

Beyond Newspeak: Three Arguments for the Persistence of the Informal in the Creation and Use of Computational Ontologies

Abstract

The creation and use of computational ontologies that represent a wide variety of information sources has been an assumed necessity for communication on the Semantic Web. Embedded in this necessity comes the challenge of *to codify* or *to collaborate*. The *codify view* fits very well with an objectivist view of knowledge management and with the current use of computational ontologies as an engineering artefact. The *collaborate view*, is more aligned with a philosophical view of ontology, mostly from a hermeneutical perspective based on the work of Heidegger. Computational ontologies are limited by the condition of consistency and work well on communication within a single perspective. On the other hand, ontology from a hermeneutical perspective is explicitly useful in speaking across perspectives. The view that we hold in this paper is that both are important and complementary to each other. We frame our discussion of *to codify* or *to collaborate* in terms the Tower of Babel problem and the ensuing Newspeak solution. The need to allow multiple, and sometimes incompatible, models to co-exist leads to the Tower of Babel problem. A solution to this problem would be the creation of a new language, simpler and less capable of expressing different perspectives, Newspeak. We also give an explanation of the importance of the tacit in all communication and we give three arguments for the persistence of the informal. We conclude that the process of reflective reasoning described here is the context in play when in the appropriate use of consistent computational ontologies, as well as being the foundation of collaborative communicative enterprises.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, hermeneutics, ontology