The Metaphysics of Chinese Information Philosophy: A Critical Analysis of Wu Kun’s Philosophy of Information

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Compared with other transdisciplinary frames of information Wu Kun’s philosophy of information differs in its metaphysical framework in that it has a background in a conception of Dialectics of Nature coming from the old Stalin textbook system but also a part of the renewal of thinking in China appearing through the thought liberty movement in the 1980s, which among other things also added a modern view of information to Chinese thinking. Still it is a philosophy in a distinctive Chinese style. Wu’s philosophical system begins by re-dividing the field of existence and founding a new ontological area or aspect of being, which he called the world of information and named it objective unreality. This, ontological framework, different from that in the West, made the concept of information in his system different from the information concept in Shannon’s and even Wiener’s sense. Wu’s philosophy of information represents a search for a proper transdisciplinary framework of information covering objective laws, subjective meaning and intersubjective normativity on an extended view of dialectical materialism. But still it is in this framework—as so many others—difficult to integrate a first person phenomenological and experiential view of the narrative meaning aspects of cognitive and communicative systems.

Keywords: Wu Kun; information; pan-informationalism; transdisciplinarity; the field of existence, Peircean semiotics.

Emergence of Information philosophy in West and East³

Information is one of the key words defining our age. The information society and technology are some of the hottest topics in academia today as they play crucial roles in contemporary science and social life. As philosophy is the reflective tool of the metaphysical construction of the spirit of any age, information naturally becomes an important subject matter in philosophy today. This can also be seen in the emergence of scientific societies such as Foundations of Information Science (University of Zaragoza), the International Society for Information Studies (Vienna Technical University), and the International Center for Philosophy of Information (Xian Jiaotong University) as well as the new International Conferences on Philosophy of Information.⁴ Luciano Floridi wrote The Philosophy of Information

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3. Main sources of this article are Zhou and Brier (2014a) and Zhou and Brier (2014b).
4. See for instance http://is4is.org/.
