Working Together in Philosophy and Informatics: An Introduction to the Contributions of the Fifth International Workshop on Philosophy and Informatics (WSPI 2008)

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Having people from two sciences come together appears to be a difficult task, especially when one of the sciences has a tradition that can be counted in millennia and where the other one some decades ago simply did not exist. Todays talking about ontologies in informatics (computer science), for instance, can easily be misleading. The term is borrowed from philosophy where there is no such thing as a multitude of ontologies, there is only ontology as the subject of existence.

The Fifth International Workshop on Philosophy and Informatics WSPI 2008 was organized by the Knowledge Management Department of the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence, the Department of Philosophy of University of Kaiserslautern and the Special Interest Group Philosophy and Informatics (SIG PandI) of the German Informatics Society (*Arbeitskreis "Philosophie und Informatik" der Gesellschaft für Informatik*).

This group provides a platform for discussions in form of regular meetings and workshops. This combination brings together scientists from philosophy, informatics, and from related fields. It addresses and encourages especially—but not exclusively—the trans-disciplinary discourse on foundations of artificial intelligence with the help of philosophy. A lot of topics have been discussed already, e.g., the relation between philosophical concepts of ontology and ontologies as a concept of knowledge representation. For further information about the goals and the progress of the SIG and the results of earlier workshops and work meetings, visit the SIG's website[3].

The main goal of this workshop series is to encourage interdisciplinary exchange on the philosophical foundations of informatics. They seek to bring together researchers from philosophy, informatics and neighboring disciplines in order to explore common points of interest and to intensify the exchange be-

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[3] http://www.philosophyandinformatics.org

tween the disciplines and a common vocabulary. The workshop also serves as the annual meeting platform of the members of the Special Interest Group on Philosophy and Informatics. The 2008 Workshop had a special focus on the area of conceptualization and representation in both computer science and philosophy.

1 Motivation

It seems clear that scientists of both areas can enter into fruitful discussions. For centuries philosophy has been a seed of ideas used to fertilize other disciplines, such as mathematics or physics.

During the last years it became clear that knowledge conceptualization and representation have crucial influence on accessibility of information both in research and business activities. However, the multidisciplinarity of the approaches and the complexity of the notion of knowledge raise many issues, which are often simply ignored or treated offhandedly. Computer scientists are very much involved in system and application modeling while using concepts implicitly or only vaguely grasping them. There are assumptions made or to be made in order to have a coherent view on the subject. Also there is the danger, that the notion of terms like "ontology" or "semantics" are misused. They become a mere marketing label and one looses track from the ambitious goal.

On the other hand, for millennia, Ontology as a discipline of philosophy—as the mother of sciences—addressed the notion of the conceptualization of our view of the world. Philosophy is about concepts and clarifying them to the maximum extent, sometimes not bothering about possible applications of the generated knowledge. What, then, seems better than systematically examining the potential of contributions of philosophy to the formalization of world knowledge for mutual promotion and synergy? The philosophical notion of ontology, which gained considerable impact in the information sciences, was an analogous success story.

In this environment the workshop's discussions centered around the topics of conceptualization as a common field of research in philosophy and informatics, ontologies and ontology, knowledge and context, personalization of knowledge/embodied mind, epistemological framework, and philosophy of information. These topics are addressed in one or more of the presented papers.

2 Contents

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