

Information as a Construct [†]

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Abstract: Information is not an objective and independent concept. It is influenced by society we live in, by the culture and its historical development. States of affairs we would like to change, changeable and unchangeable components of the world are all expressions of power over the world.

Keywords: information; power; communication

1. Introduction

Information is an answer to a question of some kind. That reflects the fact that to be aware of an information one has to be prepared for its acceptance. The acceptance of an information is not a trivial act; it is the result of a conflict in which an individual meets the world. It is the process of coming to terms with the brute world.

2. Man and the World

First comes the wish that something be such and such, then recognition of the different state of affairs in reality which has to be changed and finally reconciliation with some unchangeable facts. The distinction between the wish, the fact that has to be changed and the unchangeable fact is not stable. It often depends on one's power, perspective and presuppositions that are however necessary as they reflect involvement and interest in the world. The development of modern science, which breaks our common understanding and shows that the everyday world as we normally understand it can look like very differently, is just one example. However, science always thinks it has come to a final true description of the world and doesn't concede how relative its stance can be. As an argument in the support of the constructivist claim in science we can state the Kuhn's conception of scientific revolutions [1], Duhem Quine thesis [2] or Wittgenstein's rule following theory [3] which all stress the importance of background assumptions.

In human history various theories have been developed that claim to have found a universally valid differentiation of these three principles of wish, changeable fact and unchangeable fact or at least they show limits to them. Man's wishes are limited because e.g., of his nature; what can be changed is limited by the rules governing the world and some stable parts of the world can't be changed at all. That division can have power consequences. Thinking is always related to power. Understanding and expressing something as unchangeable means the person doesn't have power to change it and doesn't even try. Defining something as something implies that other objects don't belong into this category and must be treated differently.

We can also express the problem of conforming to the powerful prevailing limits and fighting with the world as differentiation between identity and non-identity. Identity means accepting the state of affairs, non-identity fighting against it.

3. Models of Communication

In the communication theory, there are two concepts of information communication. There is the transmission model of communication and the constructionist model of communication [4]. In the transmission model, information is sent from a sender to a receiver. This theory views communication including information recognition as a means for sending and receiving information. The proponents of the other model claim that meaning is reflexively constructed, maintained and negotiated in the process of communication. Communication is in their opinion a social practice that transforms the communicators, their identities, reality framings etc. This is close to Bateson's concept of information as difference that makes a difference.

Realizing the limits and obstacles refers to a sort of compliance with the world. However, it is just the first step of the liberation and emancipation process which can't lead to a full emancipation, but to the formation of a new conditional meaning.

4. Information Technologies

Information technologies allow easy distribution and communication of information. One of the expected advantages of this situation was the constraint of bureaucracy necessary for the governing of the state. However, the expectations have not been fulfilled and we are facing more bureaucratic practices in the support of security, fair treatment etc. that lead to increased emphasis on conformation.

The easy availability of information was intended to free man from his limited perspective, but man hasn't used the chance yet and spends his time searching unimportant amusing content.

Information should originally have informed us about the world, but we rather use it to leave the world and spend our lives in virtual environments.

Information should have explained the world, but now causes its intransparency as the world is very complicated and complex. That is different to non-identity mentioned above. The intransparency means that man is deprived of his contact with the world as he can't influence anything and becomes passive.

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