

Introduction. This contribution discusses the distribution and the interpretation of Bare Predicates, i.e. determiner-less singular nominals in predicative position (i.a. De Swart, Winter & Zwarts 2007, Zamparelli 2008) and works out the idea that the contrast between Non-Bare Predicates (1-2a) and Bare Predicates (1-2b) can be encoded in terms of the dichotomy between Extrinsic and Intrinsic Properties, first identified by philosopher David Lewis (1983).

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|-----|----|--|-----|----|---|-----------|
| (1) | a. | Max è un musicista
<i>Max is a musician</i> | (2) | a. | Max è un uomo
<i>Max is a man</i> | (Italian) |
| | b. | Max è musicista
<i>Max is musician</i> | | b. | ^{??} Max è uomo
<i>Max is man</i> | |

The pattern exemplified in Italian above can be found in several Romance and Germanic languages, and it is traditionally analyzed by means of a lexical class which contains “profession/role” nouns (e.g. “capacities” in De Swart, Winter & Zwarts 2007, “roles” in Zamparelli 2008), that are different from the others in their syntax or in their semantics. Then, the contrast between (1b) and (2b) is ultimately derived from this difference. This paper suggests that, in this case, avoiding the lexical class is a theoretically attractive goal, since it means to reduce the stipulations about the linguistic ontology. Furthermore, the approach aims at avoiding the reduplication of semantic mechanisms that are otherwise needed to meet empirical adequacy. This is crucial because the acceptability of (2b) increases depending on the context, and in certain cases the bare form is necessary (e.g. *uomo* ‘man’ is necessary in a game context where *Max* was assigned to the team of the “men” by having picked a card of a certain color).

Intrinsic and Extrinsic. The analysis of the interpretation of Bare Predicate implements Lewis’s (1983) insight about the contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic properties (a working definition is given in (3)). Intrinsic properties realized to intensional properties (type $\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$) which realize more syntactic structure, i.e. the Non-Bare Predicate.

- (3) A property *P* is intrinsic iff the instantiation of *P* by an individual *x* is independent of the features of the environment of *x*; otherwise *P* is extrinsic. (Hoffman-Kolls 2010)

The contrast derivable with the lexical class (see. 1/2b), can thus be expected since it reduces to the fact that nouns like “man” are typically used to express intrinsic properties (aspects of someone’s “nature”), whereas “profession/role nouns”¹ are typically used in the extrinsic sense (they depend crucially on elements of the environment of the subject, such as contracts, elections, etc.). The core proposal of this paper is that the speakers’ naïve ontology guides the “categorization” of predicates. Since predicates can polarize in different ways (transient to stable, accidental to essential, stage/individual-level, etc.), we argue that Bare Predicates as a phenomenon is nothing more than the lexicalization of the polarization between extrinsic and intrinsic properties.² Even without the “profession/role” lexical class, we can preserve the variation in grammaticality judgments, and, by implementing the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction to account for the meaning alternation, we can predict the distribution of Bare Predicates. The frequent occurrence of “profession/role” nouns as bare predicates is a consequence of the

¹Lexical analyses group professions and roles in the lexical class to capture the fact that they occur frequently as Bare Predicates.

²This paper makes no statement about whether intrinsic and extrinsic properties (should) belong to the world’s ontology.

