

3rd Workshop in the Philosophy of Information.

The Third Workshop in the Philosophy of Information (18-19/11/2010, Brussel, <http://www.vub.ac.be/CLWF/3WPI/>) followed previous editions (Oxford, 2007 and Ankara, May 2010) of focused workshops organized by members of the IEG Research Group (Oxford <http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/activities/ieg/home.htm>). The main aim of this workshop was to bring together researchers with an explicit interest in the notion of information and researchers from related areas. The program was structured around lectures with replies from a commentator. A considerable number of interested visitors attended the event as well.

Tony Belpaeme (Artificial Intelligence, University of Plymouth) opened on the first day with a lecture on the cultural origins of mental representation, maintaining that language is a catalyst in category acquisition and information is a product of cultural interaction. In his comment, Matteo Turilli (IEG and OeRC, Oxford) focused on the importance of meaning in artificial agents, the primitive understanding of the notion of concept (as opposed to its empirical satisfaction), and the value of simulations in validating theories.

Werner Callebaut (KLI, Altenberg) gave us an overview of the change in meaning of the notion of information in the biological sciences. He questioned the relevance of this scientific progress in relation to the philosophical debate. Max Cresswell (FLAC & Victoria University of Wellington) replied, and questioned the scientific understanding of the notion of truth in its theoretical and empirical uses.

Opening the afternoon session, Luciano Floridi (Oxford & Hertfordshire) added a new component to his formulation of an information-based epistemology and metaphysics. He started with the accounting-notion as the epistemic operation that upgrades information to knowledge, then dealt with a potential problem related to knowledge acquired by perception and testimony. The replies were delivered by Adriane Rini (FLAC & Massey University), who solicited further explanations on the role of modalities and modal expressions in informational theories.

Gabriella Pigozzi (Paris-Dauphiné) connected epistemology with logic by presenting an argumentation-based method of aggregating information in MAS as a means to solve conflicts between individual and collective choices. In his comments, Jonas de Vuyst (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) focused on the informal meaning of the presented operators, and their applicability to context-dependent argumentation frameworks.

The final lecture of the first day was delivered by Darrell Rowbottom (Oxford), who talked about the role of information and knowledge in the philosophy of Science. Starting from the old definition of knowledge as justified true belief, Darrell defended the thesis that scientific progress is about useful information, rather than about knowledge.

On the second day Benedikt Löwe (FLAC & UvAmsterdam) opened with a talk on formal and informal ways of understanding the equivalence of narratives. Lorenz Demey (KU Leuven), in his comment, first described some problems with the formal definition of equivalence, and then focused on

connections between structure, content, the range of states compatible with a certain piece of information, and accuracy.

Liesbeth de Mol (UGent) presented a number of historical case studies from the history of computing, and used these to describe shifting roles in man-machine interactions. This led Bart van Kerkhove (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) to question the relevance and reliability of artificial agents in delivering mathematical knowledge.

Erik Myin (UAntwerpen) opened the afternoon session. In his talk, he defended an externalist picture of information processing, following which the processing of world-involving information is the default condition. Commentaries by Filip Buekens (Tilburg University) criticized the thesis that no internal processes occur in the mind by drawing an analogy with how we analyse machines that miscalculate.

The final talk was delivered by Francesca Poggiolesi (Vrije Universiteit Brussel). She defended the view that analyticity is a valuable property for proof-theoretical systems, and illustrated her point by describing such a calculus for the logic of proofs. Giuseppe Primiero (UGent) questioned the relevance of such a property for knowledge representation, and emphasized the necessity of an appropriate logical counterpart to the notion of refutable assumption.

This Workshop was a great occasion for interaction among different research areas, with the notion of information on the background. We are looking forward for its next edition.

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