

COLIS 10: Ljubljana 2019

Levels of information and LIS as a science of mentefacts

Claudio Gnoli
University of Pavia, Italy

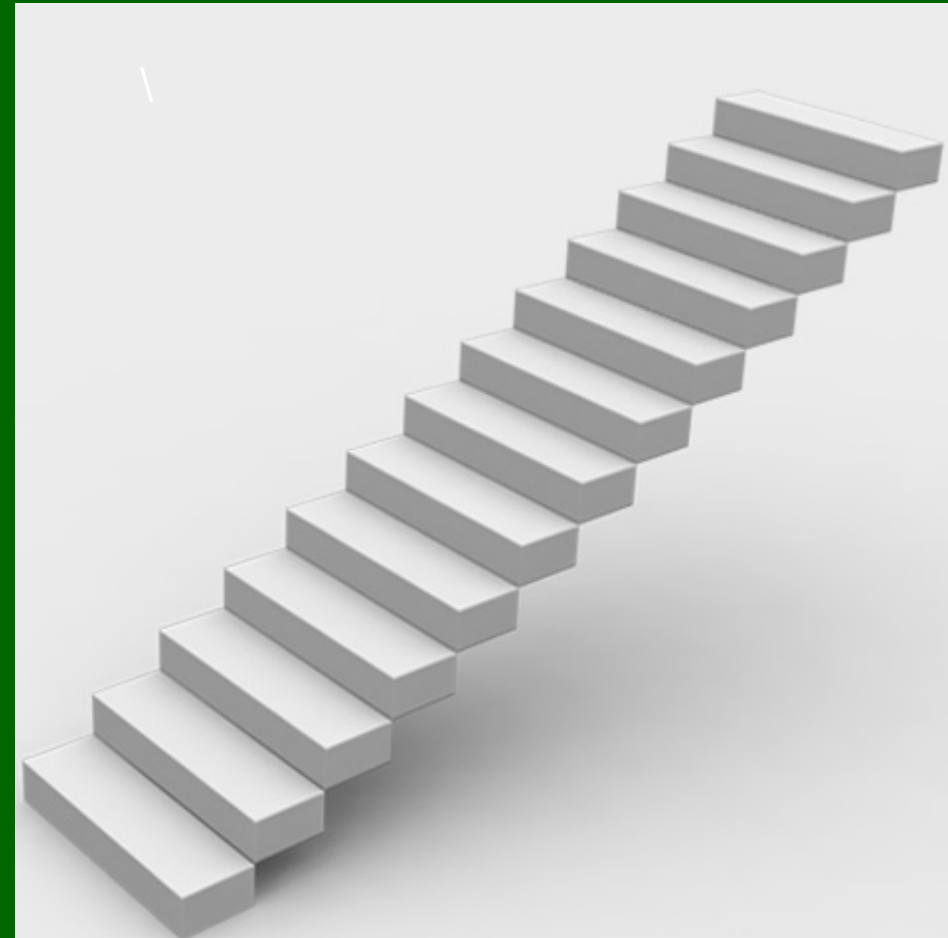
Outline

- Reconsidering the basic notions of *work, KOS, information* and *LIS* in light of
 - the theory of levels of reality.
 - Mentefacts
 - Works as mentefacts
 - KOSs as mentefacts
 - “Information” at different levels
 - LIS as a science of mentefacts

Theory of levels of reality

multiturn.co.uk

- has inspired Brown, Richardson, Bliss, the CRG, Dahlberg and other LIS-KO authors
- developed (\pm explicitly) by philosophers in different traditions: positivism (Comte), materialism (Engels), Christianity (Teilhard), metaphysics (Hartmann), ...



N. Hartmann's levels ("strata")

- spirit [= culture]
 - objectivated spirit
 - objective spirit
 - personal spirit
- mind
- life
- matter
- ideal being [logico-math. entities]

emergence



existential dependence

Can be further analyzed into:

- spirit [culture]
 - objectivated spirit [culture as human products]
 - **mentefacts: artworks, intellectual works** ≈ “World 3”
 - **artefacts: tools, buildings...**
 - objective spirit [social culture]
 - personal spirit [individual culture]
- mind
- life
- matter
- logico-math. entities



“Mentefacts”

have a thrilling bibliographic history:

HOME / BROWSE JOURNALS & BOOKS / JOURNAL OF DOCUMENTATION / VOLUME 74, ISSUE 6 / MENTEFACTS AS A MISS

Mentefacts as a missing level in theory of information science

Author(s): Claudio Gnoli, (Science and Technology Library, University of Pavia, Italy)

- Classification Research Group 1969
building on B. Kyle 1963; E. Coates 1963
“I invented it at a CRG meeting” (Kyle 1965)

(So, is “mentefacts” a woman’s idea?...)



“Mentefacts”

- J. Huxley 1955
credited in *Wikipedia*, but quoting:
- D. Bidney 1953
quoting:
- E.E. Eubank 1932, *The concepts of sociology*
quoting:
- Mrs. Eubank [J.L. Burrall ?]
pers. comm.



(So, yes: “mentefacts” is a woman’s idea,
although another woman’s!)



Reactions to “mentefacts”

HOME / BROWSE JOURNALS & BOOKS / JOURNAL OF DOCUMENTATION / VOLUME 75, ISSUE 1
/ THE FOUNDATION OF INFORMATION SCIENCE: ONE WORLD OR THREE? A DISCUSSION OF GNOLI (2018)

The foundation of information science: one world or three? A discussion of Gnoli (2018)

Author(s): Birger Hjørland, (Department of Information Studies, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark)

Among other comments, Hjørland suggests that “mentefacts” are related to “works”

Thomas M. Dousa (pers. comm.) suggests the same

“Work”

Discussed by Lubetzky, Verona, Domanovsky,
Wilson

- “is the intellectual content of a bibliographic entity. [...] Substantial change in ideational or semantic content results in the creation of a new, but related, work” (Smiraglia 2001); or
- “is the intellectual or artistic content of a distinct creation” (IFLA LRM, cf. Zumer 2017).

Works = mentefacts?

Works have their own life
at the level of objectivated spirit



Indeed, they can become part of a canon
and stimulate the origin of new works.

These processes are independent
from the origin of a work
by a specific author (personal spirit)
and social milieu (objective spirit).

Works = mentefacts?

“Language as a body of mental concepts [...] The great body of knowledge which the race has accumulated through the centuries [...] the systems of thought, the great codes of morals, the great mythologies and philosophies of the world” (Eubank 1932)

Mentefacts do not include just works, but also concepts, whole theories and systems

works \subset mentefacts

KOSs as mentefacts

Quotings suggest that another important kind of mentefacts are **knowledge organization systems (KOS)**

J EDUCATION

J2/9 *Common subdivisions*

J6P Comparative education

J7 History of education

J8 *By place*

J9 Biography

JAA PRINCIPLES & THEORY OF EDUCATION

JAC Philosophy of education

JAJ Schools of thought

JAK Education & society

JB ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

JBH Economics of education

JBH NH Financing of educational system

JBK Government in education

JBM Central government

JBP Local government

JE PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION

JECP Sensation & perception

JED Sensorimotor activity

JEEH Motivation, drives

JEF Affective experience, emotions

JEFK Cognitive processes, intellect

JEFV Learning & memory

JEK Individual psychology... Personality

JEN Social behaviour

JF EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE, ACHIEVEMENT

JFB Measurement & testing

JFL Examinations

JFOE Particular tests & examinations

JFP Selection for classes, grouping

JFR Guidance, counselling

JG STUDENTS, PUPILS

KOSs as mentefacts

KOSs do include components of personal culture (e.g. Melvil Dewey's worldview) and social culture (e.g. Christian bias in 1876 NY), but also have autonomous mentefactual properties (e.g. notational system, discipline- or phenomenon-based structure...)

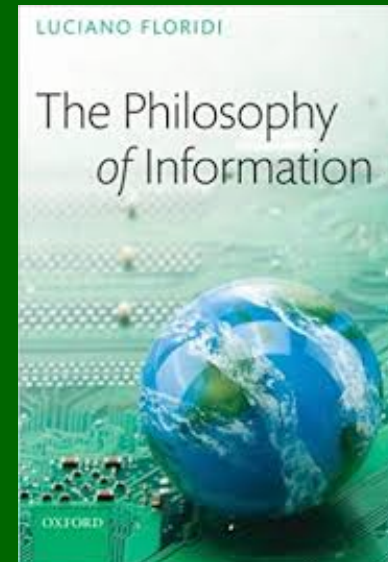
- objectivated spirit [culture as human products]
 mentefacts
 artefacts
- objective spirit [social culture]
- personal spirit [individual culture]

“Information”

Bawden and Robinson (2018) support Floridi's philosophy of information as the best foundation for LIS

To Floridi, “information” is a fundamental entity, any pattern in the configuration of things

- culture
- mind
- life
- matter
- **logico-math.**



“Information”

However, “information” in LIS
has a narrower meaning:
information contents as organized
and recorded in documents
that is mentefacts recorded in artifacts

- culture
- mind
- life
- matter
- logico-math.



“Information”

Floridi’s philosophy can be relevant to LIS, but it can be as well to other disciplines dealing with “information” at different levels:

- ICT (artefacts sublevel)
- neurobiology (mind level)
- genetics (life level)
- ...

Philosophy of information in the basic sense does not seem to have any exclusive relationship with LIS.

LIS

LIS depends on information at lower levels
(foundational, genetic, neural, artefactual)

but focuses specifically on the intellectual
content of information at the **mentefactual** level
(concepts, arguments, works, citations,
bibliographic families, subjects, KOSs, ...)

so it basically is **a science of mentefacts.**

Thanks :-)



@scritur

claudio.gnoli@unipv.it

