

Note on M. Wagiel 'Acts, occasions, and multiplicatives: A meretopological account

I would like to write this note as a clarifying follow-up to my remarks I made after Marcin Wagiel's talk at last year's SALT. My remarks were that the analysis Marcin proposed of 'times' was already in my 1997 OUP book *Parts and Wholes in Semantics* (Chap. 5).

(See <http://www.friederike-moltmann.com/uploads/Parts%20and%20Wholes%20in%20Semantics-s.pdf>)

I have now had occasion to read the SALT proceedings paper. Marcin gives a nice formal semantic analysis of the event-internal reading (counting occasions) and the event-external reading (counting subevents) of (i), distinguishing two different syntactic positions for them: (i) John knocked three times at the door.

The event-internal reading is formalized in terms of maximal temporal connectedness, the event external reading in terms of a notion of event integrated whole.

Marcin says that the phenomenon requires a structured notion of parthood rather than the standard unstructured notion, and continues: 'In contrast, Moltmann (1997) emphasized the role of structured parthood in the domain of events, but her account entirely rejects mereology (for a critical review of her system see Pianesi 2002). For this reason I will pursue an entirely different approach based on the structured part-whole relations called mereotopology, which extends standard mereology with topological notions such as maximal connectedness.' (p. 227)

Two points are to be made about this comment:

1. My account of 'times' and frequency adverbials in Chap. 5.1. (p.141ff) of my book is a mereotopological account identical to the one Marcin proposed for the first reading of (i). Or rather the account is one that makes use of a metrical space and then shows that that amounts to a mereotopological part structure based on temporal maximal connectedness. Pianesi in his 2002 review, rightly, points out that an account in terms of maximal connectedness would be simpler. But the answer to why a metrical structure is used is apparent from the next subsequent section (5.2.), which is about the German metrical quantifier 'manche' ('some'), which goes with frequency adverbials 'manchmal' 'sometimes': 'manche' imposes a relation of distance (in some dimension) among individuals, and the latter need not involve maximal connectedness (but may be integrated wholes or single things in virtue of other conditions). The notion of maximal connectedness (R-integrated whole) is used throughout the book (and related papers) as the most important notion of integrated whole for the semantics of events, plurals and mass nouns.

1. My 1997 account did not reject mereology; to the contrary it showed the importance of mereology (the theory of part-whole) for a huge range of semantic phenomena and introduced the notion of an integrated whole into semantic analysis (in addition to an ordering among parts) to account for them. What it did was to argue for a single part-relation applying to different types of entities, in particular pluralities and quantities, and it gave a range of motivations for that. One of them comes from the semantics of frequency expressions themselves: 'frequent' applies to both plurals ('frequent rainfalls') and mass nouns ('frequent rain'), which requires a single part relation, or so was the argument (Section 5.1.).

There is in fact a third reading of 'times', on which 'times' count events or states at specific given occasions ('John was asleep three times') (a reading which I had pointed out to Marcin in an email exchange and which my book attributes to H. de Swart).

(The three readings are also informally described here [Events in Contemporary Semantics](#))

Finally a remark concerning the Pianesi review: it did not show that the 1997 approach failed, in relation to extensional mereology; in part it had pointed out weakness of analyses in the 1997 book of new generalizations that had not been (and to an extent still have not been) analysed elsewhere; in part it showed the general limits of mereology for the semantics of plurals (which made me pursue plural reference in my more recent work on plurals). The review rightly called the book 'programmatic' in its use of notions of integrated whole and maximal connectedness (novel at the time in semantics), rather than being 'a self-contained essay'.

All that said, it is of course great that there is now such an interest in this field of research...