Ontological Categorisation and Mereology

Abstract: In Chapter 1, I provided a consideration of some attempts that have been made to understand complex human behaviour in both a quantitative and qualitative sense. In this chapter this understanding is enhanced by drawing upon research within the areas of philosophy, metaphysics, ontology, mereology, neuroscience, psychology and selected others. The pervasive human characteristic or predisposition of making and using categories of objects and events is considered. I review how categories are employed as a means to allow the simplification of the perceptual process, and the way in which animals (both human and non-human) understand their worlds. Facet theory and the mapping sentence are defined as category analysis procedures.

Keywords: categories; facet theory; mapping sentence; mereology; neuroscience; ontology

Human assessment

Mereology is the formal study of part to whole relationships and is a fundamental life process. My understanding of the world that surrounds me is entwined in a collective of fragmented multiplicities comprised of aspectual parts and perspectives of objects and events. Furthermore, these understandings interact with both my existing cognitions and between myself and other people. However, there is little agreement about, ‘...how many (fundamental) parthood relations there are. Compositional monists ... say there is exactly one; compositional pluralists ... say that there are at least two, presumably associated with different ontological categories and perhaps governed by different principles’ (Gilmore, 2014, p. 157, emphases in the original). Typically, however, I experience my world as a meaningful whole and within this social and physical universe is located my self-construal. In this book I am concerned with the measurement of the human being: both the parts of human life and as a total experience. I am not concerned with the mensuration of the normal, average, typical, atypical or abnormal human being. Rather, I am interested in measuring as a form of empirical understanding: anthropometric and psychometric measurement and their extension from traditionally quantitative to qualitative conceptions of being. Anthropometry measures all of the physical aspects of the human body. For example, overall height and weight along with more detailed metrics of the length of the elbow to the fingertip, foot size, head circumference and distance between an individual’s eyes. As well as these static measurements, range of motion is also recorded. Equipped with this information equipment, buildings, clothes, vehicles and so on can be manufactured that fit a person or an aggregated array of different people. The physical measures are one way in which the individual human being may be understood within their experiential lives. In an earlier era Leonardo Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man of 1490 embodied the notion of man (sic) as a metric of the world, which is based on the Roman architect Vitruvius who claimed in ‘De architectura’ that the figure of man embodied the proportions of classical architecture. Here, the built world is understood in reference to the human form. In his books Designing for People (2003) and The Measure of Man (1960) Henry Dreyfuss incorporates human physical metrics when he describes his approach to industrial design. Dreyfuss’ books, and