

The Conceptualization of Phenomena

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Abstract

In theoretical researches, the distinction between reality and concept is important because it provides crucial information.

A reality, such as an object or a phenomenon, has physical properties. This is why a reality can be submitted to various experiences: for instance, it is observable and measurable.

The observation of a reality leads to a corresponding concept: a concept is an idea that one has about a reality or a phenomenon ; it is not observable and not measurable.

Keywords: *Conceptualization; Phenomena; Reality*

The Concept

A concept is a construction of the mind. Unlike reality, a concept has no physical properties. Therefore, a concept does not exist in the nature. Of course, a concept can have various specific properties, like mathematical properties, psychological properties, etc.

Two examples

A cadaver is a complex reality for numerous reasons:

- First of all it has physical, chemical and biological properties.
- Secondly these properties evolve with time ; not because of time, that is not an active phenomenon, but because of the organic nature of the cadaver, because of the surrounding environment, because of the risks of pollution of the crime scene.

Since a lot of information is perishable, the forensic investigation must urgently gather as much information as possible: place, position, weight, physical damages, state of decomposition, development of larvae, skin colorations, rigor mortis, reconstitution of the “modus operandi” compared to standard data and added to the investigator’s experience, is a decisive step in the development of the criminal file.

The analysis of the “modus operandi” leads to the concept of “criminal type”.

The concept of osteoarthritis is not observable: the physician can only observe the syndromes (clinical revealing symptoms) of osteoarthritis such as a pain, an inflammation.

The severity of osteoarthritis results from severity of clinical symptoms.

The invention of time units

The observation of natural changes has gradually led the ancients to the invention of time units.

The repetition of the lunations led the Sumerians to invent the “lunar month” (2800-2500 BC) [1]. It was the first step towards the invention of a major concept: “time”.

The revolution of the Earth around the Sun is an observable phenomenon, but the “year”, which has no physical existence, is not. We found this interesting verse of the Greek poet Homer in Song II of “ODYSSEY” (8th BC): “when the forth year came and when seasons start again” [2]. The return of seasons every four years indicates that during the 8th century BC in Greece, the year had three months.

Erratic values of the year prove that the year is a concept.

About the length

The length is a concept. Therefore, it is not measurable. One does not measure the length of an object ; instead, one measures what separates the two ends of the object: the result is called “length of the object”.

A footprint in the sand has not a size. Instead of the size, one measures the separation between the two ends of the print: the result is called “size of the print”, which is a concept.

The Greek mathematician and geographer Eratosthenes (276-194) succeeded in evaluating the meridian by comparing the shadow cast of the same object in two different places.

Eratosthenes was convinced that he was measuring the length of the shadows; instead, and strictly speaking, he measured what separated the two ends of the shadow. Anyway he called the result “length of the shadows”.

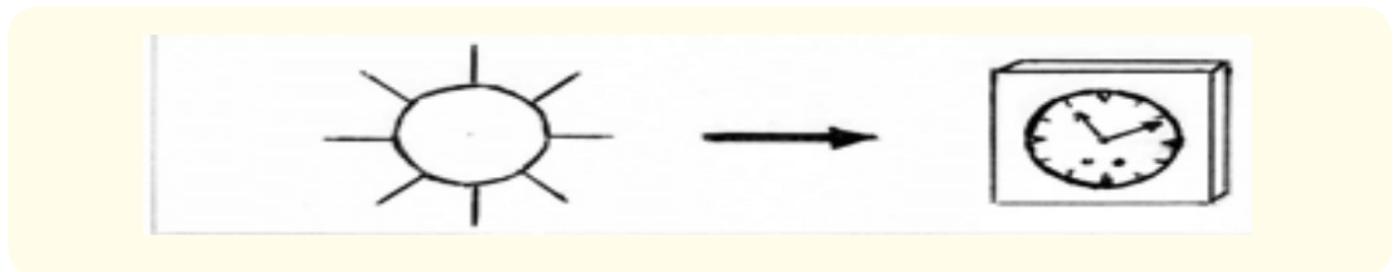
The invention of the clock

The conception is the opposite approach. For example, an artifact is an object conceived on the basis of an idea.

The idea of measuring changes led the Mesopotamians to designing a clock. Between 18th and 16th BC, they invented a water clock called clepsydra [1]. In “Life of Alcibiades”, the Greek biographer Plutarch (c.47-c.125) used the appropriate expression “measure the water of clepsydra” [3]: he did not measure time.

A clock is a device whose functioning is correlated with the configuration of the Sun and the Earth.

Below: conception of an artifact based on an idea.



Conclusion

A physical reality has physical properties; the corresponding concepts have no physical properties; these concepts can possibly have mathematical properties.

The rigorous distinction done between a reality and the corresponding concept will allow one to demonstrate that time and space are concepts. More precisely, time is not a phenomenon and space has no materiality.

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