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The predicative predicament

The Predicative Predicament
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Abstract. *The*-Predicativism is the view that names are count nouns. For example, the meaning of the name 'Louise' is roughly the property of being called Louise. Moreover, proponents of this view maintain that names that are ostensibly in argument position of a predicate are covert definite descriptions. In recent years, *The*-Predicativism has acquired a number of new supporters, mainly Elbourne (2005), Matushansky (2008), and Fara (2015b). And while it was pointed out by Kripke (1980) that these kinds of views generally struggle with capturing the rigidity of proper names, these new views are alleged to solve this problem. In this paper I argue that the more recent versions of the view continue to struggle. In particular, I show that the views fail to provide an explanatory and/or empirically adequate analysis of rigidity. My discussions of these views are then supplemented with a general diagnosis of the problem and an explanation of why it is unlikely to be solved by *The*-Predicativism.

1 *The*-Predicativism

Let's distinguish between two different uses of proper names: Let a REFERENTIAL NAME be a bare singular occurrence of a name in argument position of a predicate. Intuitively, these are expressions that refer to individuals. Consider, for example, the occurrences in (1) and (2).

(1) Louise is an archaeologist.
(2) Dorothy enjoys classes on sociology.

Referential names are also typically assumed to be *rigid*. An expression is rigid if it exhibits a particular kind of semantic stability. For example, if the name 'Louise' in (1) refers to *a*, then even relative to a counterfactual scenario where *a* has different properties (perhaps *a* is not called Louise), (1) is true only if *a* is an archaeologist. So, relative to any counterfactual scenario 'Louise' refers to *a*, cf. Kripke (1980, 6).

Rigidity is also sometimes formally defined as follows:

> **Rigidity**
> A term τ is *rigid* iff for all possible worlds w and w': $[\![\tau]\!]^w = [\![\tau]\!]^{w'}$

So, a term is rigid if and only if its semantic value is fixed for all possible worlds. By contrast, let a PREDICATIVE NAME be an occurrence of a name where (*a*) it is part of a complex determiner phrase as in (3)–(4), (*b*) it occurs as a bare plural as in (5), or (*c*) it is in predicate position in a small-clause construction as in (6).[1]

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[1] See Matushansky (2006, 286-288) for extended discussion of so-called *small clauses* such as 'her Lila' in (6). Matushansky provides convincing evidence that 'Lila' is in fact a predicate in this construction.

(3)   Every Louise looked the same.
(4)   I was introduced to three different Linas today.
(5)   Islas are usually vegans.
(6)   She called her Lila.

In contrast to referential names, predicative names intuitively express properties. For example, it seems natural to take the meaning of 'Louise' in (3) to be the property of being called Louise (or something sufficiently similar).

Despite these intuitively different uses of proper names, many find it implausible to conclude that names are systematically ambiguous.[2] But, short of accepting that conclusion, the question is how to give a uniform semantic analysis of names that captures both referential and predicative uses. One view which is argued to meet this challenge is so-called *The*-Predicativism, advocated by e.g. Geurts (1997), Elbourne (2005), Matushansky (2006, 2008), Fara (2011, 2015a,b), and Izumi (2013).[3]

According to *The*-Predicativism, names are uniformly count nouns. For example, the meaning of 'Louise' is simply the property of being called Louise.[4]

One straightforward but significant advantage of *The*-Predicativism is that the semantic contributions of predicative names, e.g. those in (3)–(6) above, are immediately accounted for. The names in these sentences make the same syntactic and semantic contributions as any other run-of-the-mill count noun, and this explains why names can take plural morphology, combine with quantificational determiners, occur as bare plurals, and occur in predicate position in small clauses.

As regards referential names, proponents of *The*–Predicativism argue that these are in fact complex determiner phrases that have a predicative name as a constituent. To illustrate, consider (1). In this sentence, the name 'Louise' is analyzed as the syntactic sister of a covert and unpronounced definite article 'the'. So, the LF of (1) is the following.[5]

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[2]Exceptions include Leckie (2013), Rami (2015), and myself, cf. Schoubye (forthcoming). See also Delgado (2015).

[3]There are also gestures towards *The*–Predicativism in e.g. Gray (2012), but Gray seems a bit more on the fence. In this paper, I discuss in detail the views of Elbourne, Matushansky and Fara. Geurts explicitly denies that names are rigid, and so makes no attempt to account for rigidity and Izumi's discussion of rigidity is rather brief, so I include here only a couple of short comments on Izumi's view.

[4]The exact formulation of the naming/being-called condition is a matter of controversy. However, since it does not matter for my purposes here, I opt for the (perhaps overly) simple formulation: 'is called N' where N is a name.

[5]I use ~~strikethrough~~ to indicate that an element is deleted from PF, i.e. unpronounced.

(7) [$_S$ [$_{DP}$ ~~the~~ Louise] [$_{VP}$ is an archeaologist]]

S
├── DP
│   ├── D
│   │   ~~the~~
│   └── NP
│   └── N
│   Louise
└── VP
     is an archaeologist
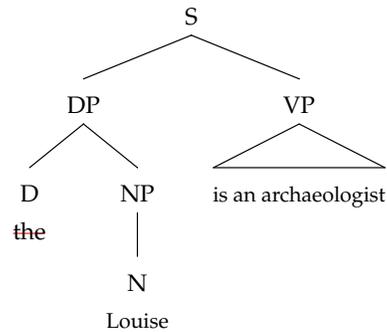
In other words, a sentence such as (1) is canonically equivalent to a sentence of the form 'the F is G' where the restrictor F is a name.

The-Predicativism thus purports to provide a uniform analysis of proper names (as count nouns) that captures all uses in a systematic and compositional way. If successful, this would be a significant achievement which admittedly would render *The*-Predicativism superior to views that posit an ambiguity.

However, the plausibility of *The*-Predicativism turns importantly on (at least) one key issue: the semantics of definite descriptions. The prima facie problem for *The*-Predicativism is that definite descriptions and referential names are widely agreed to have different semantic properties. For example, referential names are standardly assumed to be rigid, but definite descriptions are generally not.[6] Yet, if referential names are analyzed as definite descriptions, those descriptions would need to be consistently rigid. The question is how to explain this.

There are many ways to engineer a semantics for definite descriptions to yield desired predictions, but since one of the main selling points of *The*-Predicativism is that it is a *simpler* theory than its rivals, the theoretical costs incurred by capturing rigidity must be considered when assessing its theoretical merits. For example, if a proponent of *The*-Predicativism must posit an ambiguity of some kind, and if this ambiguity is as theoretically costly as simply assuming that names are ambiguous, the *The*-Predicativist theory is then obviously no longer any simpler than the theory that treats names as systematically ambiguous.

Similarly, if the proponent of *The*-Predicativism postulates a lexical feature in e.g. names that renders descriptions of the form 'the + NAME' rigid, then unless there

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[6]Any definite description whose restrictor has a constant intension is rigid. For example, the predicate 'smallest prime' has the same extension in every possible world, so the description 'the smallest prime' refers to the same number in every possible world. But, descriptions are not *generally* rigid, because whenever a restrictor has a variable intension, e.g. the predicate 'tallest man', the referent of the description will vary across possible worlds. In this paper, I will generally ignore descriptions that are rigid as a function of predicate with a constant intension.

is independent evidence for the existence of such a lexical feature, the proposed account of rigidity will not be explanatory, and this should, of course, be considered a significant theoretical cost.

In this paper, I argue that despite promises to the contrary, capturing the rigidity of referential names is a problem that proponents of *The*-Predicativism have been unable to solve. Despite their efforts, their proposals are either essentially stipulative (and thus non-explanatory), empirically inadequate, or forced to stipulate ambiguity that compromises the alleged simplicity of the view.

Some of the arguments in section 2 and section 4 are variants and/or elaborations of arguments first put forward in Schoubye (forthcoming). The primary purpose of that paper was to motivate an alternative analysis of names, namely so-called *Type-Ambiguity Variabilism*, whereas the purpose of this paper is to focus specifically on the problem of rigidity. These overlaps are thus in aid of making the arguments against *The*-Predicativism more streamlined and clear.

2 Fregean Variations

The Fregean semantics for 'the' (or variants hereof) is the preferred semantics of several proponents of *The*-Predicativism, e.g. Elbourne (2005) and Matushansky (2008). To evaluate their proposed accounts of rigidity, familiarity with the Fregean semantics is needed. I therefore start with a bit of rudimentary technical ground clearing.[7]

The Fregean analysis of definite descriptions has two characteristic elements. First, it is a referential analysis: it assumes that a definite description of the form 'the F' is a referential term. Second, it is a presuppositional analysis: it assumes that 'the F' only has a semantic value if there is exactly one individual in the relevant domain who is F. Assuming that F is a singleton set and using '$\iota x\big(F(x)\big)$' as a name in the metalanguage for this unique element, the Fregean meaning of 'the F' (within a simple extensional semantics) can be stated as follows.

(8)
$$\llbracket \text{the F} \rrbracket^g = \begin{cases} \iota x\big(F(x)\big) & \text{if } |F| = 1 \\ undefined & \text{if } |F| \neq 1 \end{cases}$$

In short, if the cardinality of F is one, 'the F' then refers to the unique individual who is F. If the cardinality of F is anything but one, 'the F' is undefined.

As regards the compositional semantics, on the Fregean view, the definite article is standardly treated as a partial function. More specifically, it is a function from properties to individuals that is defined only if precisely one individual has the

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[7]The Fregean analysis is also Izumi's (2013) preferred semantics, but I only make a couple of brief remarks about Izumi's view in this paper.

property in question. I will follow Heim and Kratzer (1998) in using the following notational convention: In '$\lambda\alpha$: M . N', α is an argument variable, M is a domain condition that indicates the relevant constraints on the domain of the function, and N is the description of the value of the function. I write $\exists! x\big(F(x)\big)$ as a convenient abbreviation of the formula $\exists x\big(F(x) \wedge \forall y(F(y) \to y = x)\big)$.[8] Given this, the Fregean lexical entry for 'the' can be stated as follows:

(9) $\llbracket\text{the}\rrbracket = \lambda F: \exists! x\big(F(x)\big) . \iota x\big(F(x)\big)$

In words, 'the' is a function that composes with an argument β only if β denotes a property and exactly one individual a instantiates that property. If so, the output of the function is simply a. For example, if β denotes the property of being president of the United States, then since only Barack Obama instantiates β, the denotation of 'the β' is simply Barack Obama. It is important to emphasize that the domain condition is not part of the output of the function. So, when composing 'the' with 'president of the United States', the result of this composition is just an individual.

This looks simple enough, but the key question is how to integrate this extensional version of the Fregean semantics into an intensional semantics. This is not a trivial task and therefore often implemented in different ways. I will, however, only focus here on the specifics of the integration into the intensional systems to the extent that it bears on how rigidity is proposed to be captured.

2.1 Definite Descriptions, Binding, and Rigidity: *Elbourne (2005)*

In contrast to the standard Fregean analysis, Elbourne (2005) analyzes the definite article as a function from *two* arguments to an individual where the first of these arguments is a phonologically null index. That is, Elbourne assumes that definite descriptions have the following underlying syntactic structure.

(10) [$_{DP}$ [$_{D}$ The *i*] [$_{NP}$ F]]

However, Elbourne also assumes that the semantic value of an index is a property rather than, as is standard, an individual. He adopts the interpretation rule in (11) for indices and variable assignments.

(11) For all indices *i* and variable assignments g such that $i \in \text{dom}(g)$:
      $\llbracket i \rrbracket^g = [\lambda x . x = g(i)]$

Putting these assumptions together, we end up with a modified version of the standard Fregean lexical entry for 'the' where its semantic type is $\langle et, \langle et, e \rangle \rangle$.

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[8]Throughout the paper, x, y, z are individual variables (e-type expressions) and F, G, H are properties ($\langle e, t \rangle$-type expressions). For the sake of simplification, and when there is no risk of confusion, I ignore the domain condition.

(12) $[\![\text{the}]\!]^g = [\lambda F . [\lambda G: \exists! x \big(F(x) \wedge G(x)\big) . \iota x \big(F(x) \wedge G(x)\big)]]$

One of the primary motivations for this analysis is to account for bound uses of definite descriptions. For illustration, consider Elbourne's example (13).

(13)   Mary talked to no senator before the senator was lobbied.

Following Heim and Kratzer (1998, 96-99), Elbourne assumes that binding is a result of quantifier raising and predicate abstraction. In Heim and Kratzer's system, when a quantifier phrase is raised, a lambda abstract λ_i is adjoined to the target of the movement and a trace t_i (co-indexed with λ_i) is left in the original position of the quantifier phrase. The rule of predicate abstraction is then subsequently used to convert that trace into a lambda bound individual variable.

As regards (13), Elbourne assumes that quantifier raising yields the LF in (14).[9]

(14)   [no senator] [λ_2 [Mary talked to [THE 2] before [the 2 senator] was lobbied]]
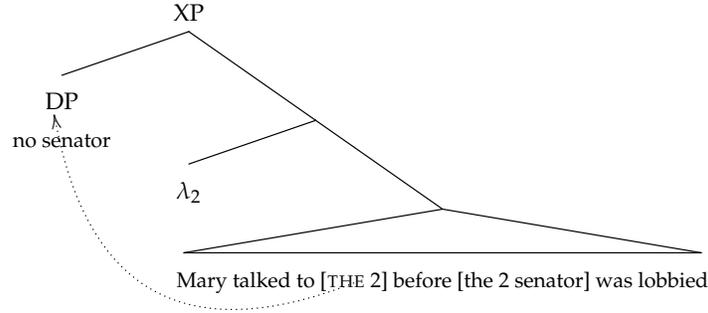
Given this LF and using a modified version of predicate abstraction, the property in (15) can then be derived:

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[9]This LF might seem a bit curious since in addition to the trace, 2, it appears to contain an unpronounced definite determiner, THE. There is, however, an important reason for this. Remember, according to Elbourne, the trace in (14) denotes a property, so in order for it to be bound through predicate abstraction, it must be converted into an expression that contains a bindable individual variable. To achieve this, Elbourne assumes that a silent definite article with a standard Fregean semantics heads the trace, viz. THE. Moreover, Elbourne modifies the rule of predicate abstraction as follows: if α is a branching node with β and γ as its daughters and if β only dominates a lambda abstract λ_i, then for any assignment g:

$$[\![\alpha]\!]^g = \lambda x . [\![\beta]\!]^{g^{[\lambda y. y = x]/i}}$$

Given this modified rule, by functionally applying THE to the trace, the output of 'THE 2' is '$\iota z(z = x)$' which in turn is bound by 'λx'. The right hand side of the phrase structure thus ends up denoting the property '$[\lambda x$. Mary talked to $\iota z(z = x)$ before $\iota z\big(z = x$ and senator$(z)\big)$ was lobbied]', which is effectively reducible to '$[\lambda x$: senator(x) . Mary talked to x before x was lobbied]. See Elbourne (2005, 95-97) for details.

(15) $[\lambda x: \text{senator}(x) . \text{Mary talked to } x \text{ before } x \text{ was lobbied}]$

Treating 'no senator' as a standard generalized quantifier, Elbourne's analysis correctly predicts that (13) is true iff the intersection of senators and individuals that Mary talked to before they were lobbied is empty. This prediction relies essentially on the assumption that the definite article takes a covert index as argument, because the presence of this index is what enables binding.

Setting aside bound uses of descriptions, here is how the analysis is supposed to work more generally. Consider the description 'the president of the United States'. Suppose that the first argument of 'the' is the (unbound) index 7. The semantic value of the index will then be $[\lambda x . x = g(7)]$. The second argument of 'the' is the property of being president of the United States. So, the definite article is going to successfully compose with these arguments iff there is exactly one individual who is identical to $g(7)$ and who is president of the United States. Assuming that $g(7)$ is Barack Obama, this presupposition is satisfied and the function then outputs (16) where this is a name in the metalanguage for the unique individual who is identical to Barack Obama and is the president of the United States.

(16) $\iota x \big(x = \text{Barack Obama} \wedge x \text{ is the president of the United States} \big)$

Notice that Elbourne's analysis predicts that this definite description is rigid. The reason is that the variable assignment constrains the semantic value of the description and since the variable assignment is immune to shifting by modal operators, it will refer to the same individual in every possible world (when defined).

However, Elbourne himself points out that an analysis that consistently treats descriptions as either bound or rigid will be empirically inadequate. For example, in so-called donkey sentences such as (17), where binding is syntactically prohibited, an alternative analysis is needed, namely an analysis that ensures that the semantic value of the description is not directly determined by the variable assignment.

(17) Every man who owns a donkey loves the donkey.

Elbourne therefore assumes that the definite article can also take as argument a special vacuous index, 0, whose semantic value is a trivial identity function, e.g. $[\lambda x . x = x]$. Thus, in case of the description 'the president of the United States', the output of the function with a vacuous index is the following.

(18) $\iota x \big(x = x \wedge x \text{ is the president of the United States} \big)$

This description is not rigid, because in an intensional semantic system (where predicates are relativized to e.g. worlds), its semantic value will be controlled by the world of evaluation. For example, relative to a world of evaluation w_3, its semantic value (if defined) will be the president of the United States in w_3, and relative to a

world of evaluation w_4, its semantic value (if defined) will be the president of the United States in w_4. In other words, its semantic value may vary across possible worlds.[10] Elbourne thus ends up with the semantic rule for indices in (19).

(19)

$$[\![i]\!]^g = \begin{cases} \lambda x \, . \, x = g(i) & \text{if } i > 0 \\ \lambda x \, . \, x = x & \text{if } i = 0 \end{cases}$$

Elbourne goes on to note that this analysis supports the not uncontroversial view that definite descriptions have two fundamentally different meanings, namely what Donnellan (1966) referred to as *attributive* and *referential* uses. This distinction amounts to the following: If a speaker uses a description referentially, she has a specific individual in mind and an intention to express a (singular) proposition about that individual. On Elbourne's analysis, this would correspond to the use of a definite description with a non-vacuous index, viz. $i > 0$. By contrast, if the speaker uses the description attributively, she has no specific individual in mind. Rather, she is simply intending to express a (general) proposition about the unique individual with the property expressed by the restrictor, whoever that might be. This would correspond to a use of a definite description with the vacuous index, viz. $i = 0$.

2.2 *Names and Indices: Some Problems*

How does Elbourne's analysis of definite descriptions capture the rigidity of referential names? In short, Elbourne assumes that referential names are rigid because they are descriptions where $i > 0$. That is, a referential name always (or nearly always) combines with a free variable whose semantic value is determined by a variable assignment. Accordingly, the resulting description is rigid. Hence, referential names are rigid. Problem solved.

This explanation is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. The most obvious one is that it seems fundamentally stipulative. There is no principled prohibition in the formal theory against the definite article composing with a vacuous index and a name, so while Elbourne correctly predicts that the sentence in (20) is ambiguous (depending on whether the index associated with 'the' is vacuous or non-vacuous), an explanation is needed as to why (21) is not ambiguous. Recall, the subject of (21) at LF is a definite description, namely '~~the~~ Barack Obama'.

(20)   The president of the United States must wear a tie.

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[10]For presentational purposes, I outline Elbourne's view in terms of simple possible worlds, but Elbourne's analysis is, to be fair, situated in a situation semantic framework. This explication of his view is therefore not entirely accurate. However, this has no effect on any of the arguments presented against Elbourne's view and its purpose is only to make his view easier to grasp.

(21) Barack Obama must wear a tie.

Indeed, if the covert description in (21) had composed with the vacuous index, the description would have a non-rigid reading. However, it does not. So, Elbourne is forced to assume that when the relevant surface syntactic combination is 'the + NAME', 'the' must be phonologically null and the index associated with 'the' must be non-vacuous. But without some principled explanation, this would be no better than straightforwardly stipulating that referential names are rigid.

Admittedly, Elbourne is aware of this problem and therefore offers a pragmatic explanation:

> It might be objected that my theory also allows for the index 0 [...] I submit, however, that it is pragmatically very difficult to have the index 0 used with a proper name. [...] [I]t is hard to construct circumstances in which a speaker might use a proper name and not intend to refer to some specific person they have in mind. They would have to be in a position to know that that name was appropriate even though they knew nothing about the person that would enable them to refer to them, and this seems contradictory.
>
> (Elbourne, 2005, 174)

But this pragmatic explanation is, in my view, equally unconvincing. Notice that to use a description attributively, a speaker needs no real identifying information. As long as the presupposition associated with the description is satisfied, attributive uses are felicitous. To illustrate, suppose a speaker knows that there is a unique janitor (in the context). If so, she can use the description 'the janitor' attributively to assert a proposition about whoever that is. For example, the speaker might assert (22) without knowing anything else than that there is a unique janitor in the context.

(22) The janitor could have escaped through the window.

The description in (22) is also easily understood as attributive by a hearer even if she was previously unaware of the existence of a janitor in the context and thus have to accommodate the presupposition. In other words, the description in (22) has a perfectly natural attributive and non-rigid reading where the speaker has no specific individual in mind and the description refers to different individuals across different possible worlds.

Assuming that referential names are covert definite descriptions, it should thus be possible to use these names attributively. For example, suppose that the speaker knows that the uniqueness presupposition associated with ~~the~~ Bob' is satisfied in the context and that she asserts (23).

(23) Bob could have escaped through the window.

There should be a natural reading of (23) where the speaker has no particular individual in mind and 'Bob' refers to different individuals across different possible

worlds. The problem is that it is very difficult (if possible at all) to understand the sentence in (23) this way. Certainly, no hearer previously unaware of the existence of a unique individual called Bob (in the context) could plausibly just accommodate this information and then interpret the name attributively. Rather the only plausible interpretation of this sentence relative to the hearer is as a singular proposition about a specific individual.

Finally, notice that there is a clear contrast between asserting (23) and (24).[11]

(24)   The person called Bob could have escaped through the window.

If the speaker asserts (24), it is manifestly easier for a hearer to (a) accommodate the information that there is a unique individual called Bob (in the context) and (b) interpret the description as attributive. But if Elbourne's proposed analysis of referential names is correct, this would be mysterious, because the meanings of the description in (24) and the name in (23) are allegedly identical. In conclusion, Elbourne's pragmatic story about how it is difficult to use a name without having a specific individual in mind is just labeling the problem that his theory was supposed to solve.[12]

2.3 *Rigidity Light*

Elbourne's analysis suffers from an additional problem, namely that it does not adequately capture the rigidity of referential names. To see this, notice that the definite description '~~the~~ Obama' presupposes that the referent has the property denoted by the restrictor. In an intensional semantics (where predicates are relativized to e.g. worlds), this will be something like $[\lambda x \, . \, x$ is called Obama in $w]$. However, suppose an occurrence of '~~the~~ Obama' is embedded under a necessity modal, presumably this presupposition will need to be satisfied at every possible world quantified over. If not, the ι-term in the metalanguage is not guaranteed to be a name of anything at those worlds. However, this now produces the result, that a referential occurrence of 'Obama' only refers to Obama in worlds where he is called Obama. If not, the description will suffer from presupposition failure in those worlds.

This means that Elbourne's lexical entry captures that 'Obama' can only refer to Obama, but it fails to capture that the name can refer to Obama even in possible

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[11]I discuss this contrast in more detail in later sections.

[12]Elbourne (2005, 174-175) goes on to argue that even if a name could take the vacuous index, it is unclear that speakers would not still default to an interpretation of the name as picking out a specific individual rather than merely as a combination of property and a uniqueness operator. If so, non-rigid readings would remain unavailable. But this explanation is also not convincing, because it only raises a different problem, namely explaining why only definite descriptions with names would have this effect as opposed to definite descriptions in general. In other words, Elbourne must still resort to special pleading when it comes to the behavior of referential names.

worlds where Obama's name is not 'Obama'. It also means that Elbourne predicts incorrectly that a sentence such as (25) cannot be false and that a sentence such as (26) cannot be true.[13]

(25)   Sue is called Sue.
(26)   Sue might not have been called Sue.

In conclusion, Elbourne's analysis of definite descriptions is not in itself problematic. Bound uses do motivate the addition of indices at LF and Elbourne provides an interesting proposal concerning how such indices can be exploited to account for other uses of definite descriptions. However, the attempt to extend this analysis to referential names *is* problematic, because the explanation of rigidity never goes beyond mere stipulation.

2.4   Indexical Naming Conventions: *Matushansky (2008)*

Rather than revising the standard Fregean semantics for definite descriptions, Matushansky (2008) proposes to analyze names as two-place predicates that take both an argument for an individual and an argument for a naming convention. A naming convention is defined as a relation between an individual and a phonological string, namely the phonological string that represents the individual's name.

One of the main motivations for this two-place relational analysis is to capture the truth conditions of so-called naming constructions, e.g. (27) below.

(27)   She is nicknamed Louise.

If names are analyzed as one-place predicates that specify a naming convention, for example if the meaning of 'Louise' is explicated as [λx . x is called Louise], it becomes impossible to capture the truth conditions of (27). By treating the naming convention as an extra argument of the name itself and by assuming that naming verbs such as 'nickname' supply the relevant argument for the naming convention, Matushansky's analysis can capture the meaning of (27).

If a name occurs in a syntactic construction without a naming verb, the argument for the naming convention must be supplied in an alternative way. Matushansky exploits this fact to provide an explanation of the rigidity of referential names:

> A possible account for the rigidity of proper names comes from the widespread proposal that it results from indexicality, since indexicals such as *I*, *now* or *here* are also known to denote the same individual across different possible worlds.

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[13]I was first made aware of this problem through discussion with Brian Rabern, but an anonymous referee for this journal subsequently noted that it has already been made in print by Maier (2009, 263-264) and is also discussed by Rami (2013, 851). I thank referee for pointing this out.

> To arrive at this compositionally, one has to assume that proper names contain an indexical—and the question is, which indexical?
>
> [...] we hypothesize that in argument positions the naming convention argument slot is saturated by a free variable—that of the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer, or more strictly speaking, the naming convention of the speaker that is presupposed to be shared by the hearer. This convention (I will indicate it as R0) is indexical in the sense of being fully extensional: it contains no argument slot for a possible world. As a result, proper names in argument positions will be rigid.   (Matushansky, 2008, 599)

So, the semantic analysis of an occurrence of a referential name looks as follows (where R_0 is the naming convention in force between the speaker and hearer in c):

(28) $[\![\text{~~the~~ Louise}]\!]^c = \iota x\big(R_0(x)(/\text{luːˈiːz}/)\big)$

How does this analysis guarantee the rigidity of referential names? The idea appears to be that the semantic value of '~~the~~ Louise' will be the unique individual who stands in the contextually determined naming relation, R_0, to the phonological string /luːˈiːz/. So, assuming that the presupposition of the definite description is satisfied, i.e. that there is exactly one individual in the context who stands in the R_0-relation to the relevant phonological string, the resulting description will be rigid: Since R_0 is fully determined by context, it has a constant intension, and the unique individual who is the relatum of that particular relation must therefore be the same in every possible world. Hence, '~~the~~ Louise' (and every other instance of a referential name) is rigid.

The problem with Matushansky's suggestion here is similar to the initial problem with Elbourne's: It is fundamentally stipulative. Notice, Matushansky's explanation of rigidity is, in a nutshell, that when a name occurs in "argument position", i.e. when it is a seemingly bare singular occurrence whose sister at LF is an unpronounced definite article, it takes a covert argument that is "fully extensional" and this renders the resulting description rigid. But what explains the assumption that the name takes a special indexical argument when it combines with a covert and unpronounced determiner 'the', but that it does not take a special indexical argument when it combines with 'every', 'some', or 'no'? There is no principled answer to this question. In other words, names are simply stipulated to take the special indexical argument whenever the name occurs in a position where it is intuitively rigid. As in Elbourne's case, this is thus not a genuinely explanatory account of rigidity.

2.5 *Explanation by Semantic Engineering*

The general lesson here is this: to explain the rigidity of referential names, a revision of a previously inadequate theory needs to be motivated and that motivation must

be independent of the relevant empirical data that the revised theory is supposed to explain. For example, if the goal is explain data points *d*, then even if principle $\mathbb{P}$ in some sense predicts *d*, the addition of $\mathbb{P}$ to the theory must be justified on grounds other than simply that it predicts *d*. If $\mathbb{P}$ cannot be independently justified, it is not clear that $\mathbb{P}$ explains *d* in any substantial sense.

The problem with attempting to capture rigidity by revising the semantics of definite descriptions is that such a revision will, initially, affect all definite descriptions— including descriptions without names. But given that descriptions are not generally rigid, such a revision will be too general. Consequently, special provisions must be made so that only definite descriptions of the form 'the' + 'NAME' are affected, i.e. so that only these descriptions are predicted to be rigid. But, there is not going to be a plausible way of justifying this kind of revision of the theory that is independent of the empirical facts that the revised theory is meant to explain. I.e. the only plausible justification for such a revision is that it predicts the rigidity of referential names.

This is very clearly the problem with Matushansky's (2008) proposed account of rigidity but also ultimately the problem with Elbourne's (2005) since his proposed pragmatic explanation is inadequate.[14]

So what exactly is needed to provide a genuinely explanatory account of rigidity? Well, if referential names are descriptions where the definite article is covert and unpronounced, the rigidity of these particular descriptions must be shown to follow from some general, and independently motivated, principle. For example, if the proponent of *The*-Predicativism provided a convincing argument that definite descriptions *in general* are rigid, the rigidity of referential names would then follow from this general and independently observed fact. This would thus be an example of a genuinely explanatory account. Unfortunately, definite descriptions are not generally rigid. However, in the next section, I discuss a recent example of a proposed explanation that, if correct, would provide *The*-Predicativism with a genuinely explanatory account of rigidity.

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[14]The account proposed in Izumi (2013) seems to have a similar problem. If I understand Izumi correctly, rigidity is captured by associating definite descriptions with situation variables that can either be bound or unbound. If the situation variable is free, and so has its semantic value determined by a variable assignment, the associated description will be rigid (the denotation of the description will be tied to that specific situation). Given this analysis, Izumi predicts that any sentence of the form 'NAME is F' is structurally ambiguous depending on whether the situation variable associated with the description 'the NAME' is free or bound (where 'bound' means co-indexed with a situation variable associated with the sentence as a whole). However, this prediction simply looks empirically incorrect. A sentence such as 'Obama is sitting' is not ambiguous between a rigid and non-rigid reading of 'Obama'. It has no, for lack of a better word, *attributive* interpretation of 'Obama'. Izumi does not address this issue, but to avoid the incorrect prediction, Izumi would need to stipulate that the situation variable associated with a description of the form 'the NAME' is always free. But this is exactly the same kind of move that both Elbourne and Matushansky make, stipulating an indexical element that guarantees rigidity.

3   Incomplete Descriptions and Rigidity

Perhaps mindful of the difficulties afflicting other accounts, Fara (2015b) proposes an alternative way for *The*-Predicativists to capture rigidity. Fara argues that referential names are rigid because (*a*) these names are in fact *incomplete* definite descriptions and (*b*) such descriptions are rigid.

A definite description is incomplete when more than one individual satisfies its restrictor.[15] Moreover, recall that according to *The*-Predicativism, when a name occurs as a bare singular in argument position of a predicate, its syntactic sister is a covert and unpronounced definite article. Accordingly, in the sentence 'Louise is an archaeologist', the grammatical subject at LF is a description, 'the Louise', and since more than one individual is called Louise, this definite description is incomplete. Consequently, if incomplete descriptions are rigid, then the grammatical subject of 'Louise is an archaeologist' is also rigid. The rigidity of referential names therefore follows from the general fact that incomplete definite descriptions are rigid.

If Fara's contention is correct, this would indeed provide a perfectly principled explanation of the rigidity of referential names. However, whether this explanation should be accepted clearly depends on the plausibility of the two key claims, namely (*a*) that incomplete definite descriptions are rigid and (*b*) that referential names are incomplete descriptions.

In this section, I will show that Fara's proposed explanation is unsatisfactory. I will argue that incomplete definite descriptions are not rigid, but more importantly that even if they were, this would not suffice to solve the rigidity problem. I will then consider an alternative strategy that involves assuming that there are two distinct definite articles and I will argue that this will undermine both the methodological and syntactic motivations for *The*-Predicativism in general.

3.1   *Complete Descriptions, Rigid Names*

Assume that Fara is correct: incomplete definite descriptions are rigid. Moreover, assume (as *The*–Predicativists do) that there is only one definite article in English. Even granting Fara these assumptions, it seems that there is an immediate problem with her proposed explanation of rigidity. Consider (29) below.

(29)   Barack Obama must wear a tie.

There is only one individual, let's suppose, who is called Barack Obama. Assuming that the grammatical subject of (29) is the description 'The Barack Obama' and that the cardinality of 'Barack Obama' is one, this description is complete. However,

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[15]The notion of 'incompleteness' is also sometimes used for cases where nothing satisfies the restrictor (also known as cases of presupposition failure), but I set those cases aside here. Nothing in my arguments will depend on this.

there is no non-rigid interpretation of 'Barack Obama' in (29). That is, the sentence does not have a reading where it means that for every possible world consistent with the rules/laws/norms, whoever the unique individual called Barack Obama is, he wears a tie at that world. Rather, (29) seems to express a proposition specifically about Barack Obama.

This looks like a problem for Fara's proposed explanation of rigidity. If a name cannot plausibly be analyzed as an incomplete description, the rigidity of that name cannot then be explained by reference to incomplete descriptions. So, even if one grants Fara the key assumption that incomplete definite descriptions are rigid, her proposed explanation is insufficiently general—an alternative explanation of the rigidity of names with unique bearers is still needed.

Now, Fara raises this issue herself and says the following:

> [...] the situation is the same with books and tables. I say that the definite descriptions in (96) are both rigid.

> (96) The book is on the table.

Let's assume, for now, that Fara is correct that 'the book' and 'the table' above are rigid. She continues:

> While we do tend to assume that there are many tables and books in the world, if there are any at all, our utterances would not have a different meaning if that assumption about the world turned out to be wrong. [...] The incomplete descriptions in 'the book is on the table' would be rigid even if, incredibly but unbeknownst to the speaker, there were no books or tables other than the ones he was talking about.
> [...] The upshot is that there is no onus on me to provide an explanation of how or why incomplete descriptions are rigid designators. That is the right of the piggybacker. I don't have to take a stand, for example, on what the mechanism is that renders incomplete definite descriptions rigid—on whether, for example, rigidity requires a covert actuality operator or whether, alternatively, there is more than one definite article for a speaker to use [...]
>
> (Fara, 2015b, 102-103)

In other words, 'the book' and 'the table' in the sentence above are rigid, but this is not a function of their incompleteness, because both descriptions, Fara maintains, would be rigid even if they were not incomplete. But granting this, why should we then think that the rigidity of referential names in general depends essentially on their putative incompleteness? Why not think instead that the rigidity of referential names is also not a function of incompleteness? The fact that names with unique bearers are rigid would seem to strongly suggest that incompleteness simply is not the relevant issue.

Summing up, Fara proposes to account for rigidity by aligning referential names with a subclass of definite descriptions that, supposedly, are rigid, namely incomplete descriptions. If incomplete descriptions are rigid and referential names

are incomplete descriptions, then, yes, the rigidity of these names trivially follows. However, as pointed out above, a referential name cannot always be analyzed as an incomplete description and in such cases the name is rigid nonetheless. The rigidity of referential names can therefore not be fully explained by appeal to the rigidity of incomplete descriptions.[16]

Consequently, it appears that the onus really *is* on Fara to provide an explanation of when and why descriptions are rigid. At the very least, an explanation is needed for *complete* descriptions since that would be needed to explain why the name in e.g. the sentence in (29) is rigid.

3.2 *A Two Article Solution*

As explained above, Fara maintains that incomplete definite descriptions are rigid and, moreover, that complete descriptions are sometimes rigid too. The key question then is how this is supposed to be explained.

One simple explanation would be that definite descriptions have referentially rigid uses. I.e. this would be the view that if a speaker *a* has a particular individual or object *o* in mind, then, on the assumption that *o* is F, *a* can use the description 'the F' to rigidly refer to *o*.

For starters, this view would immediately explain why incomplete descriptions are naturally interpreted as rigid: When used referentially, these descriptions simply refer to the individual who the speaker has in mind, so these descriptions are used to communicate singular thoughts. And given that speakers communicate singular thoughts all the time, incomplete descriptions will typically be rigid. Relatedly, the view would also explain why incomplete descriptions are ubiquitous in discourse and why this is unproblematic. If incomplete descriptions can be used referentially, there simply is no problem of incomplete descriptions.

As regards complete descriptions that are rigid, e.g. rigid uses of 'the book' and 'the table' in cases where only one book and one table exists, this view would explain how and why such uses are possible: In such cases, the speaker is simply

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[16]An anonymous referee suggested that by 'incomplete' description Fara might have in mind something like 'epistemically incomplete'. I suppose that the rough idea would be that whether or not a description is incomplete depends on the speaker's epistemic state rather than the world. This would be a non-standard use of the term 'incomplete description', so I doubt this is what Fara has in mind. Moreover, I think that it would be clearly untenable to try to tie the possible meanings of sentences containing definite descriptions to the epistemic state of the speaker. For example, suppose that *a* is under the misapprehension that there are two presidents of the United States. If so, the description 'the president of the United States' is incomplete relative to *a*'s epistemic state. Yet, this seems clearly irrelevant with respect to the question whether the description is rigid in 'the president of the United States must be wise'. Even if *a* asserts that sentence and intends a wide scope reading of the description, that does not affect whether the description *can* be interpreted as narrow scope. So, *a*'s epistemic state just seems irrelevant with respect to whether rigid readings are possible or not.

using the descriptions to refer rigidly. In short, this seems like a promising view that is consistent with Fara's assumptions.

However, if this view is correct, i.e. if speakers can use 'the F' to rigidly or non-rigidly refer, it seems natural to conclude that definite descriptions are ambiguous, i.e. that there are two distinct definite articles in English. In favor of this view, Devitt (1997, 2004) and Reimer (1998) have put forward several arguments purporting to show that 'the F' is ambiguous between an indexical meaning where it rigidly refers to an intended referent and a quantificational meaning where it is a generalized (and non-rigid) quantifier analyzed along the lines of Russell (1905).[17] So, proponents of *The*-Predicativism could embrace this conclusion. Notice that Fara herself explicitly mentions two distinct definite articles as a possible explanation of the rigidity of incomplete descriptions, cf. the quote above.[18]

Proponents of *The*-Predicativism might also argue that this kind of ambiguity view of definite descriptions agrees with various cross-linguistic data. For example, in languages such as German, Italian, and Spanish, some dialects use a definite article in front of referential names. Moreover, in e.g. Catalan and Icelandic, there are so-called preproprial definite articles that are exclusively used with referential names. So, if English had a rigidity-inducing definite article, it might seem natural to think that this is simply the correlate of the articles used with names in these other languages.[19]

Moreover, even in English, certain names come with mandatory definite articles, e.g. 'the Sudan', 'the Mississippi', 'the Space Needle', 'the Holy Roman Empire', etc. Assuming an ambiguity view of 'the', this mandatory article would then simply be the rigidity-inducing one.

Finally, proponents of *The*-Predicativism could even argue that the ambiguity view has additional explanatory virtues. For example, if it is assumed that only the rigidity-inducing definite article can occur covertly and unpronounced, the reason that referential names are rigid can then be explained as follows: Singular count nouns cannot occur in argument position of a predicate without a determiner. Since a name is a count noun, it must also occur with a determiner when it is in argument position of a predicate. So, if name occurs in argument position of a predicate and there is no *overt* determiner, there must be a *covert* determiner instead. However,

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[17]Specifically, Devitt and Reimer are arguing that Donnellan's proposed distinction between attributive and referential uses of descriptions is a genuine semantic distinction. This distinction would suit the proponents of *The*-Predicativism well as putatively referential descriptions would be rigid.

[18]Fara also mentions the possibility that incomplete descriptions contain an actuality operator, but it is not clear that positing such an operator helps. If a description is incomplete, it will remain incomplete even with the addition of an actuality operator. So, something else is needed to guarantee that the description even has a referent.

[19]For discussion of names in German and Italian, cf. Matushansky (2006) and for a discussion of preproprial articles in Icelandic, cf. Sigurdsson (2006). I am grateful to Laura Delgado for information about Spanish and Catalan.

since only the rigidity-inducing determiner 'the' can occur covertly, it follows that
any occurrence of a bare singular name in argument position of a predicate is a
constituent of a rigid definite description. So, referential names are rigid.

3.3 *Double Trouble*

Despite these potential advantages, an ambiguity view of descriptions is unlikely
to solve the problem for *The*-Predicativism. First, there are many arguments against
the inference from the existence of seemingly rigid uses of descriptions to the
conclusion that the definite article is lexically ambiguous. Most famously, Kripke
(1977) shows that referential (in Donnellan's sense) uses of descriptions can be
explained without positing a lexical ambiguity and instead distinguishing between
semantic reference and speaker's reference. Moreover, Kripke demonstrates that
this distinction is independently needed to exlain analogous cases involving names
for which an ambiguity view is clearly untenable, see e.g. Kripke (1977, 263f).

   Another problem with the semantic ambiguity view, noted by Bach (2004), is
that no language appears to have been identified where the ambiguity is lexically
encoded. That is, no known language seems to have two separate definite articles
each encoding the attributive and referential meanings respectively which should
be expected if it is a genuine ambiguity. Moreover, since definite descriptions have
attributive and referential uses in various other languages, this would, as Bach
points out, have to be a rather unlikely "massive cross-linguistic coincidence" (Bach,
2004, 226). For other arguments against the ambiguity view, see e.g. Kripke (1977),
Bach (1981, 2004), Neale (1990), Salmon (1991), Heim (2010), and Schoubye (2012).

   Second, the ambiguity view of descriptions conflicts with the principal motiva-
tion for *The*-Predicativism. Remember, one of the key virtues of *The*-Predicativism is
its simplicity which derives from its uniform analysis of names as count nouns. But,
if proponents of *The*-Predicativism must instead assume that definite descriptions
are ambiguous, it seems fair to say that the simplicity of the theory is significantly
reduced. And as regards theoretical parsimony, it is not clear that *The*-Predicativism
would be simpler, in any significant way, than the view that *names* are ambiguous.

   However, setting these issues aside, even if the ambiguity view of descriptions
is true, it raises a number of new problems for *The*-Predicativists:

1. If definite descriptions are ambiguous, an explanation is needed as to why the
   rigidity-inducing definite article must be phonologically null when occurring
   with proper names? Since this definite article can compose with any noun,
   and since it needs not (indeed cannot) occur unpronounced when composing
   with other nouns, why must it be suppressed when composing with a name?

2. If there are two definite articles, why can only one be used with bare singular
   names? Notice that both articles can be used with other count nouns.

3. If the rigidity-inducing definite article is the correlate of the preproprial articles in e.g. Catalan and Icelandic, one should expect that these preproprial definite articles could be used in similar ways to the English definite article. However, this is not the case. Preproprial definite articles are used exclusively with names.

Finally, a key argument for *The*-Predicativism is that it can explain an apparent syntactic curiosity, namely that the distribution of count nouns aligns perfectly with the distribution of names, except when it comes to the definite article.[20]

THE (MODIFIED) SLOAT CHART

A man stopped by.	A Smith stopped by.
Some men stopped by.	Some Smiths stopped by.
Men must breathe.	Smiths must breathe.
Every man stopped by.	Every Smith stopped by.
No man stopped by.	No Smith stopped by.
Three men stopped by.	Three Smiths stopped by.
The clever man stopped by.	The clever Smith stopped by.
The man who is clever stopped by.	The Smith who is clever stopped by.
A clever man stopped by.	A clever Smith stopped by.
The men stopped by.	The Smiths stopped by.
The man stopped by.	***The Smith stopped by.**
*Man stopped by.	**Smith stopped by.**
THE president stopped by.	THE Barack Obama stopped by.

These distributional facts are intuitively quite odd. What could possibly explain that names can combine with every determiner in English except for the definite determiner? Moreover, why can names occur as bare singulars in argument position of a predicate when other count nouns cannot? *The*-Predicativism has a simple and elegant answer: if the definite article can occur unpronounced, one can formulate a precise descriptive generalization that will systematically predict its distribution, i.e. when 'the' must be pronounced and when 'the' must remain unpronounced, see Fara (2015b, 91-94) for details. This generalization will then predict that just like other count nouns, a name cannot occur in argument position of a predicate without a determiner. And given this, the distributional facts illustrated above are not odd at all, because it turns out that the distribution of count nouns and names is in fact identical. What is not identical is when and where the definite determiner must be pronounced and that is what is reflected in the chart.

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[20]This was first observed by Sloat (1969, 27). I use this modified version of Sloat's original chart here because it better displays the curiosity in question.

This is indeed a simple explanation, but it only works if there is only one definite article in English. If definite descriptions are ambiguous and, hence, there are two distinct definite articles, bare singular names (unlike count nouns in general) can still not combine with the non-rigidity inducing definite article. And, relatedly, there is no answer to the question why count nouns in general cannot occur as bare singulars in argument position of a predicate. If the rigidity-inducing definite article occurs covertly with names, why can it not occur covertly with other nouns.[21]

In conclusion, while an ambiguity view of *names* has no obvious resources for explaining the distributional data above, neither does *The*-Predicativism when it is assumed that there is more than one definite article in English.

4   The Non-Rigidity of Incomplete Descriptions

In order to emphasize certain problems with Fara's proposed account, it was granted in the previous section that incomplete descriptions are rigid. Nevertheless, this assumption should, I think, be rejected. Incomplete descriptions license non-rigid readings quite consistently, and if incomplete descriptions were genuinely rigid, such readings should not generally be available.

To begin with, consider (30)–(34) below. The descriptions in these sentences are incomplete but also have straightforwardly accessible non-rigid readings. For example, it is natural to understand the sentence in (30) as making a claim not about the individual who is actually president, but rather about what is required in order to fulfil the role of president, i.e. what a president should be like. Following Gray (2012), let's refer to this non-rigid type of reading as a *relativized* reading.

(30)   The president of the United States should be a Harvard graduate.
(31)   The judge could wear a cardigan instead of a robe.
(32)   The professor might refuse to have lectures recorded.
(33)   The rental car must have four doors.[22]
(34)   If the mattress does not feel comfortable, don't buy it.

Furthermore, in cases where it might seem natural to interpret an incomplete description as rigid, it often takes little imaginative effort to construct a context

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[21] An anonymous referee suggested an alternative view, namely that English contains a phonologically null preproprial article that combines only with names and causes the resulting descriptions to be rigid. As the referee notes, this would not be an ambiguity view, so it would avoid several of the objections raised above. Currently, I have no conclusive arguments against this view, but it is unclear what evidence could be adduced in its favor and it seems to me that such a view would need independent motivation to be plausible. Moreover, I note that certain of the motivations cited in favor of *The*-Predicativism would not carry over to this kind of view. For example, the explanation of the data in the (modified) Sloat chart discussed above would not work if the (covert) article occurring with bare singular names is a preproprial article which is distinct from the English definite article.

[22] This example is due to Kent Bach in p.c. with Delia Fara.

where the most natural interpretation is instead a relativized reading. Consider, for example, this modal variant of Fara's example.

(35) The book must be on the table.

On hearing a speaker assert (35), it would be natural to assume that the speaker has a specific book and table in mind, and the descriptions therefore appear rigid. However, to bring to salience the relativized readings of 'the book' and 'the table', consider the following scenario: Suppose that Louise is explaining the exam rules to a student over the phone. The student is instructed to bring one book to the exam, but Louise is unaware what book the student is bringing. When the student asks Louise where personal belongings should be kept during the exam, Louise answers by uttering (35). In this scenario, non-rigid readings of 'the book' and 'the table' are clearly the most natural.

In conclusion, the assumption that incomplete definite descriptions are rigid cannot plausibly be maintained. In interactions with modal expressions, incomplete descriptions can, quite generally, be interpreted as rigid or relativized (i.e. non-rigid). Which reading is more natural simply depends on the discourse context.

Fara is, however, aware of the problems posed by cases such as those in e.g. (30)–(34), and so in response to this prima facie problem, Fara appeals to a distinction, due to Rothschild (2007), between *role-type* descriptions and *particularized* descriptions. According to Rothschild:

> A description is a *role-type* description if it is part of the common ground that there is exactly one person (or one salient person) satisfying the descriptive content across a range of relevant metaphysically possible situations and that the satisfier sometimes varies from situation to situation. Some examples of role-type descriptions are 'the family lawyer', 'the mayor', 'the president', 'the tallest pilot', and 'the director'. With role-type descriptions, we usually know independently of the specific conversational situation that the descriptive content is satisfied uniquely across other possible situations: It is part of general knowledge that cities generally have one mayor, countries one president, and so on. Of course, many role-type descriptions are incomplete in the sense that they need to be augmented by an implicit specification of the particular role in question—so, for instance, 'the president' might be used to mean 'the president of the U.S.' or 'the president of the board of trustees'.
>
> [...] *Particularized descriptions* are simply those descriptions that are not role-type descriptions.   (Rothschild, 2007, 75)

Rothschild's distinction explains why a description may naturally be interpreted as relativized. For example, consider the contrast between (36) and (37) below. Here the description in (36) is easily interpreted as relativized, but the description in (37) is not.

(36) The president of the United States should be a Harvard graduate.

(37)   The man I met last night should be a Harvard graduate.

Since it is common ground that there is a unique president of the United States in every metaphysical situation under consideration (i.e. every situation in the relevant modal domain) and that it need not be the same individual in every situation, the description 'the president of the United States' has a natural relativized reading, i.e. a reading where the referent of the description is potentially different relative to each relevant situation. By contrast, since it is not common ground that there is a unique individual that I met last night in every relevant situation under consideration, a relativized reading of 'the man I met last night' is not immediately available.

This seems a plausible explanation of the contrast and by embracing this distinction, Fara can then explain why the descriptions in e.g. (30)–(34) are not intuitively rigid, but also why 'the book' and 'the table' in (35) are, in the described scenario, naturally interpreted as relativized.

However, Fara's reliance on Rothschild's distinction is a bit awkward, because the distinction runs counter to Fara's key assumption that incomplete descriptions are rigid. That is, if Rothschild is correct, a definite description is not rigid simply because it is incomplete, instead it is rigid if it is particularized, i.e. not role-type. Furthermore, Rothschild maintains that incomplete descriptions need to be "augmented by an implicit specification of the role in question" (Rothschild, 2007, 75). In order for it to be common ground that a descripton, say 'the attorney', uniquely denotes across a range of situations, it must first be determined whether the relevant role is 'the attorney general', 'the bankruptcy attorney', 'the family attorney', and so on. Moreover, if this specification of the relevant role is not part of the conventional meaning of the description, the truth conditons of e.g. (38) will be indeterminate.

(38)   The attorney must sign the document.

In other words, on Rothschild's view, incompleteness is simply not relevant with respect to the issue of rigidity.

Hence, as concluded above, it is simply not plausible to maintain that incomplete descriptions, qua being incomplete, are rigid—or even *generally* rigid.

4.1 Relativized Readings of Names in Modal Contexts

Set aside the issue of incompleteness and let's instead consider whether Rothschild's distinction might be a viable alternative strategy for capturing rigidity. Perhaps it is, but it is important to recognize that this distinction comes with certain commitments. For example, given the thesis that referential names are descriptions, one should expect referential names to exhibit role-type uses. In particular, if referential names are simply definite descriptions with an unpronounced definite article, these descriptions should have relativized readings in contexts where it is common ground (*a*) that the description has a unique satisfier in every relevant situation under consideration and (*b*) that this individual might vary.

The question whether referential names have role-type uses is widely debated.[23] But, generally speaking, I think the data alleged to support role-type uses is quite subtle and mostly inconclusive. Regardless, it is noticeable that getting a role-type reading for a referential name is much more difficult than it is for a run-of-the-mill definite description and it is incumbent on the proponents of *The*-Predicativism to explain this difference.

To illustrate, consider the following example. Suppose we are hosting a party in honor of circus clowns. We therefore agree that a clown should greet guests at the entrance. However, a lot of clowns are coming to the party and no clown has yet accepted the job as greeter. Nevertheless, discussing what is appropriate attire for a person greeting the guests, I assert (39).

(39)   The clown should wear a red nose.

In this scenario, a relativized reading of 'the clown' emerges immediately. Again, Rothschild's proposed distinction between role-type and particularized descriptions seems to elegantly explain this: The description 'the clown' is intuitively interpreted (or *completed*) as e.g. 'the clown greeting the guests' and it is common ground that there is a unique satisfier of this description in every situation under consideration and that the satisfier also may vary across those situations (since it has not been determined who is doing the greeting).

By contrast, consider instead this alternative scenario. We are again hosting a party, but it is a party in honor of people called Louise. So, we agree that someone called Louise should greet guests at the entrance. However, a lot of Louises are coming to the party and no Louise has yet accepted the job as greeter. Nevertheless, discussing what is appropriate attire for a person greeting the guests, I assert (40).

(40)   Louise should wear black.

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[23]See e.g. Rothschild (2007, 101-105), Gray (2012, 59-62), Fara (2015b, 104-105), and (Schoubye, forthcoming, 34-36).

A relativized interpretation of 'Louise' in (40) is not obviously available. Indeed, the utterance is bordering on defective. It is just so natural to interpret the speaker as expressing a proposition about a single individual, and so it becomes unclear who the speaker is talking about and why. So, there is an initial problem here for *The*-Predicativism, namely explaining why we get this contrast.

In addition, notice that it is perfectly felicitous to assert (41) instead.

(41)   The Louise greeting the guests should wear black.

The next question for proponents of *The*-Predicativism is therefore this: if 'Louise' in (40) is an incomplete description at LF, why can it not be interpreted as completed, i.e. as that literally expressed by (41).

In the next section, I want to highlight an alternative but to my mind quite convincing reason to think that referential names simply do not have the same kinds of role-type uses that descriptions do.

4.2   *Relativized Readings of Names in General*

It is important to realize that the observation motivating Rothschild's distinction is ultimately an observation about the discursive function of definite descriptions. That is, the observation is that when there is a suitable fit between a salient domain (a modal domain) and the descriptive content of a definite description, a relativized reading of the description emerges, i.e. a reading where its semantic value varies with objects in the salient domain.

However, as discussed by Gray (2012), if descriptions give rise to relativized readings as a result of a specific fit between a salient domain and descriptive content, one might then expect that such relativized readings would also emerge with other, non-modal, domains, e.g. temporal or nominal domains. In other words, relativized readings of definite descriptions might also emerge with temporal and nominal quantifiers. And they do. For example, consider the contrast between (42) and (43) below.

(42)   Next year, the president will be a republican.   (Gray, 2012, 53)
(43)   Next year, the man I met last night will be a republican.   (Gray, 2012, 53)

Again, similar to the cases involving (36) and (37), the description 'the president' in (42) is naturally interpreted as relativized whereas the description 'the man I met last night' is not. Again, Rothschild's proposed distinction seems to explain the contrast. But what about relativized readings in cases involving nominal quantification. Here is an instructive example from Gray (2012).

(44)   Every man remembers the woman.   (Gray, 2012, 58)

A relativized reading of the description 'the woman', i.e. a reading where its semantic value varies relative to individuals in the domain of the nominal quantifier, is not immediately available. However, as Gray observes, with a bit of contextual engineering, the relativized reading is easily raised to salience:

> [...] you and I are psychologists studying memories from early childhood. Due to some idiosyncratic theory, we suspect that men will remember their female grade-school teachers more than their male grade-school teachers. As an experiment, we bring in a group of adult men, and one grade-school teacher of theirs of each sex. Reporting on the results of the experiment, I utter [(44)]. 'The woman' clearly has a relativized reading here. (Gray, 2012, 58)

We should thus expect referential names to also have non-rigid, role-type readings relative to nominal quantifiers. However, with respect to these kinds of cases, an interesting anomaly emerges. Consider the following case, adapted from Gray (2012).[24] Suppose that it is common ground that there is exactly one person called Louise in each of my classes. Suppose I now utter (45).

(45)   In each of my classes today, Louise asked the best question.

There is no relativized reading of 'Louise' available for this sentence, however given the contextual setup, one would expect it to be available. By contrast, suppose it's common ground that there is exactly one Canadian in each of my classes and that I utter (46) instead.

(46)   In each of my classes today, the Canadian asked the best question.

Here the relativized reading is immediately available. Again, since the contextual setups are structurally identical, if *The*-Predicativism is correct, it is not clear why there would be any differences in the readings possible.

Now, in his discussion of this case, Gray argues that there might be a simple explanation of the divergence in the availability of the relativized readings in these cases. That explanation is, in short:

> [...] there is some independent reason to think that domains in which there is a unique, potentially different, identifiable bearer of a name for each element [...] do not typically form a natural domain for modal, temporal or nominal operators. (Gray, 2012, 61)

However, this explanation is unlikely to account for the difference in distribution of relativized readings displayed above. To see why, assume again that there is exactly one person called Louise in each of my classes and now consider (47).

(47)   In each of my classes, the person called Louise asked the best question.

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[24]I discuss an analogous case in (Schoubye, forthcoming, 39). I only recently discovered that Gray (2012) discusses these very similar types of cases.

The relativized reading, again, becomes immediately available. This shows, I think fairly conclusively, that there is fundamental difference between the referential name in (45) and its proposed semantic correlate. Remember, if the propnents of *The*-Predicativism are correct, the meaning of 'Louise' in (45) should be identical to the meaning of the description in (47). But that seems exceedingly implausible given that the description clearly gives rise to the relativized reading, whereas the referential occurrence of 'Louise' does not.

Now, a referee for this journal suggested that there are certain types of sentences, even involving nominal quantifiers, where role-type readings of names are fairly natural, cf. (48) and (49).

(48)   In most Danish families, Kim is male.
(49)   Can Sam be a woman?

However, I must confess that I find even these sentences ever so slightly odd. When that is said, I will grant that people might say these kinds of things (and also that my intuitions are potentially tainted). So, I do not have a knock down argument against the assumption that these are in fact role-type uses—perhaps they are. However, as mentioned above, I do not think that the case for *The*-Predicativism can be secured simply by observing that role-type uses of names are *possible* (and perhaps not even particularly rare). There might be alternative explanations for these uses of names that do not support *The*-Predicativism. Moreover, what I have demonstrated above is that there is a striking contrast between names and descriptions as regards how easily they permit role-type interpretations even when the relevant contextual setups are analogous. If *The*-Predicativism is true, we should expect there to be no such contrast. After all, referential names and descriptions would then belong to the same category of expression. So, I maintain that proponents of *The*-Predicativism must not only show that names have role-type uses but also provide some cogent explanation of this contrast in order for it to be plausible that the best explanation of alleged role-type uses of names is that they are covert descriptions.

So, in conclusion, Fara might appeal to Rothschild's distinction in an attempt to account for the rigidity of definite descriptions, but this entails giving up the thesis that incomplete descriptions are rigid. Furthermore, as demonstrated above, it turns out that this raises a number of other explanatory challenges, namely explaining the difference in availability of role-type readings of names in contexts involving modal, temporal, and especially nominal quantifiers.

5 Concluding Remarks

Summing up:

- · Fara's assumption that referential names are incomplete descriptions is not generally true, so the rigidity of referential names cannot be explained by the thesis that incomplete descriptions are rigid.

- · The assumption that incomplete descriptions are rigid must be relinquished.

- · Adopting the view that the definite article is ambiguous only raises a number of additional explanatory questions and appears to undermine both syntactic and methodological motivations for *The*-Predicativism.

- · If the distinction between role-type and particularized descriptions is adopted, *The*-Predicativists are then saddled with a different kind of problem, namely accounting for the lack of role-type uses of names in various quantificational contexts.

I thus conclude that there is no available satisfactory account of rigidity that is consistent with *The*-Predicativism. The accounts considered above are either purely stipulative or empirically inadequate. And, yet, it is doubtful that it is possible to formulate better alternatives.

Consequently, to capture rigidity, one should adopt a view where the rigidity of a referential name is a straightforward consequence of its expression type. For example, standard Millianism or *Type-Ambiguity Variabilism*, cf. Schoubye (forthcoming).[25]

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