On amounts and measures

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It is widely accepted that natural languages contain expressions whose meanings make reference to degrees on scales (Cresswell 1976, von Stechow 1984, Kennedy 2007). But there is still little consensus regarding what sort of things degrees are and how they are related to the entities whose measures they encode (e.g. Kennedy 2001, Moltmann 2009, Scontras 2017, Wellwood 2019). I approach these questions from the perspective of two types of constructions in which a property is (apparently) predicated of an amount or measure. By way of illustration, in (1a) *five kilos of chicken* describes some concrete entity, a portion of chicken; in (1b), by contrast, the same noun phrase appears to denote five kilos of chicken as an **amount** of chicken, to which the property of being `too much food' is ascribed. As a second case, whereas *heavy* in (2a) is (at least on the surface) predicated of some concrete suitcase, in (2b) it is ascribed to 2 kg as a **measure** of some entity.

(1) a. Five kilos of chicken are in the refrigerator.
    b. Five kilos of chicken is too much food.

(2) a. The suitcase is heavy.
    b. 20 kilos is heavy (for a suitcase you have to carry)

I seek to provide a semantics for the (b) examples above, in doing so exploring some broader consequences for the semantics of degree. Two main findings emerge: the degree domain is characterized by a set of systematic polysemies; and certain degree constructions require us to posit more complex entities that simple abstract degrees. I discuss the nature of these entities as well as other contexts in which they may play a role.