Philosophers, with few exceptions, think they have a reasonably clear idea of what it is for indexicals and demonstratives, proper names, and singular definite descriptions to be rigid. Nonetheless, in Naming and Necessity Kripke seems to intend the notion to apply, at least "suitably elaborated" (1980, 134), to other kinds of expressions. And indeed people quite often talk about predicates' being rigid and non-rigid (or flexible), in discussions in philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, or metaethics. The idea implicitly guiding such talk seems to be simple and straightforward: inasmuch as the issue of rigidity for an ordinary singular term concerns sameness of signification across the different ways the world might be, it does so in the case of predicates as well. This I will label the simple proposal about rigidity for predicates.

My aim in this paper is to defend this simple proposal from one objection that it has received in the recent literature. The proposal, critics claim, suffers from a trivialization problem: according to it, any predicate whatsoever would turn out to be trivially rigid.

In section 1, I summarize the standard view about rigidity for singular terms. In section 2, I state the simple proposal for predicates. In section 3, I present the trivialization problem. In section 4, I consider the analogous trivialization "problem" that would affect rigidity for ordinary singular terms, as the notion is standardly understood. The solution to this "problem", which crucially involves intuitions concerning the actual truth-values of certain identity statements, will be used to motivate an analogous solution to the trivialization problem in the case of predicates, which I provide in the main section, section 5. I conclude in section 6 by summarizing further issues that a full defense of the simple proposal about rigidity for predicates should also deal with.

1. Rigidity for Singular Terms
The standard view on the notion of rigidity for ordinary singular terms concerns sameness of signification across the different ways the world might be.

In general, the signification of an expression (with respect to a
possible way things could be) is its contribution to the truth-conditions of the simple sentences containing it (with respect to that situation).  

(Hereafter, when I speak of expressions in general, the context should determine whether types or tokens are intended. Being precise on that score would make the presentation much harder, and needlessly so, as nothing essential depends on it here.) Second, I will be speaking of (possible) worlds, actual and counterfactual, instead of using phrases like ‘the way things actually are’ and ‘the way things could be or could have been’. I do not mean to commit myself to any specific view about the nature of such entities that goes beyond the commitment, if any, underlying the common use of such phrases. Third, and importantly, I will be speaking for the rest of the paper as if singular definite descriptions were singular terms.

Singular terms are expressions characterized by a specific kind of contribution they make: roughly, the contribution of an object. The standard view on rigidity can then be stated thus: a singular term is rigid if and only if it signifies the same object with respect to all possible worlds. That is to say, a singular term is rigid if the contribution it makes to the truth-conditions of the (simple) sentences containing it is the same object across the different possible worlds (Kripke 1980, 6–7).

There is a substantial consensus as to when proper names, indexicals, demonstratives, and singular definite descriptions referentially used are rigid in this sense, whereas most singular definite descriptions attributively used are non-rigid or flexible. To illustrate, consider ‘Saul Kripke’. Intuitively, the object contributed by that name to the truth-conditions of (simple) sentences like ‘Saul Kripke wrote Naming and Necessity’ with respect to counterfactual worlds, including those in which Kripke did not write Naming and Necessity but someone else did, is exactly the same object contributed by it to their truth-conditions with respect to the actual world — namely, Kripke himself. By contrast, consider now ‘the author of Naming and Necessity’. Intuitively the object contributed by that description to the truth-conditions of (simple) sentences like ‘The author of Naming and Necessity wrote Naming and Necessity’ with respect to a counterfactual world in which Wittgenstein and not Kripke wrote Naming and Necessity is Wittgenstein and not Kripke.

2. Rigidity for Predicates

I said that philosophers, including Kripke, often talk about predicates being rigid or not, in a variety of contexts. So what is it for a predicate to be rigid? The implicit thought seems to be that rigidity for predicates similarly concerns sameness of signification.

It is convenient, for reasons that I will consider explicitly below, to start by stating this simple proposal in terms of expressions that

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1. Alternative labels for ‘signification’ include ‘reference’, ‘denotation’, and ‘designation.’ By the truth-conditions of a sentence (with respect to a situation) I mean something which can hold or fail to hold (in the situation), and whose holding (in the situation) constitutes the truth of the sentence (with respect to that situation). Finally, by simple sentences I mean (roughly) those in which no logical or intensional expressions occur (see below footnote 4).

2. I do not want to suggest that I think they are (for indeed I suspect they are not). My reasons for doing so will be mentioned in a moment (see footnote 4).

3. Strictly speaking, a singular term is rigid if and only if, if it signifies a given object with respect to a world, then it signifies it with respect to all possible worlds in which the object exists, and does not signify any other object with respect to any possible world. As issues regarding the non-existence of the objects in question play no role in what follows, I will stick to the simplified version in the text.

4. Offering them as examples of flexible expressions according to the standard characterization just mentioned requires that singular definite descriptions are singular terms, and in particular that they signify with respect to a world the only object that satisfies with respect to that world the matrix of the description (if any object does). (Sosa 2002) shows how to amend the standard characterization so as to suit more ‘Russellian’ accounts, to which I am also sympathetic myself. Notice also that a singular definite description signifies an object (with respect to a world) in virtue of our restriction to sentences that contain no operator such as ‘necessarily’ or ‘possibly’, as no object is contributed by ‘the number of planets’ to the truth conditions of ‘Necessarily, the number of planets is g’. Hence, the straight formulation of rigidity is available only if attention is restricted to simple sentences.

5. It is worth noting that such claims often occur vis-à-vis claims that concern not predicates but kind terms’ being rigid or not: that ‘water’ signifies the same substance, ‘one meter’ the same magnitude, ‘tiger’ the same species, etc.
involve predicates rather than in terms of predicates themselves. Say that for any predicate \( F \) its canonical nominalization, \( F \)-ing, is the expression that results from \( F \) by replacing the first verb it contains by its gerund form. So ‘being water’, ‘being the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers’, ‘running’, and ‘exercising the way José prefers’ are the canonical nominalizations of the predicates ‘is water’, ‘is the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers’, ‘runs’, and ‘exercises the way José prefers’.

Canonical nominalizations of predicates are singular terms, although not of the most ordinary kind. I will assume that they signify properties (with respect to worlds), so as to satisfy the following:

**Nominalizations:** If \( F \) is a predicate, \( F \) applies to something (with respect to a world) if and only if it has the property \( F \)-ing signifies (with respect to that world).

Is nominalizations unduly controversial, by requiring that there is a property for every (nominalization of a) predicate to signify? I think that its possibly controversial character would depend on how ‘property’ is to be understood there. Following (Lewis 1986), one can distinguish a very liberal sense of ‘property’, arguably appropriate for certain purposes, such as (precisely) providing the significations of (nominalizations of) arbitrary predicates. Properties in this sense can be modelled by (arbitrary) functions from possible worlds to extensions. Properties in this sense are indeed a very abundant kind of thing: let me call them \( A \)-properties. This, I think legitimate, sense certainly contrasts with richer conceptions of properties also present in philosophical discussions, arguably appropriate for certain other purposes, such as “carving reality at its joints”, in Lewis’s evocative phrase. Properties in this sense are a much sparser kind of thing: let me call them \( S \)-properties. There are competing accounts of how \( S \)-properties should be ultimately explicated. What is important is that, although the suggestion that every (nominalization of a) predicate signifies an \( S \)-property is rather controversial, the corresponding suggestion regarding \( A \)-properties is by contrast quite plausible.’ In any event, the assumption about \( A \)-properties is one that, as we are about to see, the trivialization problem in fact exploits.

Canonical nominalizations of predicates signify, then, \( A \)-properties. The standard view about rigidity for singular terms applies in particular to canonical nominalizations: if \( F \) is a predicate, \( F \)-ing is rigid if and only if \( F \)-ing signifies the same property with respect to all worlds. We are now in a position to state the simple proposal about rigidity for predicates:

**The Simple Proposal:** If \( F \) is a predicate, \( F \) is rigid if and only if \( F \)-ing is rigid.

Once nominalizations is in place, another assumption, concerning the signification of predicates, seems very natural:

**Predicates:** If \( F \) is a predicate, \( F \) signifies (with respect to a world) the same as \( F \)-ing does (with respect to that world).

If this is also granted, then the simple proposal could be rephrased in even simpler and more straightforward terms, thus:

7. Remaining doubts arising from considerations of paradoxicality, which would eventually resulting from predicates of the sort of ‘does not exemplify itself’ are set aside here.

8. Is there any reason for resisting predicates? (Wright 1998) has pointed out that granting it entails rejecting what he calls the reference principle: ‘Co-referential expressions should be inter-substitutable salva veritate, at least in extensional contexts, and inter-substitutable salva congruitate in all’ (1998, 240). That the reference principle is indeed incompatible with predicates is witnessed by the following pair of examples: ‘José runs’ vs ‘José running’; *The property of is water has instances’ vs ‘The property of being water has instances.’ Recently, (Oliver 2005) has argued that the reference principle is false, anyway, on the basis of examples like ‘Clever Crispin solved Frege’s paradox’ vs ‘Clever the author of Truth and Objectivity solving Frege’s paradox,’
THE SIMPLE PROPOSAL RESTATED: If $F$ is a predicate, $F$ is rigid if and only if $F$ signifies the same property with respect to all possible worlds.

For the purposes of this paper predicates is indeed optional: the simple proposal and nominalizations suffice. For ease of exposition, I will take the assumption predicates for granted in some contexts and hence I will sometimes speak of “predicates signifying properties”. The essentials of the argument can be nonetheless recovered without loss in a way that is independent of the assumption by understanding such talk as elliptical for “predicates whose canonical nominalizations signify properties”.

The simple proposal certainly seems to be what implicitly guides philosophers’ talk about predicates’ being rigid or not, in the philosophical discussions that do not focus on the issue of rigidity for predicates, as I have alluded to above. And it certainly seems to be a simple and straightforward extension of the standard view about rigidity for ordinary singular terms. Furthermore, on first sight, it seems that the simple proposal does have the intuitively right results concerning the rigidity and flexibility of predicates. Consider the following examples:

‘is water’ is rigid, given that it signifies the same property with respect to all worlds: that of being water.

‘is the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers’ is not rigid, given that it signifies the property of being made of H2O-molecules with respect to the actual world, but the property of being made of XYZ-molecules with respect to an appropriate counterfactual world.

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I am Alex’ vs ‘I am Alex,’ and others. Be this as it may, as we are about to see, predicates and hence the rejection of the reference principle are not required for the purposes of this paper.

‘runs’ is rigid, given that it signifies the same property with respect to all worlds: that of running.

‘exercises the way José prefers’ is not rigid, given that it does not signify the same property with respect to all worlds: it signifies the property of running with respect to the actual world, but the property of swimming with respect to an appropriate counterfactual world.

That these are in fact results of the simple proposal is what is challenged by the trivialization problem, to which I now turn.

3. The Trivialization Problem

I just said that on first sight the simple proposal has the intuitively right results concerning the rigidity and flexibility of predicates. According to critics of the simple proposal this is not so: for them, the proposal trivializes rigidity for predicates. Consider again our examples. What prevents the following line of thought?

‘is the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers’ is rigid, given that it signifies the same property with respect to all worlds: that of being-the-substance-instances-of-which-fall-from-the-sky-in-rain-and-fill-the-lakes-and-rivers (which is the property that is had by something in a world just in case it is something which is the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers in that world).

‘exercises the way José prefers’ is rigid, given that it signifies the same property with respect to all worlds: that of exercising-the-way-José-prefers (which is the property that is had by something in a world just in case it is
something which exercises the way José prefers in that world).

Notice that, regarding both the actual and counterfactual truth-values of simple sentences like ‘Pedro exercises the way José prefers’, the assumption that ‘exercises the way José prefers’ rigidly signifies the property exercising-the-way-José-prefers, instead of flexibly signifying the different sports José prefers in the different worlds, has the same consequences as the alternative assumption. Furthermore, one might suggest, if there is such a property as exercising-the-way-José-prefers, isn’t it just the obvious candidate for ‘exercises the way José prefers’ to signify? How then could the simple proposal and the flexibility of ‘exercises the way José prefers’ be defended?

This is the heart of what I label the trivialization problem. The worry is that the proposal trivializes rigidity for predicates, in that similar considerations would reappear with respect to any putative candidate of a flexible predicate whatsoever. Let $F$ be such. The defender of the simple proposal thinks she can account for the intuitions regarding the flexibility of $F$ by its being possibly the case that it signifies with respect to the different worlds $w'$, $w''$, ... the different properties $Fw'$, $Fw''$, .... But consider the property $F$-ing, which is had by something $x$ in a world $w$ just in case $x$ has $Fw$ in $w$. Generalizing what was observed above, any (simple) predication of $F$ would be true with respect to a world if and only if the relevant object has the property $F$-ing in that world. But what would then be wrong with the following?

$F$ is rigid, given that it signifies the same property with respect to all worlds: that of $F$-ing.

Furthermore, as suggested above, if there is such a property as $F$-ing (and there is one such, given the assumption on $A$-properties), isn’t it just the obvious candidate for $F$ to signify?

Hence the simple proposal seems to have as a consequence that all predicates are trivially rigid.

4. Intuitions about Identity Statements

The solution I will provide to the trivialization problem involves intuitions concerning the actual truth-values of certain identity statements. In order to motivate it, I think it is instructive to consider an analogous trivialization “problem” arising in the more familiar domain of ordinary singular terms.

I presented the standard view about rigidity for singular terms in section 1. I said then that there was a considerable consensus concerning the claim that most singular definite descriptions, when they are not referentially used, are flexible:

‘the author of Naming and Necessity’ is not rigid, given that it signifies Kripke with respect to the actual world, but Wittgenstein with respect to an appropriate counterfactual world (in which Wittgenstein writes Naming and Necessity).

‘the Pope’ is not rigid, given that it signifies Ratzinger with respect to the actual world, but someone else, Aznar, with.

Its extension at each possible world. There is, it could be argued, such a property in the case of natural kind terms like cow and animal — namely, the property of being a cow and the property of being an animal. However, the same could be said for any predicate; for any predicate $F$, and any world $w$, the extension of $F$ with respect to $w$ is the set of things that have, in $w$, the property expressed by ‘being an $F$’. But there is no point in defining a notion of rigidity for predicates according to which all predicates turn out, trivially, to be rigid’ (Soames 2002, 250–51). See also (Schwartz 2002, 268–69). The trivialization problem was considered in (Salmon 1982) and (Linsky 1984). Speaking of general terms — involved in (some of) the predicates — rather than predicates themselves, (Linsky 2006) offers a Lewisian “double indexing” model for representing how some of them might be flexible. Each expression can be associated with a function that assigns to each possible world the property (or kind) the expression signifies with respect to that world — which in turn can be modelled as a function that assigns to each possible world the extension of the property with respect to that world (see also [Martí 2004]). As I argue in (López de Sa 2007), this by itself does not solve the corresponding trivialization problem. I don’t think Linsky would disagree, given that he alludes to the relevant considerations’ being forthcoming once the expressions are embedded in contexts involving modal or other intensional operators (Linsky 2006, 611). Although he does not expand on this, the thought might be similar to the one I will elaborate below. I am indebted here to anonymous referees.
DAN LÓPEZ DE SA

respect to an appropriate counterfactual world (in which Aznar is the Head of the Catholic Church).

But now consider the following sort of entities: “office persons” (Sidelle 1992). An office person is an "object" who is constituted at the different worlds (and times) by the person who holds a certain position at that world (and time). So there is one such office person, call him the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church, who is actually constituted by Ratzinger, but by Aznar in the considered counterfactual world. Now, office persons are objects in a relaxed sense of the term, in that they do have some of the properties ordinary objects are required to have (they exist in space and time, they undergo changes, and so on), but are considerably more abundant than ordinary objects. I will call them $A$-objects, to be contrasted with sparser ordinary $S$-objects.

But now a problem, which parallels the trivialization problem for predicates, arises for the (intuitive) flexibility of the singular term ‘the Pope’. For observe that the supposition that ‘the Pope’ uniformly contributes the $A$-object the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church to the truth-conditions of simple sentences like ‘The Pope is German’ seems to have the same results concerning the actual and counterfactual evaluation of those sentences as our original supposition involving the different ($A$)-objects Ratzinger and Aznar. But then what is wrong with the following line of thought?

‘the Pope’ is rigid, after all, given that it signifies the same ($A$)-object with respect to all worlds: the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church.

Furthermore, one might suggest, if there is such an object as the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church (and there is one such $A$-object), isn’t it just the obvious candidate for ‘the Pope’ to signify? Hence the standard account of rigidity for ordinary singular terms seems to have as a consequence that all singular terms are trivially rigid.

I take it that not many people would be particularly moved by this consideration. My contention will be that analogous ways of resisting it are available in the case of the trivialization problem for predicates.

Rigidity for Predicates & the Trivialization Problem

To begin with, it seems natural to reject the assumption that (possibly merely) $A$-objects are the right sort of entity for expressions like ‘the author of Naming and Necessity and ‘the Pope’ to signify. One might insist on appealing to the enriched, privileged class of $S$-objects instead. (I will consider in a moment a parallel move in the case of predicates and their nominalizations.) But such an appeal to “a privileged ontology” of objects, as Sidelle says, even if principled, is optional in so far as our present problem is concerned. This will be important for my purposes, as it is by analogy to this alternative route that I motivate my solution to the problem of trivialization. Consider the sentence:

The Pope is Ratzinger.

How do we intuitively think that this identity statement is to be evaluated with respect to the actual world? I take it that our intuitions strongly suggest that it should be true in actuality.10 But if this is so then we do have intuitive grounds for resisting the trivializing thought. Suppose we bracket concerns about mere $A$-objects, so that the availability of objects such as the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church is not put into question. For the identity statement to be true (in the actual world), both terms should signify the same object (with respect to the actual world). Now given that ‘Ratzinger’ does not signify the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church (with respect to the actual world), ‘the Pope’ does not signify this object either. Hence, even if there is an object such as the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church, we have the required reasons for holding that ‘the Pope’ does not rigidly signify it.11

10. I do not mean to suggest that intuitions strongly supporting one verdict or another are generally available regarding identity statements. Whether statues or trees are identical to ‘their’ matter are famous controversial cases. But I am taking for granted that in some cases we do have the relevant intuitions, and that statements such as ‘The Pope is Ratzinger’ and ‘The Morning Star is the Evening Star’ are indeed intuitively true (with respect to the actual world). And, as we are about to see, this suffices for dispelling the ‘problem’ of trivialization with respect to them.

11. Other expressions might do it: consider ‘the-Head-of-the-Catholic-Church’, for instance. It is worth noticing that to claim that (some) singular definite descriptions like ‘the Pope’ can be flexible (even if objects like the-Head-of-
5. The Simple Proposal Defended

The trivialization problem exploits the assumption that the term ‘property’ in the proposal should be understood as liberally as ‘A-property’; otherwise, there would be no guarantee that properties like exercising-the-way-José-prefers will be always available. We just saw that a natural response to the problem in the case of ordinary singular terms consists in appealing to a privileged class of S-objects. The analogous response provides what I call the sparse solution to the trivialization problem: S-properties, and not (merely) A-properties, are the right sort of thing for ‘runs’, ‘exercises the way José prefers’, and the like to signify. Some critics find a notion such as that of an S-property inappropriately obscure. I myself do not find it particularly mysterious — no more so, anyway, than the corresponding one in the case of ordinary objects. As suggested above, I take it that a notion at this level of “sparseness”, as it were, is precisely the appropriate one for a number of important issues: see again (Lewis 1986). But I do not think that solving the trivialization problem is one of them. The main limitation of the sparse solution is one of generality. Suppose that one holds that in effect ‘exercising the way José prefers’ does not rigidly signify the property exercising-the-way-José-prefers but rather flexibly signifies the different (S-properties, we may suppose, that are the) sports. One could still have good reasons for holding that some other expressions do signify the merely A-property, and rigidly: (the hyphenated) ‘exercising-the-way-José-prefers’, to name one. And it will not do to stipulate that, unlike S-properties, merely A-properties can be signified only rigidly: ‘has Pablo’s favorite merely A-property’ is intuitively as flexible as ‘exercises the way José prefers’.

The solution I want to defend here for the trivialization problem respects the previous assumption regarding A-properties. In the case of ordinary singular terms, a way of responding to the problem without directly invoking a privileged ontology of objects was to appeal to intuitions about the actual truth-values of identity statements. A similar response is available here, I claim, regarding identity statements involving the predicates not directly but rather via their nominalizations. Consider, for instance:

Running is exercising the way José prefers.

I take it that this statement is intuitively true in actuality (even if only contingently so, as José could have preferred swimming instead). But for that sentence to be true (with respect to the actual world), both nominalizations should signify the same property (with respect to the actual world). Now, given that ‘running’ does not seem to signify (with respect to the actual world) the property of exercising-the-way-José-prefers, ‘exercising the way José prefers’ does not signify it either (with respect to the actual world). So even if the property of exercising-the-way-José-prefers is available, intuitively it is not the property signified by ‘exercising the way José prefers.’

Mutatis mutandis for the following cases, provided they intuitively seem (contingent but) true:

- Being water is being the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers.
- Being blue is having the color Sônia likes best.

12. Bernard Linsky seems to favor one such solution (Linsky 1984, 262, 268–69).

13. I am assuming here that ‘is’ in the relevant statements signifies identity. (Schnider 2005) gives some nice examples that show that statements of the form ‘F-ing is G-ing’ are sometimes naturally interpreted as conveying relations other than identity: mere predicate co-extension or extension-inclusion. Here is one candidate: ‘And as to be loyal, what is that? It is being truthful!'
So the challenge provided by the trivialization problem is met.

This “abundant-friendly” solution to the trivialization problem, as the one we considered for the case of ordinary singular terms, crucially appeals to intuitions regarding the actual truth-values of certain identity statements. I have found some people reporting that they do not share these intuitions. In the remainder of this section I provide further considerations in favor of the claim that the considered nominalizations are indeed intuitively flexible, and reckoned as such by the simple proposal. But before this I want to emphasize that the trivialization problem has already been overcome, independently of whether we do in fact have them. Let me explain.

The trivialization problem consists in the challenge to motivate the (possible) flexibility of a predicate in the presence of a property sufficient to account for the truth-values of simple predications, both with respect to actual and counterfactual situations. The worry is that, given there will always be an appropriately abundant property, built from the actual and counterfactual extensions of the predicate, there seems to be no room for a consideration one could appeal to as to defend flexibility. But we have just seen that there could be one such consideration, involving intuitions favoring the (actual, contingent) truth of identity statements like those considered. Of course, in order to defend that a given predicate in fact is flexible, in the envisaged manner, it is required that in fact we do possess the relevant intuitions. But in order to overcome the trivialization problem, it is not required to argue that some predicates are in fact flexible. It suffices to show that the simple proposal does not trivially make all predicates rigid, even if merely $A$-properties are allowed to be their significations.\footnote{It is being faithful!” (Joseph Conrad, The Arrow of Gold). I agree. But for my defense it suffices that they are sometimes naturally interpreted as conveying identity (which, I would add, provide the literal bases for the other readings), and that mine are cases thereof. In other words, it suffices that mine seem, intuitively, contingently true by contrast with

Having a heart is having a liver.
Being in pain is having C-fibers firing.
For further discussion of Schnieder’s paper, see (López de Sa 2006).}

As I suggested, however, I think that we do in fact have intuitions to the effect that identity statements like those above are true but contingent. Hence not only has the trivialization problem been overcome but the examples contain actual cases of flexible predicates. I submit now some further considerations in favor of this. It is in my view in the nature of the case that the considerations cannot be conclusive, in that there is always room for those who claimed otherwise — who would not be better off dialectically, of course — to maneuver, but this does not necessarily make them worthless.

First, the intuitions to which I am appealing are to the effect that certain identity statements involving nominalizations can be merely contingent. In the case of ordinary singular terms this provides, according to Kripke, a “test” for rigidity, in the following form: an ordinary singular term $t$ is flexible provided that

\[
\text{“}t\text{ might not have been }t\text{”}
\]

has intuitively a true reading (Kripke 1980, 47–49 et passim). This seems indeed intuitively so regarding ‘the Pope’:

The Pope might not have been the Pope (they might have chosen someone other than Ratzinger).

But so it is, I submit, regarding our candidate flexible nominalizations, given that the following similarly has an intuitively true reading:

Exercising the way José prefers might not have been ex-

\footnote{It has been suggested to me that another issue involves the question of how a nominalization could be flexible. As I said above concerning ordinary singular terms, I think that intuitions about rigidity and flexibility are among the data that different semantic theories aim to account for (see footnote 11). In any case, plausibly the same kind of models for the flexibility of ordinary singular terms are also available here.}
ercising the way José prefers (he might have preferred swimming to running).  

Second, the defense does not require univocal intuitions. Considering the related case of ordinary singular terms for kinds, David Lewis says, ‘I do not say that the simple phrase ‘the color of the Eseenon stripe’ is definitely unrigified. Rather I suppose it to be ambiguous with respect to rigidification’ (Lewis 1997, 341). Some people have suggested to me that a similar ambiguity could be argued to be present in the nominalizations themselves, so that ‘exercising the way José prefers’ or ‘having the color Sónia likes best’ might be held to be literally usable both as flexibly signifying the different sports or colors and as rigidly signifying the corresponding merely A-properties. My intuitions do not clearly support such an ambiguity. But the ambiguity view would surely suffice for the claim that the candidate flexible predicates are indeed flexible in some of their uses, according to the simple proposal.

Third, and finally, some of the people who have reported contrasting intuitions to me regarding the truth-value of the relevant identity statements have in fact been driven by a theoretical modal consideration. The consideration commits a fallacy, as I observe to close this section.

Canonical nominalizations of predicates signify properties (with respect to worlds). Now, necessary co-extension of properties is indisputably at least required for property identity — Indeed for both A- and S-property identity. Take predicates F and G. Statements of the form

\[ F \text{-ing is } G \text{-ing} \]

certainly convey property identities, which, if true, will correspondingly entail necessary co-extension of the relevant properties. But this, the consideration concludes, suffices for the necessary-if-true character of all identity statements of the envisaged form.

The problem is that it does not suffice: the rigidity of the relevant expressions is precisely also required. Property identity requires necessary coextension, of course, but only provided the relevant rigidity of \( F \) and \( G \) is that expressed by:

\[ \text{If } F \text{-ing is } G \text{-ing, then necessarily something is } F \text{ if and only if it is } G. \]

An analogy with ordinary singular terms can again help to make the point. Object identity certainly requires indiscernibility. But only provided the relevant rigidity of \( a \) and \( b \) is this expressed by:

\[ \text{If } a \text{ is } b, \text{ then necessarily, for any property, } a \text{ has it if and only if } b \text{ has it.} \]

Otherwise, there could be no contingent identity statements involving singular terms.

6. Further Issues

In his recent discussion of these matters, Scott Soames claims that the “suitable elaboration” of the notion of rigidity for predicates should satisfy the following desiderata:

(a) it must be a natural extension of the notion of rigidity that has been defined for singular terms;  
(b) it must have the consequence that nearly all natural kind predicates are rigid, whereas  
(c) many other predicates are nonrigid; and  
(d) it must play a role in explaining the necessity of true “theoretical identification sentences” ... containing rigid
Rigidity for Predicates & the Trivialization Problem

Arguably the predicates ‘is water’ and ‘is made of H2O-molecules’, but not ‘is the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers’, are rigid according to the simple proposal, as intuitively required. The question relevant for desideratum (d) is whether this fact plays a role in accounting for how it is that (1), but not (2), is necessary if true, a role analogous to the one played, regarding (1’) and (2’), by the fact that ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’, but not ‘the Morning Star’ are rigid:

(1’) Hesperus is Phosphorus.

(2’) Hesperus is the Morning Star.

Remember that the latter could be, for present purposes, summarized as follows. Suppose ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’ is actually true and suppose ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ are rigid singular terms. Now consider an arbitrary world with respect to which ‘Hesperus’ signifies an object. By the rigidity of ‘Hesperus’, this object is the same as the one ‘Hesperus’ signifies with respect the actual world, which, by the actual truth of the identity statement, is the object that ‘Phosphorus’ signifies with respect to the actual world, and which, (‘#’) by the rigidity of ‘Phosphorus’, is the object that ‘Phosphorus’ signifies with respect the considered possible world. Hence ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’ is true with respect to this arbitrary possible world, and hence ‘(if Hesperus exists) Hesperus is Phosphorus’ is necessarily true. Nothing similar could be argued in the case of (2’), as the essential step (#) illustrates.

But now essentially the same argument (and hence the same role for the assumptions concerning rigidity) applies to (1) as opposed to (2). Suppose ‘being water is being made of H2O-molecules’ is actually true and suppose ‘is water’ and ‘is made of H2O-molecules’ are rigid predicates. Now consider an arbitrary world with respect to which ‘being water’ signifies a property instantiated in it. By the rigidity of ‘being water’, this property is the same as the one ‘being water’ signifies with respect to the actual world, which, by the actual truth of the identity statement, is the property that ‘being made of H2O-molecules’

predicates that is analogous to the role played by the notion of a rigid singular term in explaining the necessity of true identity sentences. (2002, 263, indexing altered)

The simple proposal about rigidity for predicates seems to have no problem in satisfying (a) and (b), and so far I have argued that it satisfies (c) also.7 Does the proposal satisfy (d)? An affirmative answer to that question is already implicit in what has been said so far, at least provided that theoretical identifications are indeed identity statements involving predicates not directly but via their (canonical) nominalizations.8 If this is right, the following have the right form of theoretical identifications involving predicates:

(1) Being water is being made of H2O-molecules.
(2) Being water is being the substance instances of which fall from the sky in rain and fill the lakes and rivers.

7. In discussion Soames pointed out that there is a stronger reading of (c) according to which it requires not only that many predicates, such as ‘has the color Sonia likes best’ come out flexible but also that predicates of the sort of ‘is a knife’ and ‘is a bachelor’ figure among them. He seems to have changed his mind on this, at least regarding general terms like ‘bachelor’ or ‘knife’. (Soames 2006) concedes that a distinction can be drawn between rigid and flexible general terms (such as ‘blue’), and derivatively between the predicates which involve them (such as ‘is blue’). The more recent proposal is not as general as mine, given that not every predicate comes from a general term by attaching the copula (see ‘runs’). Besides, as we have seen, essentially the same kind of consideration that can be used for distinguishing between rigid and flexible general terms seems also available for the case of canonical nominalization of predicates. I consider this issue when discussing the alleged desideratum (e) below.

8. (Soames 2002), by contrast, claims that the form of the relevant ‘theoretical identifications’ is that of universally quantified material conditionals or biconditionals. Under that assumption, (Gómez-Torrente 2006) offers the contingent ‘Popes are bishops’ as establishing that the simple proposal cannot satisfy the desideratum. To my mind, this and the contingent ‘All tigers are red’ and ‘All and only gold samples are hot’ clearly show instead is that Soames’s and Gómez-Torrente’s claim about the form of ‘theoretical identifications’ is, exegetically, a non-starter.
signifies with respect to the actual world, and which, (#) by the rigidity of ‘being made of H2O-molecules’, is the same property as ‘being made of H2O-molecules’ signifies with respect to the possible world considered. Hence ‘being water is being made of H2O-molecules’ is true with respect to this arbitrary possible world, and hence ‘(if there is water) being water is being made of H2O-molecules’ is necessarily true. Nothing similar could be argued in the case of (2), as the essential step (#) illustrates.

Therefore, I contend, the simple proposal does indeed satisfy desideratum (d).

One consequence of the simple proposal, nonetheless, is that it does not respect the following:

(e) It has as a result that artificial-kind predicates like ‘is a knife’ and descriptive predicates like ‘is a bachelor’ turn out to be flexible.

Some people would say that (e) is indeed a desideratum for a characterization of the notion of rigidity for predicates. Hence, they will claim, the simple proposal suffers from another generalization problem, quite distinct from the trivialization problem I have considered here, one that I suggest labelling the over-generalization problem. Among such critics there is, I think, Schwartz in his recent contribution to the debate:

Clearly there is an important difference between natural kind terms like ‘gold’ and nominal kind terms like ‘bachelor’ — and isn’t this difference based on the rigidity of the one and non-rigidity of the other? [Schwartz 2002, 266]

Although it would require further elaboration — which would be out of place here — let me mention why I think that an affirmative answer to this question is ungrounded. Consider the case of color predicates and terms. There is a profound, longstanding dispute as to whether colors are primary, fully objective properties or rather secondary, dispositional or response-dependent ones. Take the predicate ‘is red’. Most people would agree that there should be some descriptive material conventionally associated with it that plays at least a reference-fixing role, being responsible for the a priori truth of some biconditional along the lines of:

Something is red if and only if it is disposed to produce experiences as of red in normal color perceivers under normal viewing conditions.

So actual normal color perceivers have a general disposition to respond in certain ways to instances of redness under actually normal viewing conditions. There should be a deep explanation of this general disposition, which would involve a (S-)property common to all the relevant instances. Now, as I have suggested, the debate concerns the nature of this property. But most participants in this debate, on both sides, agree that, whatever its nature turns out to be, ‘is red’ rigidly signifies this property, so that the previous biconditional is contingent. Here is Crispin Wright:

We are … obliged to pay attention to the following intuition about colour: that had the typical visual equipment of human beings been very different, or had the lighting (by day) on the earth typically been of a quite different character — perhaps resembling the illumination generated by sodium street lighting — that need have made no difference to the colours things actually are. The extensions of ‘red’ and ‘green’ would not have been different if all human beings had been colour blind, and would not change if they were to become so. [Wright 1992, 114]

So it seems that ‘is red’ can be rigid, even on the assumption that it signifies a secondary property. But if it is possible to have a predicate rigidly signifying a secondary quality, why couldn’t one rigidly signify an artifact property, like ‘is a knife’, or a social property, like ‘is a bachelor’, or an evaluative property, like ‘is funny’? Indeed, unlike our previous candidates for flexible predicates, these all clearly seem to pass the
Kripkean test for rigidity, mentioned in the last section. The claim that rigid predicates should coincide with natural kind predicates seems to be ungrounded.39

**Conclusion**

I conclude that the simple proposal about rigidity for predicates deals satisfactorily with the alleged problems that it is claimed to suffer by recent critics, and that common talk of philosophers in the different areas implicitly appealing to it is thereby vindicated.20

19. The role of the consideration about colors is just to illustrate how, on the face of it, the main contention of the over-generalization problem is by itself ungrounded. Hence the over-generalization problem poses no difficulty for the simple proposal, unless some ground for the contention is provided. In (López de Sa forthcoming) I consider existing attempts to provide such a required ground, and I argue that they ultimately fail. I am indebted here to an anonymous referee.

20. This paper began as a commentary to a presentation by Scott Soames of his book *Beyond Rigidity* in Barcelona, May 2001. Earlier versions of it were presented at the LOGOS Seminar (Barcelona, May 2001), at the conference ‘Formal Theories and Empirical Theories’ (Santiago de Compostela, November 2001), at the 2002 Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society (Glasgow, July 2002), and the Colloque des doctorants de l’Université de Genève (Genève, February 2003); related material has been presented at the workshop ‘BW3: General Terms’ (Barcelona, June 2003) and the LOGOS Workshop with Saul Kripke (Barcelona, December 2005). I thank the audiences at all those meetings for very stimulating and useful criticisms, objections, and suggestions. I am particularly indebted to João Branquinho, Óscar Cabaco, Fabrice Correia, Martin Davies, Ronald de Sousa, Esa Diaz-León, José A Díez, Manuel García-Carpintero, Mario Gómez-Torrente, Jussi Haukioja, Mark Johnston, Philipp Keller, Joseph LaPorte, Josep Macià, Genoveva Martí, Adèle Mercier, Kevin Mulligan, Eleonora Orlando, Joan Pagès, Manuel Pérez-Otero, David Pineda, Josep L. Prades, Anthony Price, Murali Ramachandram, Benjamin Schneider, Scott Soames, Armin Tatzel, Agustín Vicente, Timothy Williamson, Crispin Wright, Stephen Yablo, Elia Zardini, and Ezequiel Zerbudis. Special thanks are also due to various anonymous referees. Research has been funded by project HUM2004-05609-C02-01 (MC), a bourse from the IRIS project on the Philosophy and History of Logic (Genève), and a GenCat/Fulbright postdoctoral fellowship. I am very grateful to all these institutions for their support. Thanks also to Michel Maudsley for his linguistic revision.

**References**

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