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Properties and Terms Denoting Properties



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From a philosophical point of view the relationship between the philosophical category "property" and all terms employed for naming properties is studied as a premise for a more thorough study of the terms denoting properties. The possible reasons for their inadequate elaboration on the part of linguists and terminologists are analyzed and the question concerning all relations in the *object - property - process* triad are investigated, emphasizing the organizing role of 'property'. (Author)

In scientific and technical language all terms used for denoting properties hold a place apart, because they give expression to one of the most important categories of the material world and stand for concepts which characterize the qualitative facets of objects and phenomena. Yet, so far, they have not been subjected to a thorough analysis. The most feasible reasons for this state of affairs are the following:

- obscurity of the matter concerning the limits of the chosen term;
- the contrast between the visibility and the concrete character of an object on the one hand and the abstract nature of its properties on the other;
- understandable unwillingness and even fear on the part of linguists to "encroach" upon philosophy, thus alluding to the philosophical nature of the phenomenon "property";
- quite frequent confusion of this concept with either similar or less closely related ones such as 'characteristic', 'quality', 'feature', 'attribute'.

Property is considered as an essential characteristic of any object. Therefore having a good knowledge of it conditions the mastering of the concept of this object and largely determines its nomination. The *object - property* relationship is of a bilateral nature - just as the existence of an object without any properties is impossible, so properties cannot be isolated from their bearer - the object itself.

An indispensable condition for the manifestation of properties is the interaction between objects, which is most frequently denoted by a term indicating a process, and more rarely - a state. Furthermore, in order to carry out the process or to attain the desired state, it is absolutely necessary for the participating objects to possess a capacity for taking part in such a process, which is verbally expressed by a term denoting a property. In case the object does not possess the needed property, a term denoting process will not be created. However, it is quite feasible for a term denoting a property to appear, (more precisely - a term indicating a lack of property), e.g. 'unbreakability'.

Therefore we think that in the *object - property - process* chain, property plays an important organizing role. What is more complicated is its verbal denotation, not only because every property has to or needs to be nominated, but also because of the incapacity of language to express in a single word on complex character of the concept denoting property. That is why any study of the terms used for nominating the various properties will, in most cases, necessitate the introduction of elaborated expressions, or, sometimes, even of whole clauses, stipulating that the creation of a term denoting the given concept is forthcoming.

Since a good knowledge of objects and the processes taking place in and between them is absolutely bound up with the study of their properties, one can reach the following conclusion: namely that property as a philosophical category has the capacity to satisfy certain terminological necessities as well as for the organization of knowledge as a principal criterion for classification in compiling terminological dictionaries, thesauri or automated terminological devices.

The research work concerning terms denoting properties could be effectively applied in explaining the set of terminological categories or in the search of new ways for property denotation and in the working out of some ideas concerning text linguistics.