*Philosophy of Language: Revisiting Events Semantics*

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**Handout 5**

**The Part Structure of Events**

**1. Summary and extensions of last session: Event types and event predicate types**

Abstract states and the Neo-Davidsonian account

(1) a. John owns a house.

b. ∃e(own(e) & agent(John, e) & theme(e, the house))

Problem:

The abstract state as a Kimean state depends on the content of *own* and thus cannot provide an argument of *own*.

**1.1. Some criteria for classifying event predicates**

Adverbials: *for*-adverbials, *in*-adverbials, progressive

Aspectual verbs

(2) a. *stop*: activities

b. *finish*: accomplishments

c. *take an hour*: accomplishment

d. sp*end an hour*: activity

What is classified?

Not event types, but VPs, or better sentences

Form of complement matters:

Indefinites vs. definite NPs

But also bare plurals / mass nouns vs some N.

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**2. The Part Structure of Events**

**2.1. Mass-count in the nominal domain**

x v y: the sum of x and y

(3) Cumulativity

For a set X, if x ∈ X, y ∈ X, then x v y ∈ X

Cumulativity for plurals

(4) John is a student

Mary is a student

John and Mary are students.

Cumulativity for mass nouns

(5) The liquid in the glass is water.

The liquid in the cup is water

The liquid in the glass and in the cup is water.

(6) Divisiveness

For a set X, for any x ∈ X, if y < x, then y ∈ X.

Divisiveness for mass nouns:

(7) This liquid in the glass is water.

The liquid in the glasses is water.

The liquid in one of the glasses is water.

(8) Homogeneity

A set if homogeneous iff it is cumulative and divisive.

Atomicity

(9) A set X is atomic iff for any x ∈ S, for any y > x, y ∈ X.

Atomicity as a criterion for singular count nouns?

*Apple*: no proper part of an apple is an apple.

*Fence*: a proper part of a fence is still a fence

*Sum*: a proper part of a sum may still be a sum

*A piece / amount of clay*: a proper part of of piece / amount of clay is still

*Portions, quantities, lines, …*

Part-related expressions

Partitive construction:

(10) a. part / all of the house

b. part / all of the water

c. part / all of the children

Binominal constructions:

(11) a. John gave the children one gift each.

b. Joe ate the cake one piece at a time.

c. John drank the water one small cup at a time.

**2.2. Events in the verbal domain**

Reasons for cumulativity for verbs wrt to the Davidsonian event argument position:

(12) John walked.

Mary walked.

John and Mary walked.

(13) John drank the water in the glass.

John drank the water in the cup.

John drank the water in the cup and in the glass.

Participants measuring out an event:

(14) a. John drank the water in five minutes

b. John ate the apple in five minutes.

c. John ate the apples in five minutes.

(15) Part of John’s eating drinking of the water / eating of the apple / eating of the apples

Certain event participants may individuate the part structure of the event.

Also time and space can measure out the event

(16) a. Part of John’s walk was from 8am to 9am.

b. Part of the bombardment is taking place in south Gaza.

Event types may individuate event parts

(17) Part of John’s singing and dancing was slow.

Part-related adverbials

(18) a. The guests left one at a time.

b. John ate and drank, both without restraint.

Adverbs of completion:

(19) a. John completely forgot the poem.

b. John partly drank the water.

c. The guest had completely left.

d. The dot completely disappeared.

Application to an event type

Relational adjectives:

(20) John bought and sold similar things.

Events may have multidimensional part structures (Moltmann 1997, chap. 5)

What happened if the part structure of an event is individuated in several ways at once?

Multiple readings of the sentence!

Part-related adverbials

(21) John and Mary sang and danced both for one hour.

Relational adjectives

(22) a. John and Mary bought and sold similar things.

b. Yesterday and today John bought two books at the same store.

Adverbs of completion

(23) The stain completely faded.

Two readings!

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**References**

Bach, E. (1986) “The Algebra of Events”, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 9, 5-16.

Moltmann, F. (1996): *Parts and Wholes in Semantics*. OUP, New York, Chap. 5