

## INTRODUCTION

PATRICK ALLO<sup>1</sup> & GIUSEPPE PRIMIERO<sup>2</sup>

The philosophy of information puts the concept of information at the core of our philosophical inquiries, but doesn't limit itself to the introduction of a new subject-matter into philosophy. Instead, through its chosen focus it really aims to rethink and restructure philosophy as we know it. One area where this reconceptualisation is taking place is in epistemology, where the relation between information and knowledge with its traditional components, namely belief, truth and justification is being investigated. As such, by adding information to the conceptual toolbox of epistemology, one also ventures into neighbouring areas like metaphysics (truth), semantics (meaning), and the philosophy of mind (agency).

Each of the four papers included in this issue take up one or more challenges in these areas by investigating the connection between truth and information (Demir and Rowbottom), the connection between information and knowledge (Rowbottom and Floridi), or by developing a more constructive approach to topics in epistemology and semantics, and emphasising the role of agency and the construction of models (Floridi and Löwe & Fisseni).

In “Taking Stock: Arguments for the Veridicality Thesis,” Hilmi Demir revisits a debate that has been an issue in the philosophy of information at least since the work of Grice and Dretske, and gained momentum when Floridi became one of the strongest proponents of a conception of semantic information as *truthful semantic content* rather than as the more traditional (*mere*) *semantic content*.

In “Information versus knowledge in confirmation theory,” Darrell Rowbottom asks whether the “knowledge” in “background knowledge” as the term is used in confirmation theory should really be understood along the lines of the traditional tri-partite account of knowledge as justified, true belief. He consecutively denies that background information (or background knowledge — both terms occur in the literature) requires belief, justification, and truth, and then proposes to understand it as *mere semantic content*.

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Logic and Philosophy of Science, Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Computer Science, Middlesex University, London.

Luciano Floridi's "Perception and Testimony as Data Providers" starts from the connections between data and information (no information without data-representation), and between information and knowledge (the information that "*p*" is necessary, but not sufficient for knowing that "*p*") to elucidate the concepts of *perceptual knowledge* and *testimonial knowledge*. Although initially framed as a reply to an objection of his analysis of knowledge as 'semantic information + an account for that information', the core of the paper is a defence of the view that, pace the received view on this matter, we do not automatically acquire knowledge through perception or testimony, but merely acquire data that need further processing. Crucially, this further processing requires active agents.

"Event mappings for comparing formal frameworks for narratives" by Löwe & Fisseni presents an extended study of formal frameworks for the analysis of narratives, and develops a method for comparing such frameworks. The primary outcome is the event mapping technique that is used to bridge natural language descriptions of narratives with formal models thereof. This contribution is doubly related to the philosophy of information, first because of the connection between narratives and information (as the authors recognise, "narratives [are] tools to store and transmit information"), and, second, because of the methodological focus on the comparison of formal models; a topic that is closely associated with the method of abstraction in the philosophy of information.

In the first two papers, the continuity between the philosophy of information, and traditional approaches in analytic philosophy and the philosophy of science can be readily appreciated. The third and fourth paper, by contrast, make a more marked break with the tradition. While both Floridi and Löwe & Fisseni put models at the core of their argument, Floridi does so by showing how cognitive agents can and should be seen as active model-builders, while Löwe and Fisseni develop a method for comparing different models. At first sight, Floridi's deliberate constructive approach places his work at the centre of where the philosophy of information is heading, whereas Löwe and Fisseni appear to remain closer to formal philosophy. Yet, the methodological reflection on the multitude of models of narrative as well as the focused analysis of how these models can be related to how cognitive agents understand narratives go well beyond mainstream formal philosophy. In our view, their broader project illustrates one more direction we would like to see as part of the future of the philosophy of information.

The philosophy of information has many facets. It doesn't just introduce new questions, but also revisits — and indeed transforms — old questions. Moreover, when it introduces new methods that break with the philosophical tradition, the philosophy of information remains continuous with

developments in the sciences of computing and information (including its hybrid forms we find in logic and formal philosophy). This could be seen as the main feature of doing philosophy of information: to do philosophy, with an inclusive attitude towards contemporary science, society and technology, and with ample attention for the dialogue between *techné*, *episteme* and *phronesis*.