An Interdisciplinary Approach

- A Unified Ontology-driven Modeling Methodology for databases, knowledge bases and OO-systems
 - Grounded in reality
 - Transparent to people
 - Rigorous
 - General
- Based on
 - Logic
 - Philosophy
 - Linguistics



Formal Ontology

Theory of *formal distinctions and connections* within:

- entities of the world, as we perceive it (*particulars*)
- categories we use to talk about such entities (universals)

Why formal?

- Two meanings: *rigorous* and *general*
- Formal logic: connections between truths neutral wrt trut
- Formal ontology: connections between things neutral wrt reality
- *Goal: characterizing* particulars and universals by means of formal properties and relations.

The role of formal relations

Formal relations

- only depend on their relata
- apply to multiple subdomains

Material relations

- Imply the existence of something besides the relata
- Are specific of a few subdomains
- Role of formal relations
 - Formulate general constraints on the domain
 - Induce distinctions among entities that impose a a general structure on the domain.

Formal Ontological Analysis

- Theory of Parts
- Theory of Wholes
- Theory of Essence and Identity
- Theory of Dependence
- Theory of Qualities
- Theory of Composition and Constitution

Mereology

- Primitive: *proper part-of* relation (PP) •
 - asymmetric
 - transitive
 - $Pxy = \frac{P}{def} PPxy \vee x = y$
- Axioms:

upplementation: $PPxy \rightarrow \exists z (PPzy \land \neg z = x)$

rinciple of sum: $\exists z (PPxz \land PPyz \land \neg \exists w(PPwz \land \neg (Pwx \lor Pwy)))$

xtensionality: $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{y} \leftrightarrow (\mathbf{Pwx} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{Pwy})$

Excluded models:



Extensionality and mereological invariance

Extensionality: whenever the parts exist, x exists (*the whole is always the sum of its parts*)

Mereological invariance: x always keeps its parts

Examples of extensional entities:

- Amounts of matter
- Regions
- Pluralities (pseudo-extensionality)
- Mereologically invariant (but non-extensional) entities:
- A physical body (a lump of matter)

Identity and Unity

- Identity: is this my dog?
- Unity: is the collar part of my dog?



Unity

A tentative formulation: x is a whole under ω iff ω is an equivalence relation that binds together all the parts of x, such that

$$\mathsf{P}(y,x) \to (\mathsf{P}(z,x) \leftrightarrow \omega(y,z))$$

but not

$$\omega(y,z) \leftrightarrow \exists x(\mathsf{P}(y,x) \land \mathsf{P}(z,x))$$

- P is the *part-of* relation
- (a) can be seen as a *generalized indirect connection*

Unity Refined

 $\delta_R(x) =_{\mathrm{df}} R(x, x)$

 $\upsilon_{R}(x) = \sum_{df} \Sigma_{\delta R}(x) \land \forall y, z((\delta_{R}(y) \land \delta_{R}(z) \land P(y, x) \land P(z, x)) - R(y, z))$ (x is unified by R)

 $\omega_R(x) =_{df} Max_{\upsilon R}(x) \qquad (x \text{ is a whole under } R)$

 $\Sigma_{\phi}(x) =_{\mathrm{df}} \forall y (P(y, x) \to \exists z (\phi(z) \land P(z, x) \land O(z, y)) (sum of \phi z)$

Kinds of Whole

- Depending on the *nature of o*, we can distinguish:
 - Topological wholes (a piece of coal, a lump of coal)
 - Morphological wholes (a constellation)
 - Functional wholes (a hammer, a bikini)
 - Social wholes (a population)
- * a whole can have parts that are themselves wholes (with a different ω)

Parts vs. components

- A proper part is a *component* iff it is a whole
- We can have topological components, morphological components, functional components....

Unity and Plurality

- Ordinary objects: wholes or sums of wholes
 - Singular: no wholes as proper parts
 - Plural: sums of wholes with a common unity condition
 - Plural wholes (the sum is also a whole)
 - Collections (the sum is not a whole)
 - Members of collections are special parts!
- "Fiat" objects: everything else
- Role of *topological wholes* in perception (ordinary *things*)

Unity Disjointness Constraint

Properties with incompatible UCs are *disjoint*

Essence and Rigidity

- Certain entities have *essential* properties.
- John must have a brain.
- John must be a person.
- Certain properties are essential to *all* their instances (compare *being a person* with *having a brain*).
- These properties are rigid if an entity is ever an instance of a rigid property, it must always be.

Permanent vs. Essential Properties

- Being *always* a student
- · Being necessarily a student
- Quantifying on *possibilia*

Formal Rigidity

- ϕ is rigid (+R): $\forall x \blacklozenge \phi(x) \rightarrow \blacksquare \phi(x)$ - e.g. Person, Apple
- φ is non-rigid (-R): ∃ x ◆ φ(x) ∧ ¬ φ(x)

 e.g. Red, Male
- ϕ is anti-rigid (~R): $\forall x \land \phi(x) \rightarrow \neg \blacksquare \phi(x)$ - e.g. Student, Agent



Identity as a *primitive* relation

Identity is a *primitive equivalence relation* that satisfies Leibniz's rule.

In general, *identity can't be defined*. What we can have are just *informative constraints (identity criteria)*

...related to relevant *classes* of entities

...which are ultimately the result of *our conceptualization* of reality.

Synchronic Identity

• A plausible criterion:

x and y are the same iff they have the same location

- Exceptions:
 - Immaterial objects (holes...)
 - Events (singing while taking a shower...)
 - Constituting entities (the statue's clay...)

Diachronic Identity

- It's hard, but terribly useful for commonsense
- Requires some notion of persistence
- In addition, the *sameness* (or continuity) of certain properties is required

Identity is not similarity!

- At different spatio/temporal locations, two things may be identical but not similar, and vice versa.
- Identity and similarity are *different concepts*.
- Similarity may be seen as a generalization of geometrical *congruence*
- Indiscernability of identicals (Leibniz's law) vs.
 identity of indiscernibles

Identity criteria

Classical formulation:

 $\phi(\mathbf{x}) \land \phi(\mathbf{y}) \rightarrow (\rho(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) \leftrightarrow \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{y})$

Generalization:

 $\phi(x, t) \land \phi(y, t') \rightarrow (\Gamma(x, y, t, t') \leftrightarrow x = y)$ (synchronic: t = t'; diachronic: $t \neq t'$)

In most cases, Γ is based on the *sameness* of certain *characteristic features*:

$$\Gamma(x, y, t, t) = \forall z (\chi(x, z, t) \land \chi(y, z, t))$$

Heuristics for Identity

- Finding necessary and sufficient ICs for a given property may be very hard.
- Heuristic 1: at least a sufficient IC.
- Heuristic 2: some essential parts or qualities
- Heuristic 3: some essential (non-rigid) properties

Sortals and other properties

- Sortals (horse, triangle, amount of matter, person, student...)
 - Carry identity
 - Usually correspond to *nouns*
 - High organizational utility
 - Main subclasses: *types* and *roles*
- Non-sortals (red, big, decomposable, eatable, dependent, singular...)
 - No identity
 - Usually correspond to *adjectives*
 - Span across different sortals
 - Limited organizational utility (but high semantic value)
 - Categories (universal, particular, event, substance...)
 - No identity
 - Useful generalizations for sortals
 - Characterized by a set of (only necessary) formal properties
 - Good organizational utility

Local vs. Global ICs

• LocalIC: $\phi(x,t) \land \phi(y,t) \rightarrow (\Gamma(x,y,t,t) \leftrightarrow x = y)$

Global IC:

 $\phi(x,t) \rightarrow (\Gamma(x,y,t,t) \leftrightarrow x = y)$

Carrying vs. Supplying Identity

- Supplying (global) identity (+0)
 - Having an IC (or essential property) that doesn't hold for a subsuming property
- Carrying identity (+I)
 - Not supplying identity, while being subsumed by a property that does.
- Common sortal principle: x=y -> there is a common sortal supplying their identity
- Theorem: only rigid properties supply global identity

Sortal specialization

- Type specialization (e.g. Living being \rightarrow Person)
 - New features (especially essential properties) affect identity
 - Both necessary and sufficient ICs can be added while specializing types
 - Polygon: same edges, same angles
 - Triangle: two edges, one angle
 - Living being: same DNA, etc...?
 - Zebra: same stripes?
- *Role* specialization (e.g. Person → Student)
 - New features *don't affect identity*

Types and Roles



Identity Disjointness Constraint

ICs impose *constraints* on sortals, making their ontological nature explicit:

Properties with incompatible ICs are *disjoint*

Examples:

- sets vs. ordered sets
- persons and passengers
- amounts of matter vs. assemblies

Inheriting identity constraints

If P is rigid:

x is the same P as $y \leftrightarrow x = y$

• x is the same P as y every x is a Q

x is the same Q as y



Example - Identity

Is time-interval a subclass of time-duration?

Initial answer: yes
IC for time-duration

Same-length

IC for time-interval

Same start & end





Part, Constitution, and Identity

- Structure may change identity
- Mereological extensionality is lost
- *Constitution* links the two entities
- Constitution is asymmetric (implies *dependence*)



Ontological Levels and IC/UC Kinds

- Physical
 - Mereological
 - Topological
 - Morphological
- Functional
- Biological
- Cognitive/Intentional
- Social

(an amount of matter, a collection) (a piece of matter) (a cubic block, a constellation) (a tool, a biological organ) (a human body) (a person, a robot) (a company)

- Correspond to different *kinds* of IC/UC
- All levels except the mereological one have non-extensional IC
- A generic dependence relation links higher levels to their immediate inferior.

How ontological levels simplify taxonomies


Why bother with this?

- Formal ontological analysis requires analyzing all properties according to their meta-properties This is a lot of work!
- Why perform this analysis?
 - Makes modeling assumptions clear, which:
 - Helps resolving known conflicts
 - Helps recognizing unkown conflicts
 - Imposes *constraints* on standard modeling primitives (*generalization, aggregation, association*)
 - Elicits natural distinctions
 - ...results in more *reusable ontologies*

Resolving Ontological Conflicts

- Two well-known ontologies define:
 - Physical Object is-a Amount of Matter (WordNet)
 - Amount of Matter is-a Physical Object (Pangloss)
- Amount of Matter
 - unstructured /scattered "stuff"
- Identity: mereologically extensional
- Unity: intrinsically none (anti-unity)

- Physical Object
 - Isolated material body
 - Identity three options:
 - None
 - Non-extensional
 - Extensional
 - Unity: Topological

Conclusion: the two concepts are *disjoint*. Physical objects are *constituted* by amounts of matter

Overloading Subsumption Common modeling pitfalls

- Instantiation
- Constitution
- Composition
- Disjunction
- Polýsemy

Taxonomic Constraints

- +R ⊄ ~R
- -I ⊄ +I
- -U ⊄ +U
- +U ⊄ ~U
- -D ⊄ +D

- Incompatible IC's are disjoint
- Incompatible UC's are disjoint

- Categories subsume everything
- Roles can't subsume types

Instantiation (1)

Does this ontology mean that My ThinkPad is a ThinkPad Model?



Question: What ThinkPad models do you sell? Answer should NOT include My ThinkPad --- nor yours.





Question: What Computers do you sell? Answer should NOT include Disk Drives or Memory.



Disjunction (1)











Question: How many books do you have on Hemingway? Answer: 5,000







Question: What types of matter will conduct electricity? Answer should NOT include computers.



Property Dependence

- Does a property holding for x depend on something else besides x?
 - $P(x) \rightarrow \exists y Q(y)$
 - y should not be a part of x
- Example: Student/Teacher, customer/vendor

Basic Property Kinds Table

+		ł	+	±	Туре
-	-	+	+	±	Quasi-type
_	-	+	_	-	Mixin
-	-	+	~	+	Mat. role
_	-	+	~	-	Phased sortal
-		-	+	±	Category
_		-	~	+	Formal role
-		-	-	-	Attribution

A formal ontology of properties



The Backbone Taxonomy

Assumption: no entity without identity

- Since identity is supplied by types, every entity must instantiate a type
- The taxonomy of types spans the whole domain
- Together with categories, types form the backbone taxonomy, which represents the invariant structure of a domain (rigid properties spanning the whole domain)



Well-founded ontology design

An *ontology-cleaning* example

Dealing with Ontological Relativism

 Deciding about the meta-properties carried by a given property...

Is up to YOU!

 But a *common agreement* must be achieved about the formal meaning (and practical utility) of meta-properties



Property Analysis Entity, Location

- Entity
 - Everything is an entity
 - -I-U-D+R
 - Category

- Location
 - A generalized region of space.
 - +O: by its parts (mereologically extensional).
 - ~U: no way to isolate a location
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Amount of Matter, Red

- Amount of Matter
 - unstructured /scattered
 "stuff" as lumps of clay
 or some bricks
 - +0: mereologically extensional
 - ~U: intrinsically no unity
 - -D+R
 - Type

• Red

- Really Red-thing, the set of all red-colored entities
- -I-U-D-R
- Formal Attribution



Property Analysis Agent, Group

- Agent
 - An entity playing a part in some event
 - -I-U: no *universal* IC/UC
 - +D: on the event/action participating in
 - ~R: no instance is necessarily an agent
 - Formal role

- Group
 - An *unstructured* collection of wholes
 - +O: same-members
 - ~U: unstructured, no unity.
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Physical Object, Living Being

- Physical Object
 - Isolated material objects.
 - +O: same spatial location (only synchronic, no common diachronic IC).
 - +U: Topological
 - -D+R
 - Type

- Living Being
 - +0: same-DNA (only nec.)
 - +U: biological unity
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Food, Animal

- Food
 - +I-O~U: amt. of matter
 - +D: something that eats it.
 - ~R: being food is not necessary...
 - Material Role

- Animal
 - +0: same-brain
 - +U: biological unity
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Legal Agent, Group of People

- Legal Agent
 - A legally recognized entity
 - +L: All legal systems have a defined IC, has-same-legal-ID
 - -U: no universal unity
 - +D: on the legal body that recognizes it
 - ~R: not necessary
 - Material Role

- Group of People
 - See Group
 - +I-O~U-D+R
 - Quasi-type



Property Analysis Social Entity, Organization

- Social Entity
 - A group of people together for social reasons
 - -I: no universal IC
 - +U: social-connection
 - -D+R
 - category

- Organization
 - A group of people together, with roles that define some structure
 - +0: same-mission and way of operating
 - +U: functional
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Fruit

- Fruit
 - An individual fruit, such as an orange or bannana
 - +O: same-plant, sameshape, etc. (only nec.)
 - +U: topological
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Apple, Red Apple

- Apple
 - +O: shape, color, skin pattern (only nec)
 - +U: topological
 - -D+R
 - Type

- Red-Apple
 - +I-O: from Apple
 - +U: from Apple
 - -D
 - ~R: no red apple is necessarily red
 - type-attribution mixin



Property Analysis Vertebrate, Person

- Vertebrate
 - Really vertebrateanimal
 - A biological classification that adds new membership criteria (has-backbone)
 - +I-O: from animal
 - +U: from animal
 - -D+R
 - quasi-type

- Person
 - +O: same-fingerprint
 - +U: from animal
 - -D+R
 - Type



Property Analysis Butterfly, Caterpillar

- Butterfly
 - +L: same-wing-pattern
 - +U: biological
 - -D
 - ~R: the same entity can be something else (a caterpillar)
 - Phased sortal

- Caterpillar
 - +L: spots, legs, color
 - +U: biological
 - -D
 - ~R: caterpillars become butterflies and change their IC
 - Phased sortal



Property Analysis Country

- Country
 - A place recognized by convention as autonomous
 - +L: government, sub-regions
 - +U: countries are countable (heuristic)
 - -D
 - ~R: some countries do not exist as countries any more (e.g. Prussia) but are still places
 - Phased sortal


















































Use OntoClean for all your ontology cleaning needs!

