**Properties in the Ontology of Natural Language**

Metaphysicians commonly distinguish properties as denotations of linguistic predicates (abundant properties) from properties that play a role in (fundamental) reality (sparse properties). I will argue that the ontology reflected in natural language displays yet another notion of a property. This notion roughly corresponds to the notion of a Kimiean or abstract state that some linguists (Maienborn 2007, Moltmann 2013) have argued acts as an implicit argument of (most) stative verbs. It is conveyed by explicit property-referring terms:

(1) the property of being wise.

Gerundive or infinitival clauses such as *being wise* are generally taken to refer to abundant properties (Chierchia/Turner 1988), which would then be picked up by explicit property-referring terms. But this cannot be right, since explicit property-referring terms are subject to significant constraints. *Property* does not permit eventive modifiers, as opposed to the stative modifiers in (3):

(2) ??? the property of walking home.

(3) the property of owning an apartment / owing someone money / resembling a film star.

But *property* excludes stative modifiers that describe ‘concrete states’, such as states of bodily position:

(4) ??? the property of sleeping / standing / sitting

Abstract states are also implicit arguments of the copula verbs *be* and *have*, which are always acceptable as predicates of clausal modifiers of *property*:

(5) a. the property of being the cause of a commotion

 b. ??? the property of causing a commotion

(6) a. the property of being asleep

 b. \* the property of sleeping

It is implausible that the constraint in question is learned by exposure to uses of explicit property-referring terms, which suggests that the notion of a property as an abstract, predicable state is part of a universal ontological inventory that is best considered part of universal grammar in the Chomskyan sense.

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