NA-CAP@IU-2009: Networks and Their Philosophical Implications, June 14-16

Following last year's success, the North American Computing and Philosophy conference was again hosted by Colin Allen (Indiana) and skillfully directed by Anthony Beavers (Evansville) at Indiana University in Bloomington. Luciano Floridi's presidential address and Edward Zalta's Covey Award lecture opened the conference by setting equally high standards for technical sophistication and philosophical depth.

Floridi (Hertfordshire and Oxford) presented new material from his forthcoming *The Philosophy of Information* by setting out a *correctness* theory of truth for suitably translated semantic information. Arguing that correctness is neither correspondence nor coherence, Floridi showed how his correctness theory of truth can be used to analyze semantic paradoxes and clarify systems for users and designers alike.

Upon accepting the IACAP's Covey Award for Excellence in Research in the Area of Computing and Philosophy, Zalta (Stanford) presented an argument that the Leibnizian ideal of computational metaphysics can be met, with important qualifications, by deploying automated reasoning tools like Prover9 to explore carefully formalized metaphysical arguments. Using Anselm's argument for the existence of God as an example of computationally illuminable metaphysics, Zalta showed how Prover9 reduced Anselm's argument to a single non-logical assumption.

William Bechtel (University of California, San Diego) gave the Herbert A. Simon Keynote Address on the critical role of complex hormonal and neural networks in mammalian circadian phenomena. Paraphrasing Bechtel, in 2003 we thought we understood the circadian clock provided by the suprachiasmatic nucleus sufficiently well that the full story would shortly be told, but all bets are now off with the discovery of oscillating mechanisms in peripheral

structures and the enormously complex dynamics of the resulting network. Olaf Sporns' (Indiana) Douglas C. Engelbart Keynote address described methods for modeling the human connectome and showed how these models can be deployed to make predictions about neural function. Receiving the Goldberg Graduate Award, Matteo Turilli (Oxford) used the example of the UK's VOTES system of networked medical records to highlight the ethical challenges software engineering faces. Turilli introduced a new formalism, 'Control Closure', which can be used to translate morally prescriptive constraints into conditions on software design.

Among too many valuable presentations and discussions to describe here, two sessions bear special mention. First, during the Social Network Effects panel session Craig Condella (Salve Regina University) explored network 'friendships' in light of classical conceptions of friendship; Dylan Wittkower (Coastal Carolina University) argued that vast social networks succeed to the extent that they permit users efficient control of the “glut of the commons”; Margaret Cuonzo (Long Island University Brooklyn) located the fascination with social networks in an evolutionary past of 'verbal grooming' alliances; and Michael V. Butera (Virginia Tech) described how social networks permit constructions of personal and public self-representations.

Second, Patrick Grim (SUNY Stony Brook) led the Modeling, Epistemology, and Cooperation session with a counter-intuitive result from spatialized game theory for the epistemic implications of social networks whereby fully connected research networks are not always superior to some sparsely connected alternatives; Nicolas Payette (Université du Québec à Montréal) gave preliminary results from a rich model formalizing Hull's 'Science as a Process' evolutionary epistemology; and Stephen Crowley (Boise State University) described an application of the ISI publication database to expose and explore emerging cross-disciplinary

research.

This is at best a thumbnail sketch of the fascinating scholarship NA-CAP draws: Please see http://ia-cap.org/na-cap09/ for additional details about the conference.

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