

Cascades. Part 1: Acts, levels, and verb concepts  
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The talk is a contribution to what can be called Natural Language Metaphysics: a theory of reality as it is reflected in the use and notions of natural language semantics.

Based on Goldman's (1970) *Theory of Human Action*, the talk develops the notion of cascades, applying it to act-tokens, act-types, and verb frames. Any act is, at least potentially, part of a cascade of acts that are done by the agent in one doing. For example, the agent presses her index finger on a movable plastic square at the wall, she turns on the light (thereby), she wakes up her friend (thereby), making a mistake (in doing so), because she didn't want her friend to awake, she annoys her friend. These are five co-enacted, co-existent, temporally co-extensive acts, "level-generating" each other. Independently of the controversy as to whether these are one act-token or four act-tokens, they uncontroversially are of five different act-types. The talk develops the thesis that the distinction of levels of acting is vital to the understanding and modeling of action verb meanings. For the vast majority of such verbs, the center of the verb frame is not formed by just one event node, but by a cascade of act nodes related by level-generation. When the verb is combined with argument specifications or modifiers, these select a level to apply to. The approach offers new perspectives for the analysis of verbal modification and for understanding of verb-argument interaction which in other approaches are held to involve coercion.

The talk will be continued with Part 2 on 29 June 2017.

Friederike Moltmann will give a talk on "Natural Language Metaphysics" on 13 July 2017.