INFO 6540

Ontology Assignment: Infinite Jest

Prof: Elvira Mitraka

Student: Brian Jenkins, B00782701

Date: March 6th, 2018

Ontology: InfiniteJest

The subject matter of this ontology is the novel Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace. The purpose of this ontology is to track the novel's major themes, main characters, and plot elements and see how they relate to one another. By organizing this information this way this challenging novel can be understood more easily. I chose this as my subject for an ontology because this is a lengthy novel with a non-linear plot structure that has a large cast of characters who, although isolated from each another, share similar characteristics. To understand the novel on a deeper level, I can bring these characters together with their shared characteristics in relation to the novel's themes, and develop a deeper understanding of this challenging confusing book.

The object properties of this ontology are divided into two main categories: Family and Characteristics. The "Family" category has object properties like "isBirthMotherTo" and "hasBirthMother", etc. These familial relations are important to track as they are closely related to themes, specifically the classes and subclasses of Communication and Trauma. Family object properties are based on simple human relationships, for example, the domain of the object property "isBirthMotherTo" is limited to one character, Avril_Incandenza, and the range of this property are her three boys: Mario, Hal, and Orin_Incandenza. I developed an inverse relationship for this object property called "isBirthMotherTo." This was developed so when entering the relationship for the object property "isBirthMotherTo", Protégé automatically makes an "inverse relationship" where the domain and range of this new relationship, called "hasBirthMother", is an inversion of the domain and range of "isBirthMotherOf". I also developed more simple family relationships such as "hasBrother" where the domain

were one of the three Incandenza children and the range were the designated brothers of their sibling classes.

The other category of object properties is "Characteristics". These are important for tracking themes and for the novel's literary allusions such as Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and Dostoevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov". The domain of each "Characteristic" object property is a character and the ranges are either a theme, allusion, or a sub-class of either. One object property is "dead", its domain is the character Dr._James_Orin_Incandenza, and the range is the sub-class "Hamlet" of the parent class "Allusions". The range of this class of object properties is a vital part of understanding how a theme is portrayed within a character or plot element. For example, the plot element "The_Entertainment", the video tape so entertaining that people will allow themselves to waste away and eventually die from being utterly captivated by its spectacle, has an object property of "hasFatalPleasure" with a range of "in_Thrall", a sub-class of the parent class "Addiction". However, applying this same object property to a different domain needs a different range. For example, the domain Remy_Marathe with the object property "hasFatalPleasure" has the range "Freedom/Limits". This is important because this character is not afflicted with the "Fatal Pleasure" like "The_Entertainment", but instead is the character who identifies "fatal pleasure" as a characteristic of "The-Entertainment". By carefully making these relationships between characters, plot elements, and themes, the reader can more easily grasp what David Foster Wallace has to say about the human condition in Infinite Jest.