The Concept of Knowledge and its Impact on IT-Structures and Society

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Abstract: In [Ne13] Neuser develops a new conceptualization of knowledge which essentially involves it-structures as well as facets of personal experiences. In this paper we investigate social dimensions of this approach along with the impact on and interplay with it-structures.

A new conceptualization of knowledge

In his most recent book „Wissen begreifen“ Wolfgang Neuser describes dynamic structures in our understanding of ‘knowledge’ throughout the historic development. As already Platon knew that a universally valid and fully justified foundation of knowledge is out of reach, social agreement on and community-wide acceptance of basic issues have to fill this gap. However, the internal disposition and functionalities of the evolvement of these social phenomena could have been rather described than explained in a concise and precise way beforehand. Such social developments had solely been a subject of socio-historical studies in the humanities and could not make their internal driving forces transparent and obvious.

Neuser’s approach is meant to overcome this very situation. In his exposition a new kind of conceptualization of knowledge arises that abandons the traditional conceptualization of knowledge completely. This new perspective not only explains the internal dynamics of the rise of such acceptance structures in societies but also their changes over the ages. Most interestingly, an essential part of his exposition involves it-structures (especially the use of ontologies) even in the clarification of the philosophical(!) concept of knowledge. Moreover, as his conceptualization is tightly interwoven into communication aspects inside a society, we observe not only a new philosophical view but also a new interplay between social phenomena, conceptualizations and it-systems. This new kind of interplay ties philosophy, it-technology and social aspects more closely together as ever before.
This approach poses challenges for traditional it-systems and it-structures. Some of the most prominent ones (as being given by the following list) will be discussed in greater detail:

- The role of the ontologies for the constitution of knowledge in Neuser’s approach should be examined. May the classical understanding indeed serve the intended purposes? A semiotical point of view seems to be promising.
- In Neuser’s approach it is no longer the individual who produces knowledge. Instead, knowledge arises out of an interplay between the communication of individuals and it-structures. Thus a new representation technology as part of it-structure capture the new phenomena, especially the new knowledge items.
- Knowledge items are no longer ‘data’ but also involve procedures, e.g., on social behavior. These cannot be ‘stored’ in the traditional sense but must be ‘processed’. As a consequence it should be clarified what ‘retrieval’ then should mean, respectively.
- New juridical aspects concerning the right to control storage and usage of personal data demand a solution. Does it result in a change of the concept ‘person-related data’ in view of the modified concept of knowledge, e.g., in the form of ‘cascading knowledge items’?
- New forms of „knowledge“ may develop which are not available for everybody right „at the fingertips“ in the classical sense of just retrieving stored data.
- What are the consequences for a ‘knowledge-society’ where everybody may have unlimited access to all “the” knowledge (which is thought as a collection in an encyclopaedic style) just “at the fingertips”? Thus a new concept of what could be considered as “at the fingertips” is requested. Will ‘knowledge-society’ just turn out to be an illusion?
- Along with ‘knowledge’ the concept of information is subject to re-considerations as well and requests for a respective clarification, especially in view of their mutual dependencies.

**Literature**