial term be a proper name. This version of the first complaint falls prey to the charge of question begging described in the previous paragraph. Is there some more neutral set of auxiliary assumptions that would, in combination with the truth of a *de dicto* report, imply that report's existential generalization? David Kaplan has famously argued that *de re* belief reports *are* inferable from the corresponding *de dicto* reports, given certain further assumptions having to do with the subject of the report's epistemic connection to the object of his or her belief. If there is some such set of further assumptions, their being true would clearly also allow inferences to existential generalizations of *de dicto* belief reports from those reports themselves. Perhaps, if Lois is sufficiently "*en rapport*" with Superman, her believing *de dicto* that Superman can fly implies that there is someone such that Lois believes that he can fly. However, doubts have been raised about whether Kaplan has succeeded in specifying the correct set of assumptions, and some philosophers have gone as far as claiming that the project of seeking such assumptions is ill conceived. There are no such further assumptions, these skeptical philosophers say, and to think there are is to misunderstand the nature of *de re* belief. *De re* belief, they claim, is fundamental, and not even partially analyzable in terms of *de dicto* belief. If this sort of skepticism about the Kaplanian project is justified, then that presumably closes the book on ARM: **b** does not follow from **a** (nor **d** from **c**) and there are no further assumptions, short of **b** (or **d**) itself, that would bridge the gap.

However, even supposing that exportation and existential generalization are allowable in certain special circumstances is not going to rescue ARM; ARM requires something more specific than this. First, it requires the validity of *both* "positive" and "negative" existential generalization; that is, it must be possible to move both from a positive belief report of the form "*A* believes that *a* is *F*," and from a negative belief report of the form "*A* does not believe that *b* is *F*," to their respective existential generalizations—that is, to reports of the form "There is something such that *A* believes that it is *F*" and "There is something such that *A* fails to believe that it is *F*." But, second, ARM also requires that positive and negative existential generalization be legitimate *even when the instantial terms are coreferential*.[17] The trouble with these more specific requirements is that *no one* can meet them; the Fregean can't, but then neither can the Radical Millian.

The reason these more specific requirements cannot be met is best approached via the related issue of the invalidity of positive and negative *exportation*. If one holds that in certain

circumstances one can infer the "positive" *de re* form, "*a* is such that *A* believes that it is *F* from the "positive" *de dicto* one, "*A* believes that *a* is *F*," then one cannot further hold that, in those same circumstances, and where "*a*" and "*b*" corefer, one can also infer the "negative" *de re* form, "*b* is such that *A* fails to believe that it is *F*" from the "negative" *de dicto* form "*A* fails to believe that *b* is *F*." Allowing such a thing would lead to contradiction: "*a* is such that *A* believes that it is *F* and *a* is such that *A* fails to believe that it is *F*."[18] One might reply that this is, in effect, Sider and Braun's point: contradictions result from allowing the truth of both "positive" and "negative" *de dicto* belief reports involving coreferential proper names. But the trouble is with exportation and existential generalization, and it is not peculiar to names but afflicts belief reports containing coreferential terms quite generally. If Jones believes that the mayor is a crook, but fails to believe that his neighbor is a crook, and the mayor = Jones's neighbor, then, if exportation is valid in both the positive and negative cases, contradictions will result. This shows that at least one of the relevant inferences is not valid, not that Jones cannot believe that the mayor is a crook while simultaneously failing to believe that his neighbor is a crook.[19] In sum, there are general reasons, having nothing in particular to do with one's favored semantics for proper names, for disallowing the possibility on which ARM depends, that is, for disallowing cases of simultaneous positive and negative existential generalization where the instantial terms are coreferential.[20]

5. Conclusion

Radical Millianism *needs* a positive argument. In my view, there is currently far too much enthusiasm for a semantic theory that we have never been given reason to believe.[21] Following the publication of *Naming and Necessity*, the situation, as I see matters, was this: Descriptivism of the Frege/Russell variety had been very convincingly laid to rest. However, and as Kripke himself has stressed, the question of what, positively, to say about the semantics of names, and especially what to say about their behavior in attitude contexts, remained an open question. As far as I can tell, this is still, to this day, *a completely open question*. There is simply nothing in Kripke's work that suggests or implies the truth of Radical Millianism. Surprisingly, there is also nothing in the work of present-day Radical Millians that counts as a reason for believing the theory they endorse. Part of the problem is that present-day Radical Millians have busied themselves with a *defensive* project: "Given the truth of our theory, what can we say to defend it from the evidence that appears to conflict with it?" This sort of attitude is perhaps a natural one, especially given the nature of the evidence against

Radical Millianism. After all, the theory conflicts not just with esoteric philosophical principles but with robust, easily elicited intuitions had by nearly everyone. Even so, such defenses won't (or ought not) convince anyone who is not already a Radical Millian. Radical Millians need now to go on the offensive. We all know that false theories can be given ingenious defenses. We need to be shown that Radical Millianism is a theory *worth* giving such a defense.

ARM looked promising in this regard, and Sider and Braun are to be commended for at least making an attempt to argue positively for Radical Millianism. But I believe I have here exposed ARM as a failure. The question, then, is whether there is something that can be put in its place. This is the challenge to Radical Millians. Until it is met, we should be suspicious of the value of defenses of Radical Millianism. Berkelian idealism can be defended too.[22]

Notes

[1] More precisely, what ARM allegedly shows is that (1) and (3) cannot be true together, when (3) is read as the negation of (2). If sound, ARM also shows that (1) and (2) cannot differ in truth-value, again taking (3) as (2)'s negation. There is a scope ambiguity in (3); this is why the claims about what ARM allegedly shows must be qualified. The issue of (3)'s scope ambiguity will reappear later in the main text. It forms the basis of one of my criticisms of ARM.

[2] Sider and Braun think that ARM not only shows that Radical Millianism is true, but also that it can be extended to show that the "Millian Descriptivism" elaborated in Scott Soames's *Beyond Rigidity* cannot be correct. That is, they believe that ARM can be used not only to show that we have to be Radical Millians, but also that we have to be Radical Millians of a particular variety. We can't, according to them, be Radical Millians who maintain that descriptive propositions are pragmatically imparted by utterances of name-containing belief reports. (This, very roughly, is Soames's *Beyond Rigidity* position.) To me, the real interest of ARM is its potential to show that no version of Fregeanism could be correct. Whether it can be used to whittle down the range of possible versions of Radical Millianism is very much a side issue. However, if my criticisms of ARM below are correct, then Sider and Braun are wrong in thinking that it can be extended, in the way they imagine, to criticize Soames's Millian Descriptivism. (Note 14, below, briefly explains why.) Having said that, I should add that the ARM-based criticism of Soames's Millian Descriptivism is only one of many raised by Sider and Braun (2006).

[3] I suspect that many philosophers take Kripke's arguments in *Naming and Necessity*, and perhaps especially in "A Puzzle About Belief," to be pro-(Radical-)Millian. This is a mistake. Those arguments are antidescriptivist and decidedly *not* pro-Millian. As Scott Soames reminds us in *Beyond Rigidity*, in *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke told us what the semantic content of a name cannot be, not what it is. In fact, Kripke says things in *Naming and Necessity* that, if true, entail the falsity of Millianism, or at least of Radical Millianism. (He says

that "Hesperus is Hesperus" is *a priori* but that "Hesperus is Phosphorus" is *a posteriori*, e.g.) As for "A Puzzle About Belief," the main thrust of the argument in that paper is that a certain powerful seeming anti-Millian argument is not as powerful as it seems. This too falls far short of an argument for, or even an endorsement of, Millianism. Some Millians seem to think that pointing to cases in which a pair of coreferential names seem, intuitively, to be interchangeable in certain attitude contexts somehow counts as arguing for their view. This is like arguing for the validity of *affirming the consequent* by pointing out that there are *some* cases in which when one reasons from "If *p*, then *q*," and "*q*," to "*p*," one is not led from truth to falsehood. Radical Millianism says that, in *every* case and in *any* context, an exchange of coreferential names does not lead to a difference in truth-value. That there are *some* cases and contexts in which an exchange of coreferential names does not alter truth-value is irrelevant. Despite this, Millians like Bryan Frances (2002) claim to "prove" that Radical Millianism is true by describing cases in which certain well-chosen examples of coreferential names do seem freely interchangeable in certain belief contexts. But even a Fregean descriptivist can allow that some coreferential names can be freely interchanged, namely those with the same descriptive sense. Frances is not the only culprit. David Braun (1998) claims that "some of our intuitions about belief reports actually support Russellianism ["Russellianism" is Braun's label for Radical Millianism.]" (Braun 1998, 559). His defense of this claim is that "we often take a belief report to be true as long as it 'gets the reference right'" (Braun 1998, 559). And he goes on to give an example in which swapping an indexical for a (coreferential) name in the "that-clause" of a belief report seems, intuitively, not to affect the truth of the report. How could this possibly count as *support* for Radical Millianism? Of course, *sometimes*, coreferential terms can be interchanged within the content clauses of belief reports *salva veritate*. But this would be true even if every name, indexical, or other allegedly directly referential term were synonymous with some definite description or other. I class Mark Richard's famous phone-booth argument (Richard 1983) as an example of the same sort of faulty reasoning. Richard argues that there are cases in which it is intuitive that certain belief ascriptions involving different but coreferential terms in their that-clauses (In Richard's original case, the terms are indexical.) have the same truth–value and content. Again, the existence of such cases is irrelevant to the truth of Millianism; there would be such cases even if Millianism were false.

⁴ Sider and Braun call ARM "A4" (2006, 677–78). My lettering of the premises and conclusion of ARM matches theirs.

⁵ Some readers may be less of a nerd than I am: Lex Luthor is the arch-villain of the Superman stories. Perry White is the editor of *The Daily Planet*, the newspaper for which Clark Kent, a.k.a. Superman, works as a reporter.

⁶ **f** and **vi** are identical, so what I say about **f** will of course apply to **vi** as well.

⁷ Sider and Braun describe an analogous process—"descriptive enrichment"—whereby variables/pronouns have descriptive content associated with them, but only at the pragmatic level. What I'm proposing is descriptive enrichment, but at the semantic level.

⁸ Or suppose that the proper interpretation of **f*** is: "Therefore

there is someone who is the superhero and is such that Lois Lane both believes that he—when thinking of him as 'the superhero'—can fly and does not believe that he—when thinking of him as 'the milquetoast reporter'—can fly." This sounds even more clearly true than **f****.

9 It is somewhat surprising, from a historical perspective, that Sider and Braun imply that the variable/pronoun in **f/f*** is plainly Millian, and that this can be exploited in cooking up a powerful anti-descriptivist, pro-Millian argument. Nearly twenty-five years ago, Alonzo Church (1982) suggested that the fact that statements like **f/f*** follow from statements like (1) and (2) (modulo some uncontroversial auxiliary assumptions) is precisely a reason to *deny* that the variable/pronoun in **f/f*** is Millian. Church would say that this counts as a reason to take the variable/pronoun in **f/f*** as possessing a Fregean sense**.** Church's papers on quantification and the propositional attitudes are missing from the bibliographies of (Sider 1995) and (Sider and Braun 2006).

10 Sider and Braun make something of a fuss over the difference between what they call "particular intuitions," i.e., intuitions about the truth-values of sentences, and what they call "logical intuitions," i.e., intuitions about the validity of arguments. "Logical intuitions," they write, "are not merely subservient to intuitions about particular sentences. They are independent, and indeed have the potential to clash with particular intuitions" (2006, 674). One of their main contentions is that while particular intuitions favor Fregean (in Sider's sense) theories, some logical intuitions appear to favor Radical Millianism. In particular, the intuition that ARM is valid is alleged to favor Radical Millianism. However, the point about the "independence" of logical and particular intuitions is only partly true. It is true that one can make a judgment about the validity of an argument without having an opinion about the truth-values of the argument's premises and conclusion. Logical intuitions and particular intuitions are independent in this sense. But if one has the particular intuition that "S" is true and the particular intuition that "T" is false, then the two intuitions combined just is, in some sense, the "logical intuition" that the argument from "S" to "T" is not valid. In a way, then, particular and logical intuitions are *not* independent. The point bears on Sider and Braun's claim about our intuitive reactions to ARM: If we do intuit the truth of the argument's premises and the falsity of its conclusion, as they insist we do, then haven't we *thereby* intuited that the argument is invalid? If so, it is misleading for Sider and Braun to describe the situation to be such that it is only particular intuitions that tell against Radical Millianism. There is also a logical intuition, based on (subservient to?) the particular intuitions about its premises and conclusion, that ARM is invalid. Sider and Braun seem to think that we will also have a separate intuition to the effect that the argument is valid. This strikes me as unsupported speculation, but even if it is right, there is a question about how much weight this separate intuition will be given. A reason to suspect that it will be given little weight is that it is probably true in general that particular intuitions are *firmer* than logical intuitions, especially when the arguments to which the logical intuitions apply are relatively complex (as is the case with ARM).

11 Unrestricted *existential generalization* says: From any sentence, "… *a* …," where "*a*" is a singular term, infer "∃*x* (… *x* …)."

[12] This *seems*, at any rate, to be a plausible constraint on existential generalization. The matter is somewhat controversial, however.

[13] In any case, the first conjuncts of **a** and **c** imply the existence of Superman/Clark Kent.

[14] Sider and Braun (2006) claim that ARM constitutes an objec-tion not just to Fregean theories but also to a certain version of Radical Millianism, like Soames's "Millian Descriptivism" (see note 2, above). However, ARM can be extended in this way only if we accept that (A) ARM is intuitively valid, and (B) **f/f*** is a contradiction. But I've argued here that we should reject both (A) and (B). Hence, I don't think that ARM poses a threat to Millian Descriptivism.

[15] When this is pointed out, it is usually in the spirit of identifying some of the interesting consequences of Radical Millianism. Although this is more properly a topic for another paper, my view is that Radical Millianism's inability to "see" *de dicto/de re* ambiguities counts as further evidence against the theory. I think there are clear cases in which the truth conditions of "*S* believes that *a* is *F*" and "*a* is such that *S* believes that it is *F*" differ, even when "*a*" is a proper name. See note 16, below, for a presentation of one such case.

[16] Here again it may be that Sider and Braun are simply relying on a supposed intuition to the effect that the existential generalizations of *de dicto* belief reports containing names (**b** and **d**) do follow from those reports themselves (**a** and **c**). I do not have such an intuition, and I suspect that, to the extent that the ordinary speaker does, it is also had with respect to *de dicto* belief reports containing (denoting) definite descriptions, and hence should be taken with a grain of salt. Anyone who has the intuition that name-containing *de dicto* belief reports straightforwardly imply the corresponding *de re* reports can come to see the error of his or her ways by consider a case involving a name whose reference is "fixed by description." Suppose Superman arrives at a murder scene and catches a glimpse of the horribly mutilated body of Smith. Somehow, it is clear that there is only one perpetrator. Superman introduces the name "Alfred" for the murderer, whoever it may be, of Smith. He then forms the belief that Alfred is insane. It ought to be obvious, however, that nothing said so far suffices for its being true that Alfred is such that Superman believes that he is insane. Given the obvious similarities between exportation and existential generalization, these sorts of cases ought to make us discount intuitions to the effect that exportation involving (nonempty) names is valid.

[17] How does ARM depend on these further requirements? The move from **a** to **b** involves positive existential generalization, while the move from **c** to **d** involves negative existential generalization. But "Superman" and "Clark Kent" are coreferential.

[18] Assuming, that is, that the relevant variables/pronouns are Millian.

[19] Sider (1995, 512) claims that intuition tells us that both positive and negative exportation are unrestrictedly valid. Any thought to the contrary results, Sider claims, from overexposure to early work on exportation and *de re* belief (e.g., Quine 1956 and Kaplan 1968). But anyone who judges that Jones can believe that the mayor is a crook while failing to believe that his neighbor is a crook, even when Jones's neighbor = the mayor, can be made to see that maintaining this judgment requires denying that both positive and negative exportation

are valid. And they can be made to see this without exposing them to the details of philosophical theories on the topic.

[20] Sider (1995) imagines a Fregean responding to ARM by claiming, perhaps on the basis of commonalities between *de re* and existentially generalized versions of *de dicto* belief reports, that there is an "asymmetry" between positive and negative existential generalization. One *can*, Sider imagines his Fregean critic saying, validly infer existential generalizations of positive *de dicto* reports from those reports themselves, but one *cannot* validly infer existential generalizations of negative *de dicto* reports from the reports themselves (Sider 1995, 511). This is *not* the view I mean to be defending here. There is no asymmetry; *neither* positive nor negative existential generalization is valid. Though it is doubtful, it may be that, under certain conditions perhaps having to do with the relevant believer's epistemic connection to the object of his or her belief, one may infer a positive generalization from the corresponding positive *de dicto* report. By the same token, it may be legitimate, again in certain special circumstances, to infer a negative existential generalization from the corresponding negative *de dicto* report. What has been argued here is that what cannot be allowed, under any circumstances, is *both* positive and negative existential generalization where the instantial terms are coreferential. Positive existential generalization, considered alone, is no better or worse than negative existential generalization considered alone. It is their combination that causes trouble.

[21] One of the negative effects of this overenthusiasm is the philosophical time and energy spent on problems that would not arise in the absence of a commitment to Millianism. Explaining the persistence of objects is a real problem only if you assume Berkelian idealism. Similarly, a particularly virulent form of the "problem of empty names" arises only by assuming Millianism: "Since empty names have no content, given that names must refer in order to have content, how can their use in truth-evaluable assertions be explained?" One wonders whether we should fret much about this version of the empty names problem in the absence of some positive reason for endorsing the Millianism it presupposes. At least Berkeley argued for his idealism.

[22] I'd like to thank John Collins, Harry Deutsch, Nick Georgalis, Wong Pak Hang, Pei Kong Ngai, Joe Lau, and Dan Robbins for helpful discussions of the material in this paper. Special thanks are due to Michael Veber who, besides discussing the paper's content with me, gave me some very useful advice, which I took, concerning its style.

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