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Shape and Function of Solid Objects, Vol. 137: Some Examples (Classic Reprint)

By Ernest Davis

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Introduction This paper analyses the relation between shape and function in a few basic objects - various kinds of boxes, buttons, and rings. The basic ontology used in the analysis has already been studied in [1]; it gives a formal semantics for such concepts as object, action, physical law, etc. By analysing these particular objects in detail, we wish, firstly, to test the adequacy of this ontology in reasoning about shape and action, and, secondly, to determine what geometric predicates are needed in this domain. Our analysis of each type of object has three parts. First, we present a general definition of the object in terms of its shape. Second, we enumerate some important facts about the functioning of the object, and express them in terms of our ontology. This expression is sometimes in English, sometimes in predicate calculus, and sometimes in both, whichever is dearest. Third, we define some of the geometric predicates which are useful in determining whether an object can serve...



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