

Rafael Capurro | Michael Eldred | Daniel Nagel

Digital Whoness

Identity, Privacy and Freedom in the Cyberworld

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The authors

Rafael Capurro is Prof. emeritus, founder of the International Center for Information Ethics, Karlsruhe and editor-in-chief of the *International Review of Information Ethics*. His work has concentrated on a phenomenological approach to information ethics in which he has numerous publications in many languages. Books include: *Information: Ein Beitrag zur etymologischen und ideengeschichtlichen Begründung des Informationsbegriffs* 1978, *Hermeneutik der Fachinformation* 1986, *Leben im Informationszeitalter* 1995 and *Messages and Messengers. Angeletics as an Approach to the Phenomenology of Communication* 2011 (co-edited with John Holgate).

Michael Eldred trained as a mathematician at Sydney University and then gained a doctorate in philosophy, where he has numerous publications in several languages in the areas of phenomenology and political philosophy. Currently he is engaged as phenomenological ethicist in the project, A Culture of Privacy and Trust for the Internet of acatech, the National Academy of Science and Engineering, Berlin. Books include *Critique of Competitive Freedom and the Bourgeois-Democratic State: Outline of a Form-Analytic Extension of Marx's Uncompleted System* 1984, *Phänomenologie der Männlichkeit* 1999, *Social Ontology: Recasting Political Philosophy Through a Phenomenology of Whoness* 2008 and *The Digital Cast of Being: Metaphysics, Mathematics, Cartesianism, Cybernetics, Capitalism, Communication* 2009.

Daniel Nagel is a solicitor in Stuttgart whose work focuses on legal issues around the internet and digital technologies. He is a member of the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence, University of Leeds and studied law at the University of Heidelberg, the University of Innsbruck and at Leeds University. Recent publications include 'Beware of the Virtual Doll: ISPs and the Protection of Personal Data of Minors' 2011 and 'IPv 6 and Data Protection: Personalized Surfing with its Dangers for the Private Sphere' 2011 (in German).

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Sola autem nos philosophia excitabit,
sola somnum excutiet gravem.

But only philosophy will wake us up,
only it will shake off the heavy sleep.

Seneca

Epistulae ad Lucilium Ep. LIII

0 Introduction

On Wednesday, when the sky is blue,
And I have nothing else to do,
I sometimes wonder if it's true
That who is what and what is who.
A. A. Milne *Winnie-the-Pooh*

The concept of privacy cannot be adequately determined without its counterpart, publicness. Privacy and publicness are not properties of things, data or persons, but rather ascriptions dependent upon the specific social and cultural context. These ascriptions relate to what a person or a self (it may also be several selves) divulges about him- or herself. A self, in turn, is not a worldless, isolated subject, but a human being who is and understands herself as always already interconnected with others in a shared world. The possibility of hiding, of displaying or showing oneself off as who one is, no matter in what way and context and to what purpose, is in this sense, as far as we know, peculiar to human beings, but precisely not as the property of a subject, but rather as a form of the interplay of a human being's life as shared with others.

This, in turn, implies that the possibility of revealing and concealing who one is always already concretely shaped within the rules of interplay of a concrete culture within a shared world. We understand by culture the totality of values, customs and principles on which a society is explicitly and implicitly based. Accordingly, the very meaning of private and public varies depending on the culture, which does not imply that these meanings and practices are equivocal or incommensurable, for they occur in a shared world-openness constituted by a network of referential interconnections of signification. This network of interrelated signification is today marked deeply by digital information technologies.

World-openness is not only always already concretely structured semantically and pragmatically in the sense of a culture, but also subjected to an historical process of forming and shaping over time. What constitutes a world can change as a consequence of diverse,

unpredictable events. When a culture changes, and not merely the situation, values and customs within a culture, then the sense of the difference between private and public also changes. Jürgen Habermas has shown this in relation to the structural transformation of the public sphere,¹ but only in presenting, so to speak, largely one half of the story. A structural transformation of the public sphere (or rather: publicness as a mode of social being) implies also a structural transformation of the private sphere (privateness as a mode of social being), and both can be reflected upon. The latter is the task of information ethics when it is a matter of problematizing given values, customary life-practices and principles of action, that is, an ethos, in connection with digital technologies and the cyberworld to which they have today given rise.

If today we proceed from the fact that on the basis of these technologies and, in particular, the internet, a structural transformation of publicness is taking place, then this holds true equally for privacy. Information technologies do not hover in empty space but are embedded in the cultural life of societies. The distinction public/private in connection with the cyberworld is a socially and culturally dependent difference. Cultural dependency means that differences in the understanding of information technologies must be discussed if an encapsulation of societies and cultures is to be avoided, through which a potential ground for *reciprocal* trust would be forfeited. It is plain from what has been said that such a ground is always provisional. Trust is essentially also a mood that is counterposed to the moods of unsureness, fear, anxiety, and even Angst and dread. If Angst reveals the groundlessness of human freedom, trust signifies something like the experience of the formation of a tentative ground on which we can depend on each other, no matter in what fragile forms and within which limits. Hence trust does not signify, at least not primarily, putting oneself into the hands of another in line with the sentiment, 'Trust me, I'll look after you'. That is a particular form of (paternalistic) trust that is fostered, for instance, between parents and their children. In contrast to this (and there are many intermediate shades and variants of trust),

¹ Habermas 1962/1990.

reciprocal trust means that a self lets itself in for an interplay with other selves in certain situations and contexts, for which then customs, norms and values, including ethical and moral and legal usages and norms, are required to give this interplay a certain consistency and constancy, that is, some sort of ground. In this ongoing interplay, trust is engendered, won, put at risk, lost, regained, etc. but never produced like a thing.

To foster trust in a globalized world and with respect to the artificial dimension of the cyberworld is certainly no easy task. The objective of the ethics strand within the present overall project² consists in providing the foundations for a phenomenological explication of privacy and publicness in the context of the cyberworld enabled by digital information technologies. This will allow options for shaping life-worlds to be uncovered that are both shared and also culturally differentiated with regard to valued, customary living practices. Accordingly, everything will depend upon whether privacy and publicness and their respective socio-ontological foundations can be attuned and brought into play with each other so that differing, but nevertheless mutually permeable, casts of good living in the world can be outlined. From what has been said it is plain that the phenomenon of the self as well as that of a shared digitized world, the cyberworld, are given special weight and significance. The distinction between self and thing or, more precisely, between *who* and *what*, is an eminently ethical difference from which the difference private/public can be thought. Therefore we take pains, on an extended detour, to spell out what whoness means.

0.1 The significance of a phenomenology of whoness as the starting-point for discussing the question concerning privacy and freedom in the internet

The difference between self and thing, or who and what, already points to the necessity of working out and presenting a phenomenology of whoness in a turn away from the modern subjectivity of a worldless subject vis-à-vis an objective world, an ontology which is tacitly

² This study arose as part of the acatech project, *A Culture of Privacy and Trust for the Internet* 2011-2013; cf. Acknowledgement above.

presupposed and taken for granted as the self-evident framework for reflecting upon privacy, identity and freedom in the internet age. In contrast to this, the who is always already cast into the world and has an identity, whose phenomenological concept has to be explicitly unfolded whereas, strictly speaking, the worldless subject cannot have an identity, a point that will be made clear, especially by engaging critically with selected authors. Identity is only possible where a who finds itself mirrored back from the world, and chooses, casts and takes on its self from this shining-back from the world. This is an essential hallmark of *freedom*, since the who fashions its self from the mirrored-back options including, above all, the world of others.

Our approach is characterized by the endeavour to open our eyes for the phenomena we encounter in today's world that shape and determine who we can be. These phenomena are very familiar to everybody, but nevertheless stir discomfort that not least of all gives occasion to penetratingly and explicitly ask the question, 'Who are we in the internet age?' or 'What historical options are open to us to cast ourselves *as* free selves in the context of the cyberworld?' The question concerning whoness is hence a foundational and also an essentially historical question in the sense that we change who we are in the world through thinking and acting, and bear a special responsibility for fathoming these changes in their ramifications. Such a thinking (which is in itself already a kind of acting) can serve as a kind of orientation for action in its quotidian concreteness, where this linking of thinking and action that is peculiar to ethical reflection should never be misconceived in the sense of recipes or unchangeable laws or norms, but rather as a question concerning good, enhancing life-practices treasured and cultivated by specific cultures — and their opposites. The fragility of whoness in all its historical and cultural diversity repeatedly provokes thinking to engage in ethical reflection and also in practical action in caring for the lived 'goodness' of a shared world that is understood differently in different times and places.

Today this world is becoming increasingly occupied and permeated by digital, cybernetic technologies of multifarious kinds. The care that is directed toward the whole often dons the garb of an elevated

universalism which only makes sense when its values and principles are thought through and lived through over and over again in the concreteness of an historical constellation. This, in turn, happens on the basis of differing cultural stamps and contextual preferences. It is precisely the diversity of self-interpretations of human being which always gives rise to a thoughtful, albeit provisional, reassuring of our selves in the question concerning whoness. In the openness vis-à-vis our specific identities we experience freedom in and as an interplay that today is being played out in, with and through the cyberworld.

0.2 A provisional stocktaking of the discussion in information ethics on privacy and freedom in the internet age

The discussion in information ethics on the concept of privacy has changed and intensified over the past fifteen years due to the broad commercial and social use of the internet. This discussion sometimes assumes an ideological flavour when privacy in the internet age is declared to be obsolete or, conversely, defended in its traditional sense, frequently without having understood the unique, new, existential possibilities and even new, valuable, systematic, social formations that are emerging. Often cultural differences and specificities are left out of consideration in favour of considering human beings simply as apparently autonomous subjects in the Western sense. Analyses in information ethics show, for instance, that conceptions of privacy in Buddhist cultures are the complete opposite to those in Western cultures, but that nevertheless reasons can be given for why privacy in Buddhist cultures still can be regarded as worthy of protection in an ethical and legal sense. Such a discussion is still in its nascent stages, for instance, with regard to Latin American and African cultures.

To what extent and in what form can universalist approaches such as the Declaration of Principles made by the World Summit on the Information Society, or the Internet Rights & Principles Coalition pay regard to the particularities and singularities of differing cultures, as well as to concrete ‘good practices’, if both global and local cultures of trust

and privacy in the internet are to be engendered? Who are we when we are in the cyberworld? What does it mean to have a digital identity? And how can one's identity wander off into the cyberworld? In the debate in information ethics on privacy in the cyberworld, this question is understood mostly in the sense of 'What are we when we are in the internet?'. It then concerns digital data on individual persons that are to be protected technically, legally and ethically. Implicitly, however, this question includes also the question concerning *who* in the sense of the person to whom the data relate, revealing and concealing *who* this person is. How are we to play the who-game in the cyberworld? When the question concerning who crops up in the discussion in information ethics, it does so usually in the guise of implicit, and therefore unclarified, preconceptions of what 'whoness' and 'personhood' mean.³

The debate over privacy thus presupposes and skips over the philosophical interpretation of what whoness means in the digital age. It begs the question. The question cannot be answered through a digital reduction that equates whoness simply with digital information about a person, or even declares personhood itself to be (ontologically) an informational data bundle, for such a reductionism leaves open the question concerning how 'person' is to be understood, what the specifically digital dimension is in a conceptually clarified sense, and what the interconnection is among these phenomena. The philosophical-ethical foundations are either missing entirely — as in the current discussion on privacy and the internet, where the protection of privacy is simply presupposed as a 'value' without any phenomenological-conceptual clarification —, or the foundations are borrowed unquestioningly from subjectivist metaphysics, that is caught in its subject/object split, or else the digital itself as a mode of being, i.e. of how beings come to presence and present themselves, is not laid out at all or only cursorily.

With few exceptions,⁴ a phenomenological approach to identity, privacy and freedom in the cyberworld has received scant attention. The

³ Tavani 2008, Van den Hoven 2008. Cf. esp. Chap. 3.

⁴ Introna 2005, Eldred 2008/2011, Capurro & Holgate 2011.

debate in information ethics, however, needs a philosophical and especially a phenomenological grounding with the simple phenomena themselves in view if it is not to rely on unexamined preconceptions. On the ground floor this task includes interpreting what has already been thought throughout the philosophical tradition (albeit mostly at a tangent and without clarifying the distinction between what and who) on the question concerning the whoness of human beings. This question is closely related to that of freedom. And ultimately, we are interested in the options for freedom in the cyberworld.

Our investigation therefore takes on these decisive questions underpinning the debate in information ethics on privacy and publicness in the internet by undertaking a detailed, stepwise phenomenological analysis of whoness in the cyberworld.

0.3 Course of the investigation

The question concerning whoness is only at a first, unquestioning glance one relating to an isolated individual subject. From the outset, our approach is characterized by a recognition of the *plurality* inherent in human togetherness in the world. Who I am in each instance always depends on reciprocal interchanges of estimation and recognition in a world shared with others. Hence, the question concerning whoness is simultaneously an ontological and ethical question. The ontological aspect refers to the mode in which human beings come to presence and present themselves in the world to each other. In the age of the internet the question concerning whoness is posed anew because the ways of being in time and in space that characterize human being, along with togetherness in the digital medium of the cyberworld, are going through hitherto scarcely imaginable reshaping and recasting.

The philosophical tradition offers an almost inexhaustible quarry of interpretations of the whoness of human being, but invariably without ever employing the term 'whoness'. In the first chapter *I Phenomenology of whoness: identity, privacy, trust and freedom* we go into these matters and engage with the interpretation of whoness, whose rich beginnings are to be found already in Greek antiquity. The analysis of whoness, in turn, will be put into relation to phenomena such as

freedom, private property and autonomy in an engagement with classical authors such as Locke, Smith, Ricardo, Marx and Kant. A treatment of private property with regard to the socio-ontological structure of capitalist market economy is indispensable for distinguishing personal privacy from the privacy of private property, a task sorely neglected elsewhere, thus seeding endless confusion. Our presentation considers exemplary approaches that contribute to clarifying the question concerning the phenomenon of whoness with respect to the dimensions of identity, privacy and freedom. Our analyses are initially restricted to the Western tradition of thinking. However, in the fourth chapter we delve into exemplary discussions of cultures in the Far East, Latin America and Africa. We also engage in particular with Hannah Arendt's treatment of whoness, which not only works up many insights into the sharing of world by a plurality of human beings, but also takes on many of the principal themes of the Western tradition with regard to privacy and publicness. Arendt's interpretation of whoness thus represents an implicit extension of Martin Heidegger's phenomenology in the direction of political and social togetherness and world-sharing, since Heidegger's 1920 lectures, some of which Arendt heard, provide a rich treasure-house for reflecting upon whoness. In this study, however, we do not provide an interpretation of Heidegger's thinking, but rather attempt, in a new theoretical approach, to make use of Heidegger's ontological insights into the phenomenality of whoness, its privacy and freedom, as well as today's digital cast of the world.

The second chapter 2 *Digital ontology* engages with the interpretation of the digital ontological cast of the world that underlies and overlays the interplay between privacy and publicness. That today we are confronted with a fast-moving embrace by digital technologies of the most diverse kinds is not merely the result of a history of stepwise (and also abrupt, leaping) developments in the natural sciences and technologies, but of paths of access to the world as a totality in philosophical thought that have been pre-cast and fore-cast by thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Leibniz. Already with the Greeks, a certain logico-mathematical dissolution (ana-lysis) of the world is under way. This beginning casts a long historical shadow right up to

today's increasingly digitized world. A brief sketch of the main stations along the way of the grand unfolding in the history of thoughtful spirit hence makes our contemporary situation clearer. This chapter thus provides the precondition for taking on whoness in a digitized world — the *cyberworld*. In this cyberworld the concern is growing about the protection of what constitutes our whoness in different cultures. Whoness grounds the non-self-evident sense of privacy.

Privacy itself has many shades that can all be understood in the sense of a *privatio* either in a negative or positive sense. Not only a spatial, but also a temporal meaning of privation is here in play. Hence it is conducive to preface the analysis of digital whoness with a discussion of space and time in relation to the cyberworld. What is the adequate phenomenological concept of the cyberworld? The basic phenomenon of personal privacy, however, is not-showing-oneself as a *privatio* of showing-oneself-off in public life, which initially has nothing at all to do with the digital dimension. The sketch provided of an explicitly *digital* ontology serves not only to reflect upon the privacy of the who in a world pervaded by digital technologies, but also to conceptually grasp in a well-founded way the space where the who, so to speak, spends its time in a peculiar artificial, digitized world. The cyberworld that was enabled historically not only by technologies of the twentieth century but, more deeply, has only opened up through the tacitly presupposed digital cast of the world made possible through the mathematico-scientific access to the world, is the automated materialization of our own world-understanding which, in turn, is a granting from an inexhaustible source of historical eventuation. What do cyberworld, cyberspace, cybertime mean, and how does the who sojourn and live in such a cyberworld thus technologically enabled? Only on the basis of such a phenomenological clarification can the question be posed regarding what it means for a who to enjoy privacy in the cyberworld, or how privacy can be protected in this cyberworld.

The third chapter 3 *Digital whoness in connection with privacy, publicness and freedom* delves into the phenomenon of whoness against the horizon of the digital and explicates initially the specifically *digital* identity of somewho. Privacy and publicness, too, increasingly assume

peculiar features in connection with the cyberworld in whose medium and through whose interfaces today we spend more and more life-time today. Here the ‘cyber’ aspect of the cyberworld comes forcefully to the fore, for every movement in it is automatically given a digital trace that throws up completely new questions with respect to the protection of freedom. The question as to *whose* freedom is enabled by the cyberworld raises doubts about whether the cyberworld is truly subject to ‘our’ control. Who are ‘we’ as such controllers? Is the freedom empowered by the cyberworld simply the freedom of individuals to communicate in and through the digital medium? To mark off and highlight our approach, the second part of the chapter is devoted to the critical appraisal of the current debate in information ethics on the digitized world and privacy (Tavani, Floridi, Ess, Beavers) and, in particular, engages with the thoughts on privacy offered by Helen Nissenbaum.

In the fourth chapter *4 Intercultural aspects of digitally mediated whoness, privacy and freedom*, the foundations laid in the preceding chapters are concretized in an intercultural dialogue with approaches to the phenomena from the Far East (Japan, Thailand, China), Latin America and Africa.

The fifth chapter *5 Cyberworld, privacy and the EU* is another concretization to situate important EU conventions, covenants, resolutions, guidelines and directives that impinge on personal freedom and privacy.

The concluding chapter *6 Brave new cyberworld* briefly indicates why it is worthwhile laying a theoretical foundation through a phenomenology of digital whoness by showing how the topic of e-commerce can be approached.

1 Phenomenology of whoness: identity, privacy, trust and freedom

Michael Eldred⁵

In this chapter, the phenomenon of *whoness* will be illuminated in its various facets with respect to privacy, publicness and freedom. A phenomenology of whoness thus serves as a foundation for approaching *privacy*. The subsequent chapter will then present a sketch of *digital ontology* as a basis paving the way to the succeeding chapter, which investigates whoness and privacy specifically in a *digitally* mediated world.

1.1 The trace of whoness starts with the Greeks

And now I ask, ‘Who am I?’ I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. ... [T]hose old half-articulate ghosts ... clutch at me as I try to escape — shadows of people one might have been: unborn selves.

Virginia Woolf *The Waves* p. 775.

Human beings share a world together. They are always already a *plurality*. Whoness is the phenomenon of a plurality of human beings who show themselves to each other in a shared world. A phenomenon is a showing, a disclosing, a revealing which, in its broadest sense, encompasses also the privative or negative modes of disclosing: concealing and revealing only distortedly. Because whoness is the

⁵ All sections of this chapter are the final authorial responsibility of Michael Eldred, apart from the sections 1.9 and 1.10 by Rafael Capurro.

phenomenon of human beings ('men' in older discourse) showing themselves *to each other*, it cannot be located in a single human being like a 'what', as in: 'What's that?' 'A stone.' There is also a reciprocity in human beings showing themselves *to each other*.⁶ This observation is key for approaching the phenomenon of whoness as distinct from that of whatness, which has a rich tradition in metaphysics starting with Plato and Aristotle. Whatness has been thought in this tradition as οὐσία, substance, essence, quidditas, etc. whereas whoness has tended to be subsumed under the metaphysical determinations of whatness. The distinction between what and who, quid and quis has not attracted the sharp focus of philosophical thinking, as evidenced by the very absence of the apt words 'whoness' and 'quissity' in English. Thus, for example, what a human being is has been determined metaphysically as an animal with a soul and intellect. The trace of whoness, however, is by no means

⁶ William James, for instance, captures this "to each other" with his notion of the Social Self: "A man's Social Self is the recognition which he gets from his mates. We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind." (James 1890/1950 p. 293) This he contrasts with the Empirical Self: "The Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of *me*. But it is clear that between what a man calls *me* and what he simply calls *mine* is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves. Our fame, our children, the work of our hands, may be as dear to us as our bodies are, and arouse the same feelings and the same acts of reprisal if attacked. And our bodies themselves, are they simply ours, or are they *us*? (...) In its widest possible sense, however, a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body, and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down,- not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all." (p. 291-292). Whereas James emphasizes the self as what a man "CAN call his", i.e. a notion of ownership, in the present study, as outlined below, the self's identity consists of the assemblage of masks that are nothing other than adopted existential possibilities of who somewho 'CAN be' in the world.

entirely absent from the Western philosophical tradition but, instead of being treated in its own right as a mode of being, and thus as an ontological question, it has been relegated to the realm of ethics and politics, again starting with Plato and Aristotle. Whoness leaves its trace throughout Western thinking in phenomena and terms such as ἀνδρεία, φιλοτιμία (manliness/courage, love of esteem/honour/value, Plato), τιμή (esteem/honour/value, Aristotle),⁷ virtù (Machiavelli), vainglory (Hobbes), amour-propre (Rousseau), Anerkennung (Hegel) and so on, and only starts to come into its own with the originally German tradition of dialogical philosophy⁸ and Heidegger, who focuses on casting human existence itself explicitly and ontologically under the heading of whoness (Wersein, Wahrheit).

Human beings showing themselves to each other can be regarded as their *showing off* to each other, their *self-display*, even to the point of hiding from each other exemplified in phenomena such as diffidence.⁹ Human beings present themselves to each other in the open space of presence and, in doing so, show themselves off *as* who they are, including deceptively. Such showing-off may be simply ‘as a man’ or ‘as a woman’, and the showing-off to each other implies *acknowledging* each other’s presence, even in the privative mode of ignoring each other’s presence, say, when travelling in a crowded underground train. A nod or a wave or a salute or some other slight bodily gesture already

⁷ James addresses the phenomenon of honour as follows: “A man's *fame*, good or bad, and his *honor* or *dishonor*, are names for one of his social selves.” (James 1890/1950 p. 294), thus continuing a venerable tradition.

⁸ Starting with Ludwig Feuerbach and on through authors such as Martin Buber, Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, Ferdinand Ebner, Eberhard Grisebach, Karl Heim, Gabriel Marcel, Friedrich Gogarten, Helmut Plessner, Adolf Reinach, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Wilhelm Schapp, Alfred Schütz, Ludwig Binswanger, Karl Löwith, Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, Emmanuel Lévinas and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Cf. Michael Theunissen *Der Andere: Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart* 2nd ed. W. de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1977 for a comprehensive overview of most of these authors.

⁹ Cf. Eldred 2008/2011 Chaps. 2 and 3 for more detail of a phenomenology of whoness. Cf. also the critical appraisal of Arendt further on in the present chapter.

suffices to acknowledge each other's presence in which they show themselves off *as* some who or other. So, from the very start, there is an *interchange* or *interplay*, be it ever so minimal, among human beings in showing themselves off to each other in the presence of a shared world. For the moment, the focus is restricted to presence, leaving aside the two temporal modes of absence.

1.2 Selfhood as an identification with reflections from the world

‘Here’s Bernhard!’ How differently different people say that! There are many rooms — many Bernhards. There was the charming, but weak; the strong, but supercilious; the brilliant, but remorseless; the very good fellow, but, I make no doubt, the awful bore; the sympathetic, but cold; the shabby, but — go into the next room — the foppish, worldly, and too well dressed.
Virginia Woolf *The Waves* p. 761.

It is important for showing-off to have oneself acknowledged by others *as* who one shows oneself to be. One chooses, or neglects to choose, one's masks for self-display in adopting this or that behaviour, wearing certain clothes rather than others,¹⁰ etc. in order to be seen *as* who one presents oneself. The interplay with each other is always a reciprocal *estimating* of each other's self-presentations. Willy-nilly one presents oneself as some who or other, thus making a certain *impression* on others. Who one *is* is always a matter of having adopted certain *masks of identity* reflected from the world as offers of who one could be in the world. Each human being is an *origin* of his or her own self-

¹⁰ “It [men’s dress] not only covers nakedness, gratifies vanity, and creates pleasure for the eye, but it serves to advertise the social, profession or intellectual standing of the wearer.” Virginia Woolf *Three Guineas* 1938/2007 p. 797.

movement and has an *effect* on the surroundings, changing them this way or that, intentionally or unintentionally. Moving ably and skilfully in the shared world in some sense and some fashion or other is bound up with adopting the masks of identity through which one understands oneself and also presents oneself to the world. Being estimated in a positive sense in presenting oneself to others is the phenomenon of *esteem*. Such esteeming estimation of one's self-presentation depends also on presenting, or at least seeming to present, oneself as a *capable* who in some sense or other, which will be estimated variously in different circles and situations. A brain surgeon presenting himself at a medical congress will make a big splash, whereas at a football game, his who-mask *as* a brain surgeon is of no import and makes no special impression. In the negative sense, estimation amounts to not having one's self-presentation appreciated, but rather depreciated.

The core mask of identity borne by a who (Gr. τὴς, L. quis) is one's own *proper name*, around which other masks cluster. Above all, it is a matter of adopting masks of *ability* reflected by the world, thus developing one's own potential abilities to developed personal *powers* of whatever kind. Each who ends up in some vocation, profession, job, social role or other, thus becoming who she or he is in living that role, and this is the mask of identity that *somewho* (L. quisquam), for the most part, presents to the world *as who* he or she is, being estimated and esteemed by the others in the interplay. Since human beings are estimated and esteemed above all on the basis of their personal *powers and abilities* as who they are, and because the exercise of such powers also effects some change or other in the world, the interplay of mutual estimation is always also a *power play*, especially in the sense of mutually estimating each other's who-standing. At first and for the most part, one wishes to have one's developed powers and abilities, whatever they may be, esteemed by the others in the power play. One may *fail* in doing so. In sharing the world, human beings are constantly estimating and assessing each other's performances in presenting themselves *as* *somewho* or other through their powers and abilities, i.e. their *merit* as that which deserves esteem. Those of a similar who-standing are therefore, for the most part, in a *competitive rivalry* with one another.

The interplay of mutual self-presentation as who one is also can be interpreted as the *sending of messages* to each other. Each player's who-standing is a message to the others, as are his modes of comportment that display his individual powers. In particular, what each player *says* in the interplay is, of course, a message sent out (perhaps to nobody in particular) that is understood in some way or other by others. In the back-and-forth of messages, the players show themselves (off) to each other as who they are, estimating, esteeming and appreciating each other's presence and presentations. The phenomenology of messaging is called *angeletics*.¹¹ In contrast to rhetoric as an intended productive technique imbued with a will to power to win others over finally to the speaker's point of view, angeletics lets itself in for the end-less interplay of messages back and forth through which something in between, unintended by any single player, may come into view through the groundless interplay of individual powers of insight.

The introduction of individual powers and abilities that have been adopted as masks of identity forces a widening of focus from the temporal mode of presence because such powers refer both to who one has become and also to who one may become in future. The estimation of one's abilities by the others gives rise to one's *reputation* as who one is, and reputation refers to how one has presented oneself to the world in the past, which is never past, because one has inevitably always already established or ruined one's reputation as who in some circle or other. Conversely, who one will become depends crucially also on one's potential being estimated by those who are in a position (especially parents and teachers) to foster the development of that potential to powers and abilities that an individual *actually has* at its disposal. Furthermore there is the *futural* aspect of whoness in the *ambition* that someone has to become such-and-such, usually by honing his or her abilities of whatever kind. Such ambition is always also linked to *as* who one wants to be regarded in the world and is thus tied intimately to the power play of mutual estimation. Ambition is the striving to leave one's mark on the world, even to the point of establishing one's *fame* as

¹¹ Capurro & Holgate 2011.

someone about whom the ‘world’ speaks. Leaving one’s mark on the world is a way of making an impression on the shared world, namely, a *lasting* impression, which again refers to the temporal dimension of the past or beenness.

Wanting to make any impression at all on the world, let alone, wanting to have an impact or to leave one’s mark on the world, are all manifestations of the *will to power to be who*. To be someone in the world amounts to having one’s self-presentation to the world estimated, esteemed and reflected by the world, to *come to stand* in shared presence as a who with some standing. In the realm of politics, for example, a who may come to stand by being appointed or elected to a recognized political office, which thereby becomes a mask of identity for this particular individual who thus enjoys the *honour* of holding public office for as long as the specifically political power play accords the office in question to the individual in question. Such *standing presence*, however, is very fragile, not just in politics, but in the power play of togetherness in general, for it depends on the mirror game of mutual self-presentation in which having a stand as who depends on the reflections of estimation received back from the others. “To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people’s eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self.”¹² Appreciative reflections of esteem from the others may be very fickle, easily replaced by depreciative, even downright derogatory, reflections. This contrasts with traditional metaphysical determinations of whatness which is a standing presence either in the sense of possessing an enduring, well-defined essence, or in the sense of possessing an underlying, enduring substance that persists in presence. Whoness as a mode of presencing is the way in which human beings share a world with each other, i.e. the mode of mutually mirroring togetherness in the time-space of the world. Such presencing as someone in an ongoing power play of mutual estimation is insubstantial, that is, lacking an underlying substrate or *ὑποκείμενον* and is thus *groundless*.

¹² Woolf 1931/2007 p. 692.

Hence, crucially, the power play of whoness breaks the ontological cast of the productive power of whatness, i.e. the power play among whos has to be distinguished from productive power *over* somewhat or somewho conceived *as* a what. In the Western tradition, the ontology of power has only even been thought as *productive* power within a metaphysics of whatness, and, to the present day, the phenomena of the power play among somewhos has been misconceived from within the metaphysical cast of productive power.

Furthermore, selfhood conceived as a shining-back from the world in a plural power play of whoness is far removed from any conception of the modern metaphysical subject, first cast by Descartes as the *res cogitans*. It is instructive, by way of contrast, to note, with the barest of hints, Locke's version of selfhood, which he shares, with modifications, with all representatives of subjectivist metaphysics. In his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* from 1690 we read in Chapter XXVII on 'Of Identity and Diversity': "...we must consider what person stands for; — which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive." Thus, for Locke, the self is *self-consciousness*, which is a connected consciousness in time through which a self identifies itself with its consciousness at previous instants of time. The constitution of self is thus a retrospective, inward reflection of consciousness on itself, independent of any other individual consciousness. Later, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* from 1781/87, Kant will call this "pure apperception" and extend it to the temporal horizon also of the future. For Kant, the "transcendental ego" will even *constitute within itself* the temporal horizon of past, present and future through its three a priori, synthetic capacities of apprehending, reproducing and reconnoitring, respectively.¹³ Later, we will return to this encapsulated subject of consciousness (cf. 3.8 *Floridi's metaphysics*

¹³ Kant 1781 pp. 98-110.