

ISIS 4 SUMMIT, VIENNA 2015

# Many “-isms” about information

—— Multiple Doctrines of information

信息主义的多种含义

Feng XIAO / 肖峰

China Youth University of Political Sciences

# I. Introduction

From print publications and cyber source we can find many words about “information+ism”;

In information age the “information+ism” is a necessary result;

Due to the complicated implication of “information+ism”, we need to perform specific investigation to clarify the different meaning of them

and then find which doctrine is acceptable or unacceptable especially from philosophy.

信息时代，多种“信息主义”的出现是必然的。

## II. Four words about information+ism

***informationalism***

***informatism***

***informationism***

***informatilism***

至少可以找到4个关于“信息主义”的英文词

# 1. Informationalism

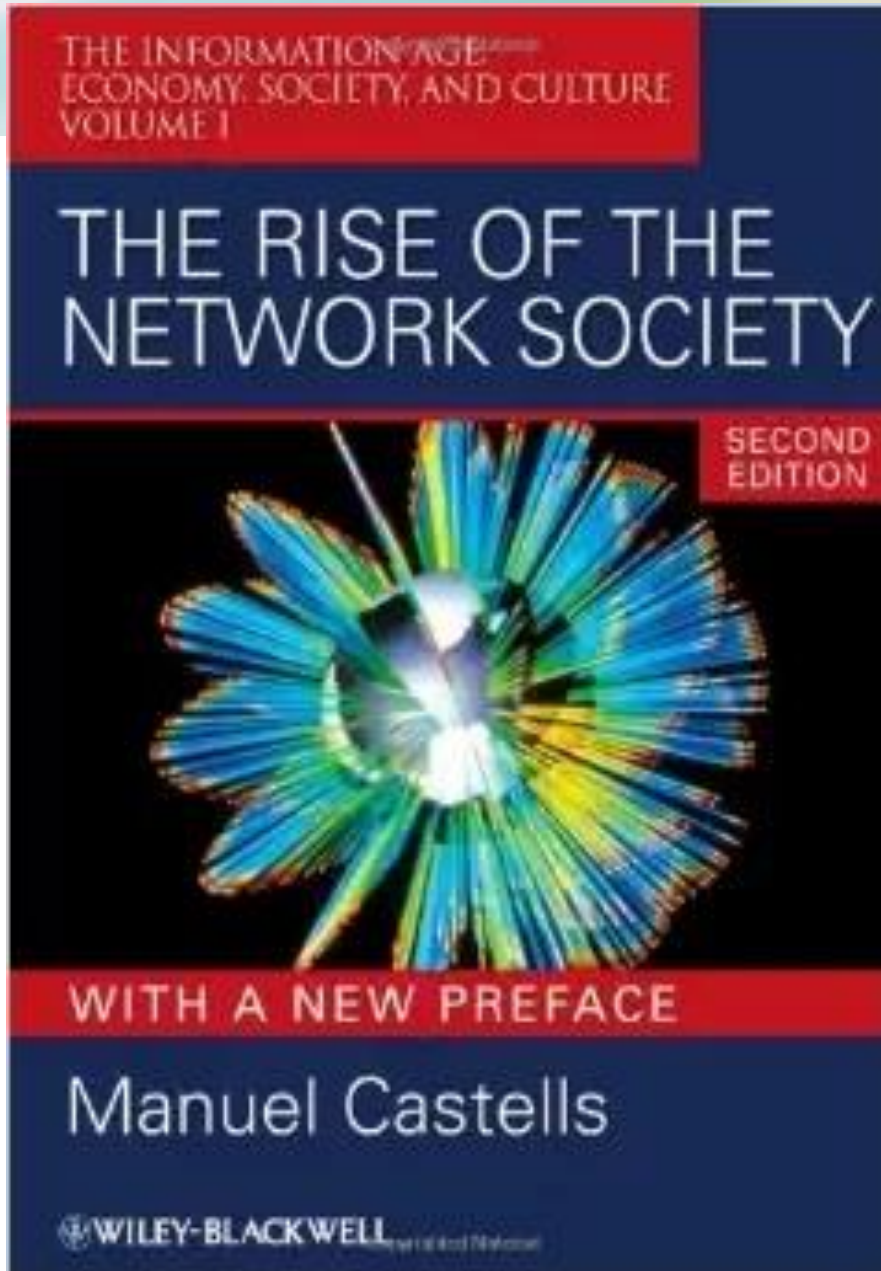
- ❖ a sociological concept
- ❖ by David Lyon (1988) and Maunel Castells(1996)
- ❖ describing the emergence of a new social structure
- ❖ Similar to information society

一个社会学概念

由莱昂和卡斯特提出

描述一种新的社会结构的出现

类似于“信息社会”、“信息时代”、“网络社会”



- ❖ in his book , Castells constantly used the concept of **informationalism** to describe the paradigm of the new technology with the information technology as its foundation and the network technology as its core.

在其著作中，卡斯特尔不断使用“**信息主义**”的概念，用它来描述以信息科技为基础、以网络技术为核心的新的技术范式。

# Towards a philosophy meaning

- ❖ **In a recent paper Zhou Liqian and Søren use “Pan- informationalism” to reference the philosophical proposition, especially classify the view of Wu Kun to this camp, which marks the meaning of “informationalism” going beyond the sociology and expanding to philosophy field.**

最近在周理乾和 的文章中，采用了“泛信息主义”来指称哲学上的主张，尤其是在分析邬焜的观点时将其归入了这一阵营，可见，其含义也超出了社会学的领域而扩展到了哲学之中。

- ❖ **The fifth approach, represented by David Chalmers, John Wheeler, Tom Stonier and Gordana Dodig-Crnkovic, is pan-informationalism approach which treats information as basic property of the cosmos.**
- ❖ **From Liqian Zhou: *A Review of Approaches of Western Information Studies***

# 2.Informatism

- ❖ **It is used in three disciplines:**
- ❖ **art and literature**
- ❖ **politics**
- ❖ **philosophy**



# 1 ) informatism ——art and literature

**It is a form of art that makes use of electronic media ; includes the art interacting with computers that generate artistic content based on the processing of large amounts of data.....**

**In China the dominant usage of informatism is to reference a new school of poetry: the network poetry ( or informatism poetry )**

## (2) informatism—politics

**David T. Johnson uses "bureaucratic informatism" to show that the bureaucracy has the information, but other people do not have.**

**As a privilege, the right to information becomes a confidential legal system, forms the social divide between people, and also becomes the means for "elites" to keep control of social conflict and changes.**

**David T. Johnson  
Department of English, Salisbury University  
cinema studies, adaptation studies**

# (3)The informatism ——philosophy

*In a famous discuss (在“统一信息理论是否可能”的“三人谈中) :*

*when Wolfgang takes an evolutionary perspective to see information as a feature of emergence and goes back to the etymological roots (information as "giving form") in his establishment of a unified information theory,*

Rafael Capurro thinks Wolfgang Hofkirchner's method as "***dialectical informatism***" —a deferent new version of dialectical materialism(DIAMAT).

所以它也是卡普罗教授的重要发明

# 3.Informationism

literature

Richard Price in 1991 in the magazine *Interference* to describe common trends in the work of a group of **Scottish poets**. Their work was later collected in the anthology *Contraflow on the Super Highway* (1994). Inside it there is an introduction: **Approaching the Informationists**.

philosophy

Another one is considered as a new philosophical trend, it is the focal point in this paper and will be introduced soon afterwards.

See next part

在诗歌中，被Richard Price于1991年在《界面》（*Interference*）杂志中用来描述一个苏格兰诗人群体的共同倾向。

# 4. Informatilism

a word used only by a Chinese scholar Shen Xinxi(沈新曦) and only take it as a philosophy category.

In Shen Xinxi's view, information includes two kinds: "original information" and "derived information".

In its own deductive history the "original information" shows as rule, relation, structure of N order's ( $0 \leq N \leq 7$ ) things of universe including the derived information since C . E . Shannon. (Shen Xinxi, 2007)

沈新曦强调了一种“本”与“源”的信息，这种“本源信息”在自己的演绎历程中也彰显为宇宙的N阶事物的法则、关系、结构、形式的有序度和连续发生的概率分布的变异度。这些“有序度”和“变异度”本身就是模式基因和秩序模组在演绎过程中的表达——它成为申农以来人类所知的“末”与“流”的信息。

# III. Multiple dimensions of philosophical informationism

**Informationism**

哲学界  
更多地  
使用的  
单词

is used by more scholars  
in philosophy circle,

so we can mainly take it  
as a philosophical theory.

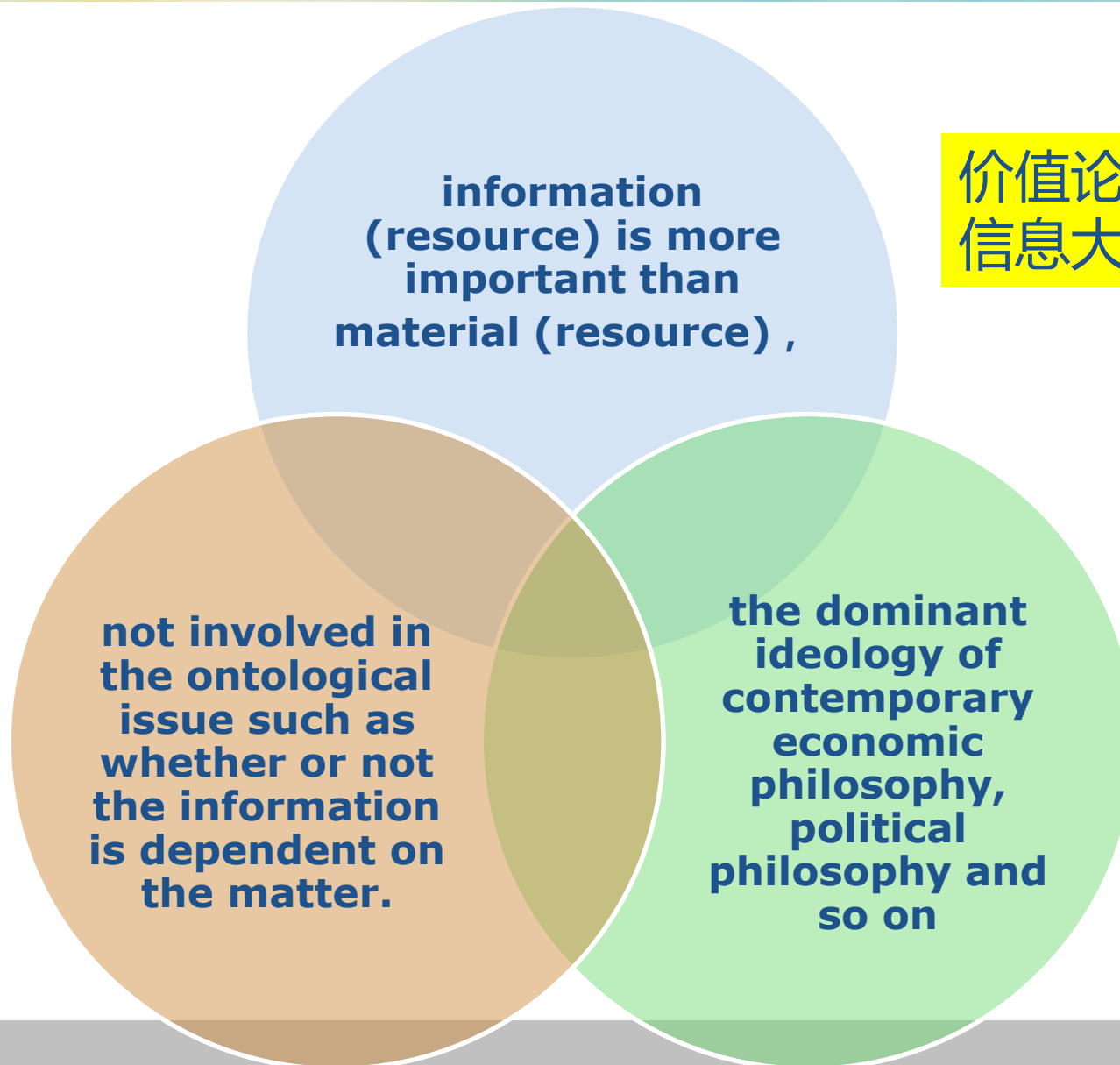
❖ **multiple dimensions**  
❖ **for philosophical informationism:**  
❖ **哲学信息主义**

**1.Axiological informationism**  
**价值论信息主义**

**2.Epistemological informationism**  
**认识论信息主义**

**3.Ontological informationism**  
**本体论信息主义**

# 1. Axiological informationism



**价值论信息主义：  
信息大于物质**



## 2. Epistemological informationism

认识论信息主义：  
信息引导物质

**information  
deciding  
matter,**

**or information  
guide material  
items, —  
another way of  
saying “concept  
guiding artificial  
object”**

**The  
information  
here  
indicates  
knowledge,  
idea,  
purpose,  
and so on.**

# 3. Ontological informationism

## ❖ Information producing matter

### ❖ Wheeler:

### ❖ “It from bit”

### ❖ “Everything is information”.

### ❖ — the most important philosophical informationism.

本体论信息主义：  
信息产生物质

**Wheeler: information is not only an independent existence that differed from matter and mind, but also the most basic existence, because whole universe was initiated from information,**

**Some Chinese scholar: "information is the fundamental factor of the universe", "The material is an aggregate of information"(Wang Jiang-huo), "Information generate world, the universe is a deductive process of information"(Shen Xin-xi), and so on.**

**it is why we call informationism not materialism.**

# IV. How to evaluate the philosophical informationism?



**Axiological and epistemological informationism is certainly acceptable,**



**Ontological informationism is difficult to be accepted.**



# Taking Ontological informationism as:

**a new form of materialism**

(Rafael Capurro , maybe including Wu Kun);

**a new form of idealism**

(Miao Dongsheng thinks Wheeler's opinion);

**beyond materialism and idealism**

belongs to the third form  
of ontology theory (Shen Xinxi)

three different  
ontological  
positions about  
ontological  
informationism

**Mere-informationism?  
唯信息主义?**

**The difficulty of ontological informationism is:**

**how to understand the information without the material carrier,**

**or how "bare-information" can existence?**

**If there is no reasonable explanation for how information initially produces material,**

**we should think the ontological informationism is unreasonable.**

# V. Conclusion

**How to understand information philosophically decided how to evaluate ontological informationism.**

**Due to information is not equal to the material or any physical items, so the ontological informationism as a form of materialism is not reasonable.**

**Due to the information is not the third being beyond the physical and mental phenomena, so the ontological informationism as third kinds of ontological doctrine transcending materialism and idealism is also untenable.**

**Furthermore, how to understand information philosophically is determined by how to understand philosophy;**

**Philosophy is different from science. If we see philosophy as the study of the relation between Men and world,**

**then the information as a philosophical concept should be understood involving human being rather than a phenomenon unrelated to people,**

**i.e. , it indicates a major human characteristic and so there is no "nature information", all information is "human information".**



# Its epistemological meaning

- ❖ ***information*** is familiarly related to concepts such as: to reason with somebody, to listen to what somebody has to say, to a messenger and to his message. There is a context of ignorance and expectation but also of common knowledge to which the information is supposed to be significant.
- ❖ ***Information*** is a concept situated in the field of human language and intersubjectivity.
- ❖ It refers to the process of telling something to somebody and to the content being transmitted.
- ❖ From a comprehensive view of human existence, communication, on the one hand, cannot be reduced to the physical process of sending and receiving signals, but it is a specific human phenomenon.
- ❖ In short, it indicates a major human characteristic.

## ❖ **The Oxford English Dictionary (5):**

- ❖
- ❖ **The action of informing, formation or moulding of the mind or character, training, instruction, teaching.**
- ❖ **The act of informing; communication of the knowledge or 'news' of some fact or occurrence; the act of telling or the fact of being told of something.**
- ❖ **Knowledge communicated concerning some particular fact, subject, or event; that of which one is appraised or told; intelligence, news.**
- ❖ **The act of informing against, charging, or accusing (a person).**
- ❖ .....

**More immediately, information can be regarded as the virtual form of material reality,**

**it belongs to the mental world — a mental phenomenon emphasizing communication and semantic function.**

**With this understanding of information and philosophy, we can say that the ontological informationism is a new form of idealism.**

**If you are a materialist, you certainly will not agree with it.**

**Thank You !**

**LOGO**