THEORETICAL / PHILOSOPHICAL PAPER

The Sense of Someone Appearing There: A Philosophical Investigation into Other Minds, Deceased People, and Animated Persona

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Abstract

We sometimes feel the presence of a person-like something on a non-biological object, such as a memento from a deceased family member or a well-engineered, human-shaped robot. This feeling—the sense of someone appearing there—has not been extensively investigated by philosophers. In this paper, I employ examples from previous studies, my own experiences, and thought experiments to conduct a philosophical analysis of the mechanism of the emergence of this person-like something by using the concept of an animated persona. This animation process works not only in cases of deceased people and non-biological objects but also in cases of a living, conscious human being. This suggests that the appearance of the other mind on a human body is not necessarily a reflection of that human's inner self-consciousness but can be considered a personhood that appears, animated by various surrounding factors. I also propose the concept of "the supremacy of surface-ness over behind-ness". Finally, I categorize the appearance of an animated persona on a human body or an object into eight patterns and compare their characteristics.

Introduction

There are many people who feel the presence of deceased family members in their living rooms, on mementos, or in the natural environment. Although many think that these experiences are illusions created by their ardent affection for their loved ones,

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some believe that what they feel are not mere illusions because the experiences are so vivid and overwhelming.

There are also many people who talk to their dogs, cats, birds, and even the plants in their houses. Philosophers usually do not consider these animals and plants to be persons. What are these people talking to in such cases? My intuition is that they feel the presence of something on the animal or the plants, and they talk to that something. Of course, it is not a human person. What, then, is it?

In this paper, I carefully examine previous studies on this topic and attempt to philosophically investigate what actually occurs when we perceive someone appearing on the surface of something, on a human body, or in the surrounding environment. This discussion will lead us to a fundamental reconsideration of the Western concept of "person," which is thought to have inner self-consciousness, rationality, and free will as its necessary essence. The exemplars of personhood shift from self-conscious, rational human beings to more marginal existences, such as a deceased person, a sleeping child, a mannequin, and a robot.

The discussion occurs in two stages. The first stage is a phenomenological description of the experience of perceiving someone appearing on an object or a human body. The cases to which special attention is paid are those in which a person-like something appears on an object, a robot, or the body of a deceased person. By carefully analyzing these phenomena, we realize that the most striking feature is that these appearances appear on the *surface* of something or someone. The second stage is a methodological investigation. I extend the concept of an animated persona, apply it to the above cases, and make a series of philosophical analyses. As a result, a concept called "the supremacy of surface-ness over behind-ness" is proposed. In the last chapter, I discuss some important implications that this concept raises.

I take the concept of *surface-ness* seriously because only by using this concept can we treat the appearance of a person-like something on various objects and human bodies equally, which is not possible with a commonsense framework, that is, the traditional dualism of the body and the mind. In the following discussion, I will try my best to clarify what it exactly means for a person-like something to appear *on* an object or body.

An Encounter with a Deceased Person

First, let us look at some experiences of encountering deceased people.

There are many stories of those who have encountered a deceased family member in an everyday setting. In a magazine article published in 2022, a woman recalls her experience of encountering her deceased father in her parents' house. She says, "After the funeral ceremony was over … when I was washing my hair at home and drying it myself with a towel, I suddenly felt as if my father was standing right in front of me, and I almost cried. It may have been an illusion created by the regret of losing a loved one, but it was not frightening; it was a moment of rest, as if my mind

suddenly stopped wandering".[1] This is a typical example of encountering a deceased person in the surrounding space.

I myself had a strange experience when my father died in the hospital. After a doctor pronounced his death, I touched my father's forehead and body. They were warm and a little moist. Nothing had changed. I felt as if my father was still there, about to open his eyes and look at me and say something like, "Why am I lying here, my son?" I was able to feel the presence of my father on his deceased body, though I clearly knew that he had already lost his inner self-consciousness. One day after the funeral, I was sitting on a chair in my room, under heavy mental stress, and I felt my father come up behind me and gently embrace my whole body, like a warm liquid, as if he was trying to protect me from external enemies. I am agnostic and do not believe in the soul as an entity, but this feeling was powerful and heartwarming. I keep my father's wristwatch, which he wore until the last moment of his life. When I see it, I feel a subtle trace of my father on it. This shows that I can feel the presence of a person-like something on the surface of a mere object.[2]

I would like to show one more example, which is discussed in a paper on death studies. Kunio Yanagida, a journalist, lost his second son due to brain death. He says that in the hospital, he was able to have "conversations" with his brain-dead son's body without spoken language. He writes, "Even though Yōjirō was brain dead, when Ken'ichirō [elder brother] and I talked to his body, he "talked back" to us. This was a truly mysterious experience. Perhaps it is something that can be understood only by members of a family who have shared happiness and sorrows with each other" (Morioka, 2021: 116f.:). Special attention should be paid to the fact that Yanagida distinguishes between two words here: the "body" of his brain-dead son they talked to and the "he" who talked back to them. This suggests that Yanagida believed that he encountered someone ("he") who appeared on the body of his brain-dead son and was able to have a conversation with him. Who was this someone, and how was it possible for them to have such a conversation?

Let us turn our attention to previous studies.

Gillian and Kate Mary Bennet point out that there are a variety of examples of the presence of the dead in the literature. The weakest is "one is somehow being watched," and the strongest is "a full-blown sensory experience—olfactory, auditory, visual, and occasionally tactile" (Bennett & Bennett, 2000:140). The authors say that "these sorts of experiences are commonplace" (Bennett & Bennett, 2000: 140). Matthew Ratcliffe distinguishes "the sense of being with a particular person" from a "hallucination," which consists of a "sensory experience of something or other," and focuses his discussion on the former experience (Ratcliffe, 2021: 605).[3] Ratcliffe's concept of "the sense of being with a particular person" is exactly what I would like to investigate, as hallucination is not the subject of this paper.

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[1] "I Don't Care If It's a Ghost, I Want to See Him Again" (in Japanese), *Daily Shincho*, March 10, 2023. https://www.dailyshincho.jp/article/2022/03100615/?all=1 (Visited March 10, 2022).

[2] DuBose (1997:373) reports that similar things happen with deceased people's "empty shoes, vacant clothing, watches, rings, and empty chairs".

[3] This topic has been discussed in the field of grief studies. See Cholbi (2019), Cholbi (2021), and Millar and Lopez-Cantero (2022).

Thomas Fuchs says that in an encounter with the deceased, "[t]he bereaved continue to feel, perceive and behave *as if* their loved ones were still alive, although they know intellectually that they are dead in reality" (Fuchs, 2018: 52). Fuchs explains these phenomena using the analogy of a phantom limb: "Just as the amputated limb is irrefutably felt even though it is missing, the deceased person is present even though his body is no longer visible" (Fuchs, 2018: 54). Ratcliffe provides a similar explanation, but from a different angle, referring to Merleau-Ponty (Ratcliffe, 2021: 606).

I call this type of explanation *the phantom limb model*; it is a clear and to-the-point explanation of the appearance of a deceased person from a phenomenological point of view. This is an excellent theory that can explain most cases of deceased people's appearances; however, there is another type of appearance of a person-like something that does not objectively exist. In the next section, I will examine these cases.

An Encounter with a Person Who Does Not Exist There

In his well-known book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl writes about a young woman who is about to die in a concentration camp:

This young woman knew that she would die in the next few days. … Pointing through the window of the hut, she said, "This tree here is the only friend I have in my loneliness". … "I often talk to this tree," she said to me. … Anxiously I asked her if the tree replied. "Yes". What did it say to her? She answered, "It said to me, 'I am here – I am here – I am life, eternal life'" (Frankl, 2011: 56).

In this impressive scene, the woman is talking to a tree, but when we look closely at her words, we understand that what she is talking to is not a tree—she is talking to "eternal life," something that appears on (or through) the surface of the tree.

Let us consider a hypothetical situation. Your child is sleeping deeply in bed at night without making a sound. You look at them from a distance. You have a strong feeling that there is someone in the place of your child's body in the bed. At this moment, there is no interaction between you and your child, and there is no evidence that your child has inner self-consciousness or rationality because your child might actually be dead for some reason. In this case, what makes you believe so strongly that there is a living person in the place of the child's body in the bed? My intuition is that the parent can feel the appearance of a person-like something on the surface of the child's body, which makes them believe that there is a living person who has potential inner self-consciousness and rationality. Here, the distinction between "the appearance of a person-like something" and "a living person who has potential inner self-consciousness and rationality" is the key to understanding the situation.

The next example is an artistic installation. A few years ago, I went to a museum and saw Ugo Rondinone's work *Vocabulary of Solitude*.[4] In a large exhibition room, there were about twenty human figures dressed as clowns with their faces painted white. Many of them were sitting on the floor, and others were lying down as if they

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[4] You can see photos of some versions of the same installation on the Internet, for example, at https://www.sadiecoles.com/exhibitions/630-ugo-rondinone-vocabulary-of-solitude/installation_shots/ (visited on June 17, 2022).

were sleeping. At first glance, they appeared to be human actors dressed as clowns, but as I walked around, I gradually began to understand that they were mannequins that had been cleverly installed by the artist. However, their figures and postures were so realistic that I could not help but feel that at least one of them was an actual human being and might suddenly stand up and walk away. This feeling was so strong that I felt the appearance of a person-like something on every mannequin, and then I realized that there was no evidence that a real human was not mixed in among them. I felt a little scared. The shadow of an unknown person appeared on the body of the mannequin in front of me, disappeared, and appeared again (this is a reverse example of a human being appearing like a mannequin, which is eloquently described in Marguerite Sechehaye's book).[5]

The last example is the case of a robot. One of my friends went to a café and saw an automatic serving robot delivering cups and plates to customers. It was a child-sized cylindrical robot with wheels on the bottom and a cat-like face on an LCD screen. Watching the robot as it was busy working, my friend perceived the presence of a person-like something on the robot and found it endearing. The point here is that the robot was not the shape of a human—it looked like an awkward machine—but still, my friend perceived the presence of a person-like something on the robot.[6]

How can these phenomena be explained in academic terms?

The phantom limb model cannot apply to the above cases because the factor of death or the disappearance of a loved one is not involved. Therefore, a different kind of explanation is needed.

Elizabeth V. C. Friedrich et al. conducted a psychological experiment using a computer screen on which an observer could see a human figure made of dots on the right side and randomly moving dots on the left side. They found that when the human figure on the right side performed communicative actions toward the moving dots on the left side, the observers were more likely to "see" a human agent that did not actually exist on the left side. They concluded that "[b]ecause of our expectations, communicative gestures can affect our perception in such a way that we see a person who is actually not there" (Friedrich et al., 2022: 5). This indicates that the communicative gestures of the human figure on the screen lead the observers to hold an expectation of the existence of its counterpart, and this expectation facilitates the illusionary experience of a nonexistent agent. The authors suggest that some functions in the brain (found in the sensorimotor cortex and a network of action-observation brain areas) may contribute to this kind of illusionary experience (Friedrich et al., 2022: 7).[7]

I would like to call this type of explanation the *expectation model*. The function of communicative gestures in the experiment can be extended to include other factors, such as the look of an object, an observer's affection for an object or a human being,

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[5] "But she seems more a statute than ever, a manikin moved by a mechanism, talking like an automation. It is horrible, inhuman, grotesque". (Sechehaye, 1970: 38). I thank an anonymous reviewer for letting me know about this book.

[6] I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Yoshitsugu Nagata for allowing me to use his experience.

[7] They call this kind of illusionary experience "a Bayesian ghost". See also Manera et al. (2011).

and an observer's religious beliefs. This *extended expectation model* can eloquently explain the cases of Frankl's woman (religious belief), the sleeping child (affection), the mannequin (a realistic human figure), and the serving robot (communicative behavior).

The Ontological Status of an Animated Persona

It seems that the combination of the phantom limb model and the extended expectation model can explain the *mechanisms* of the marginal cases discussed in the previous sections. However, some important questions remain unanswered, such as regarding the *ontological* status of a person-like something.

When I perceived the appearance of a person-like something on the body of the mannequin, I had a strong feeling that something was actually present on the mannequin. In this case, what was I perceiving? It must have been something that existed *on the surface of* the mannequin because nothing should exist inside the mannequin's body—it is just an object made of plastic resin, and there is no central nervous system inside.

In a recent paper, I introduced the concept of an "animated persona," arguing that even a brain-dead body or a wooden mask on an actor's face can be the locus of personhood once it is animated by various factors, for example, the accumulation of human relationships between a patient and their family members or the body movements of an actor, as well as the dynamic contexts in which they are embedded. I defined an animated persona as "a soundless voice saying, 'I AM HERE' that appears on the surface of something or someone" (Morioka, 2021: 124).[8] Here, the phrase "soundless voice" means that an animated persona is not a hallucination perceived through the five senses (that is, not an auditory hallucination) but can only be perceived through the whole body (Morioka, 2021: 120).

I did not attempt to develop this theory further in that paper; however, the idea of an animated persona has the potential to elucidate the appearance mechanism of a person-like something. In the following discussion, I will develop this idea and try to solve the aforementioned question.

First, I would like to reinterpret the concept of an animated persona. An animated persona appears on the surface of something or someone. An animated persona is a soundless voice that makes me strongly believe that someone is appearing on an object or a human body in front of me. Sometimes, it appears vaguely in the surrounding environment. An animated persona appears animated by various factors, such as the human shape of an object, the history of accumulated human relationships, affection toward an object, emotions for a loved one, the communicative behaviors of an object, and so forth. An animated persona can even appear on a sleeping child, a deceased human body, or a non-human object.

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[8] I borrowed the Latin-Japanese word "persona" from Tetsuro Watsuji's essay "Mask and Persona" (1935). The words "I AM HERE" are those uttered by the dying woman in Frankl's case. For a general philosophical discussion of the concept of person, see Spaemann (2012) and Singer (2011).

The above is the essence of the animated persona as I understand it. Let us think about the mechanism of the appearance of a person-like something discussed in the second and third sections using this concept of an animated persona.

First is the case of a woman who recently lost her father. She encountered her father when she was drying her hair. She felt as if her father were standing right in front of her. In this case, the animated persona of her father appeared in front of her, and she felt its presence, but she did not see his image with her eyes. The animated persona is considered to have appeared, animated by her strong affection for and regret about her deceased father as well as by the sense of security she felt in her parents' home.

Second is the case of a mannequin. The shape and posture of each clown mannequin were so realistic that I felt the appearance of an animated persona on each mannequin in front of me. In this case, an animated persona is considered to have appeared on the body of a mannequin, animated by the shape and posture reminiscent of a realistic human body and by the feeling of fear I had toward the mannequins.

Third is the case of a robot. A friend of mine perceived the appearance of an animated persona on a serving robot. In this case, an animated persona is considered to have appeared, animated mainly by the robot's communicative behavior and partly by a cat-like face on the LCD screen. Although this robot can perform the task of serving effortlessly, what it does is no more than respond appropriately to easily predictable input from the environment. It is far from a sophisticated human-like robot embedded with state-of-the-art artificial intelligence. The interesting point is that even on such a simplistically made cylindrical robot, my friend was able to perceive an animated persona.

Fourth is the case of a memento of my father's wristwatch. In this case, an animated persona appeared because it was animated by my affection for and regret about my deceased father and my memory of him wearing it. The interesting thing is that the wristwatch does not have a human shape.

Fifth is the case of my father's body just after the declaration of his death. This is an example of a human version of a mannequin. An animated persona appeared, animated by the shape and warmth of my father's body, which looked and felt exactly the same as before the declaration.

Sixth is the case of the tree in Frankl's book. This example is a little different from the previous ones. The young woman talked to a tree, and the tree replied to her, "I am here". She insisted that there was a conversation between them. The existence of a *conversation* makes this case unique. Let us believe her testimony. From the woman's perspective, there was a bilateral, symmetrical interaction between the tree and the woman. It is unclear whether she heard an actual voice with her ears or whether it was a soundless voice, although she clearly believed there was an exchange of words between them. However, from a bystander's perspective, it must have been a series of one-directional utterances from the woman to the tree, and there were no objective responses from the tree. Let us call this kind of conversation a *subjective* conversation.[9] If we take a closer look at this case, we find two events happening simultane-

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[9] In this connection, Millar and Lopez-Cantero (2022) argue that there can be an interaction between the living and the dead that lacks "full-blown reciprocity" but is not "merely one-directional" (n.p.).

ously. One is the appearance of an animated persona on the surface of the tree. The woman noticed it and felt that someone was on the tree. The other is the appearance of the counterpart of her conversation. She talked to this counterpart (eternal life), and the counterpart replied to her. I think that these two—the appearance of an animated persona and the appearance of the counterpart of the conversation—should be clearly distinguished. Let us look back at previous cases, for example, the mannequin. In the case of the mannequin, there was the layer of an animated persona, but there was no layer of the counterpart of the conversation because I did not say a word to the mannequin, and the mannequin did not say a word back to me.

In the case of the tree, the difference between the two layers is subtle; in the next case, the difference becomes a bit clearer.

Seventh is the case of the brain-dead son. This is also a good example of a subjective conversation, as discussed above. Let us compare it with the case of my deceased father. In the case of the brain-dead son, there was both the layer of an animated persona and the layer of the counterpart of the conversation, but in the case of my deceased father, there was only the layer of an animated persona. I was able to feel an animated persona on the body of my deceased father, but I was not able to have a verbal conversation with him.

Eighth, let us consider the case of a living, conscious human being. It may sound strange to talk about an animated persona appearing on the body of a living, conscious human being, but this is one of the most interesting parts of my theory. My argument is that when I meet a human being, I perceive two layers at the same time: the layer of an animated persona on the surface of that human body and the layer of the counterpart of the conversation, which is vaguely perceived to exist somewhere on or inside that human body.

For example, suppose I have an appointment to meet a friend and I am waiting for them on the street. A few minutes later, I recognize them approaching me. I notice a soundless voice saying "I AM HERE" emanating from their body. I say, "Hello," and I smile at them. At this moment, I have the undeniable feeling that what I am seeing is a human being, not just a human-shaped biological machine. This shows that an animated persona appears on the surface of their body, animated by their human shape, their natural behavior, and my expectation that my friend is about to show up.

I begin to talk to them. At this moment, another layer reveals itself; the layer of the counterpart of the conversation appears in the place of my friend's body. The counterpart and I have a lively conversation, which is objectively observable by the people around us. This objective conversation is completely different from the subjective conversation found in the cases of the tree and the brain-dead son. The important point is that the counterpart I am talking to and the animated persona appearing on my friend's body are different things that exist on different layers. This is because while an animated persona can only be perceived *subjectively* by me, the counterpart of my conversation can be *objectively* observed by many people. During a conversation with my friend, while in the layer of the animated persona I continue to feel its appearance and hear the soundless voice saying "I AM HERE" emanating from it, in the layer of the counterpart of the conversation I have a bilateral, symmetrical,

objectively observable verbal interaction with the counterpart in front of me.[10] These two processes occur simultaneously during our conversation. Of course, the first is subjective, and the second is objective.

Although an animated persona and a counterpart are ontologically separate beings, the physical locations where these two beings appear are usually almost identical. The animated persona appears on the surface of my friend's body, and my counterpart is also vaguely perceived to exist on or inside my friend's body. Hence, when I talk to my friend, I feel as if there is only one partner of mine in front of me, but that is not correct. There are two partners: one is an animated persona that I feel on my friend's body, and the other is the counterpart of my conversation, with whom I have a bilateral conversation.

Here, I would like to define the concept of conversation. In this paper, "conversation" refers to a bilateral, symmetrical interaction that uses verbal and non-verbal language. If surrounding people can objectively observe such bilateral interactions, this is an *objective* conversation. If surrounding people cannot observe these interactions, it is a *subjective* conversation. In the latter case, a conversation is bilateral only in the sense that I can perceive both my utterance and my counterpart's response to it in my subjective world.

Ninth is the case of a sleeping child. In this case, an animated persona is considered to appear, animated by a parent's affection for the child, the child's human-shaped body and face, the context the parent and the child share that night, habitual expectations, and other factors, but what about the counterpart of the conversation? At first glance, no such counterpart appears. However, we usually believe that if we wake up our children, they will be able to have verbal conversations with us. Thus, in this sense, we can say that a *potential* counterpart of the conversation appears on the child's body. This case is different from that of the mannequin; in the case of the mannequin, I did not think that I would be able to have a conversation with a mannequin if I tried to wake one up. Hence, we can say that this kind of potentiality is an essential characteristic of the case of a sleeping child.

Similar is the case of a living, conscious human being. Imagine again the case in which I meet a friend on the street. When I see them approaching me, I say, "Hello," but at that moment, the counterpart of the conversation has not yet appeared on their body. My friend may have lost the ability to speak or think for some reason and, therefore, not be able to reply.[11] Nevertheless, I have a strong conviction that when we come face-to-face with one another, we will be able to exchange words and start a conversation as usual. Therefore, a potential counterpart of the conversation has

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[10] This does not necessarily mean that in the former layer I have no reactions to the appearance of an animated persona. In many cases I react to it nonverbally.

[11] Readers may think that this argument is too strong to be taken seriously, but this is a methodological skepticism for examining the nature of the appearance of an animated persona, so it is considered necessary for my argument. The important thing is that we can live both levels at the same time, that is, the level of methodological skepticism in which we can even doubt the existence of the inner self-consciousness of our family member, and the other level of everyday lived experience in which we never doubt its existence. What we really need to solve is the question of how these two incompatible levels can be successfully reconciled in us. This is a very interesting methodological question, but we are not going to discuss it in this paper due to space limitations.

already appeared on the body approaching me. It can also be rephrased that I have the conviction that a potential counterpart of the conversation will become an actual counterpart when we meet face-to-face.

There are people who water growing plants and tell them good morning. In this case, they are considered to perceive animated personae on the plants. However, they would not believe that the plants are a potential conversation counterpart and that if they wake them up, they can have a bilateral, objective conversation. Therefore, in this case, the layer of a potential, bilateral, and objective conversation does not emerge. Of course, in special situations, such as Frankl's tree, the layer of a subjective conversation could appear on a tree. However, even in that case, the conversation would be subjective or potentially subjective and not objectively bilateral or potentially objectively bilateral. What about a pet dog or a pet bird? Recent scientific observations have shown that there can be verbal or semi-verbal interactions between pets and their owners. This suggests that there may be both the layer of an animated persona and the layer of a verbal or semi-verbal conversation. People talk directly to their pets. From the perspective of animated persona theory, this is described as talking directly to an animated persona that appears on the surface of the pet, not to its body.

Discussion of Surface-Ness, Projection, and Morality

Here, I want to examine the difference between the commonsense view of other minds and our animated persona theory.

The commonsense view of other minds argues that: (1) there is the other mind *inside* another human body, and (2) in many cases we can perceive the emotions and thoughts of the other mind through the behaviors and expressions of that human body.

The animated persona theory, on the other hand, does not argue that there is actually the other mind *inside* another human body. As I will discuss later, it remains agnostic about the actual existence of the other mind inside another human body. Instead, it pays special attention to the *conviction* we naturally have when we see another human being in front of us, the *conviction* that there is the other mind inside another human body, and argues that this *conviction* functions as one of the powerful animating forces that can bring an animated persona before us.

Let us again consider the case in which I meet a friend on the street. In this case, according to the animated persona theory, an animated persona appears on my friend's body when I see them, and I have the *conviction* that there is inner self-consciousness inside the body of my friend who is speaking before my eyes. Here, I am considering their inner self-consciousness, for example, as a counterfactual stream of consciousness that I would directly experience if my mind existed inside their body (this is a kind of interpretation of simulation theory).

In this case, an animated persona on their body is considered to have appeared, animated by the shape of their human body, the lively conversation between us, the dynamic behaviors of their body and facial expressions, *and my conviction* that there

must be inner self-consciousness inside their body. My conviction serves as a factor that strongly animates the appearance of an animated persona on that human body.

My conviction that there is inner self-consciousness inside their body, together with the various other factors mentioned, makes it possible for an animated persona to appear on their body. This shows that there is no inevitable reason to think that the appearance of an animated persona leads to the actual existence of the inner self-consciousness *inside* another human body. In fact, even without such a hypothesis, we can explain the mechanism of the appearance of an animated persona. It should also be remembered that phenomenology has generally criticized the commonsense view of other minds described previously.[12]

In the following paragraphs, I would like to further discuss three important aspects of the appearance of an animated persona.

The first is surface-ness. In most cases, a person-like something, that is, an animated persona, appears on the surface of something or someone. In the case of the mannequin mentioned earlier, a person-like something appears literally on its physical surface. As long as I perceive the mannequin as a mere object made of plastic resin, there is no appearance of a person-like something; hence, no significant philosophical problem arises. However, once I perceive a person-like something on a mannequin, the situation becomes completely different.

Let us consider this point from the beginning. Imagine that there is a cube box in front of us. In this case, we understand that the box is made up of the visible front side and the invisible back side, and that both sides are necessary for the box to be what it is. Next, let us imagine a human being in front of us. In this case, *according to the commonsense view*, we understand that this human being is made up of the visible body and the invisible mind lurking inside it, and that both the visible body and the invisible mind are necessary for the human being before us to be established as a person. And in this case, the visible body is the front side and the invisible mind is the back side.

Next, imagine the mannequin case in which I perceive a person-like something on the mannequin. Because I see a person-like *figure* before me, it is natural for me to see the mannequin through the lens of the front and back structure, just like when I see a living human being. I am naturally inclined to posit (or infer) a hidden realm inside the mannequin's body for the place of inner consciousness. I am being captured by the front and back structure.

However, although it is natural for me to imagine that there could be some kind of mind in the invisible inside of the mannequin's body, I clearly know that there is no way a person-like entity could be there because it is the established fact that the inside of the mannequin is merely a lump of plastic resin. The important point is that

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[12] It should be noted that phenomenologists are generally critical of the commonsense view that another mind exists independently, literally inside the body of the human being in front of us. They argue that we can directly perceive the emotions of other people. That is because the body and the mind of another person melt into each other, just like those of mine, and thereby we directly perceive someone's body and mind simultaneously when we interact with them. Christian Skirke summarizes this as "the problem of other minds does not arise because subjects are situated in a world and for this reason are familiar with each other" (Skirke, 2014:228). See also Zahavi (2019:91–94), Gallagher & Zahavi (2021), Overgaard (2010), Overgaard (2012), and Avramides (2001).

because I am being captured by the front and back structure, it should be easily possible for me to imagine a person-like something lurking inside the mannequin, but actually what I can perceive is a person-like something appearing on the *surface* side of the mannequin's plastic body, and that is all there is.[13]

We can say that the person-like something that frightened me in the museum existed on the *surface* side, not in the realm *behind* it. If I had perceived that the person-like something existed in the realm behind the surface, I would have been scared, imagining that there might be an actual, living human being *trapped behind* the surface of the mannequin, but that was not the case. The reason for my scare was my imagining that the mannequin I saw in front of me might not be a mere lump of plastic resin but something more than that—a living being, like an actual human person. This imagining was triggered by the mannequin's realistic figure and the atmosphere of the gallery. It is on the surface side, not the realm behind it, where a person-like something resides. I would like to call this characteristic, which is common to many cases of the appearance of an animated persona, "the supremacy of surface-ness over behind-ness".

Let me emphasize it once again: when I saw the mannequin, I did not think that a person-like something was trapped inside the mannequin's plastic surface. Instead, I vividly felt that a person-like something was actually appearing on the surface of the mannequin, in spite of the fact that I clearly understood that the mannequin in front of me was only a lump of plastic resin. The current phenomenological framework does not fully explain this kind of situation. A new kind of explanatory framework is needed, which is why I propose the concept of "the supremacy of surface-ness over behind-ness".

While it is natural for an observer to imagine a hidden realm behind the surface, the establishment of the appearance of a person-like something on the surface does not, in principle, need any structural support from the imagination about the realm behind, which is demonstrated by the fact that I believed that the inside of the mannequin was only filled with plastic resin and that there was no mental entity behind the surface of the mannequin. I think this opens up a new field of discussion in phenomenology.

So what about the case of the woman who perceived her father when drying her hair or the cases in which people feel a person-like something on the "empty shoes, empty clothes, watches, rings, and empty chairs" of deceased people?[14] In such cases, we usually do not assume that there could be an unperceivable realm behind an animated persona or inside any of the objects of the deceased, hence an unperceivable realm behind is not usually established, and "the supremacy of surface-ness over behind-ness" does not occur either.

So what about the case in which I meet a living, conscious human being on the street? The commonsense view argues that the human being in front of me is made up of the visible body and the invisible mind lurking inside it and that there is a person-like entity inside that person's body. This is a clear example of traditional mind-body dualism. On the other hand, the animated persona theory argues that although I see

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[13] I use the phrase "surface and behind" instead of "front and back" in this context because the former pair is more appropriate in the case of an animated persona.

[14] DuBose, 1997:373.

the human being in front of me through the lens of the front and back structure, what I really perceive is an animated persona appearing on the surface of the body of that human being. It argues that the hidden realm inside the body does not necessarily play a significant role in the interactions between that human being and me, except in some unusual settings (for example, the case where I am asking that human being about their hidden inner feelings in a clinical setting). In other words, it takes an agnostic stance toward the existence of a person-like entity inside the human body in front of me. The animated persona theory can be considered a type of mind-body dualism that argues that both an animated persona (*mind*) and the perceived body of another human being (*body*) exist on the same *surface* side and that these two are closely related to each other on the surface.[15] This is a different scheme from the Western mind-body dualism. In the case of a living, conscious human being, there is a sharp conflict between the commonsense view and the animated persona theory. The problem with the commonsense view is that it cannot provide a convincing account to explain the lived experience of perceiving a person-like something appearing on the mannequin and other similar cases.

The second important aspect of the appearance of an animated persona is projection. My colleagues often ask me if we can interpret an animated persona as the projection of an observer. This reaction has a wide range of variations, for example, "When you feel a person-like something on a mannequin or a memento, you are projecting your inner emotions, such as fear, regret, and expectations, onto such an object, and you are sensing your own projected emotions on the surface of such objects. Nothing actually appears on them".

I can understand this kind of reaction. An animated persona can only be perceived in a subjective form, so if the last sentence was "Nothing *objective* actually appears on them," then I would not have any disagreement. My point is that even if everything is the result of an observer's projection, animated persona theory does not collapse because *such projection is considered part of the animation mechanism that actualizes the emergence of an animated persona*. It should be noted that we cannot easily control the time and place of emergence. A projection is not an intentional action, like walking or reading. A projection can only occur when all the surrounding conditions are met; therefore, it should be considered a *passive* event. In other words, this kind of projection is an *uncontrollable projection*. Uncontrollability and passivity are important characteristics of the appearance of an animated persona.[16] In the everyday world, we live our lives surrounded by this kind of projections. Some of my friends have already died, yet when I go to certain places, I can sometimes feel the animated persona of one of these friends in the surrounding environment. This may be a projection, but the experience is real to me. For many people who have lived for a long time, the world is filled with animated personae of deceased people.

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[15] One of the remaining important problems is the problem of what kind of mind-body dualism occurs in the case of myself. I will discuss this in my future paper.

[16] This does not mean that the way in which I should treat a human person on whom an animated persona appears (or does not appear) is uncontrollable. Whether an animated persona appears on a human person or not, we have the independent moral responsibility to treat that human person as a being that has basic human rights.

Personification is one version of such projection. There are at least two kinds of personification. One is the personification we use when we talk about an object as if it were a human. The other is the personification we use when we sense someone appearing on an object. The latter is a good example of the appearance of an animated persona.

The third important aspect of the appearance of an animate persona is morality. Is there a case in which the counterpart of the conversation appears on someone or something, but an animated persona does not appear in the same place? Yes, there is.

First, imagine well-made artificial intelligence software running on a huge computer. I can have a smooth and rational conversation with this artificial intelligence, and I can strongly feel that there is a counterpart to my conversation on the computer in front of me. However, this does not guarantee that I will perceive an animated persona on the screen. No matter how smoothly and rationally we communicate with each other, in most cases, this type of artificial intelligence is no more than a machine to me, and no animated persona will be found there.

This case shows that the existence of a counterpart of the conversation does not necessarily guarantee the appearance of an animated persona. This is a mirror image of the cases in which an animated persona appears, but no counterpart of the conversation exists, such as those of the mannequin and the wristwatch.

What, then, about humans? Imagine, for example, a slave and his master some centuries ago. This slave is owned by his master; hence, the master can do anything to his slave. He makes his slave carry heavy things as if the slave is an ox or a horse. He uses his slave to the point of exhaustion, and when the slave is no longer able to work, the master abandons him. In this case, the slave appears to his master as a counterpart of the conversation (they can have a linguistic conversation), but an animated persona does not appear on the slave. To his master, he is nothing more than a mere sentient creature or a biological machine with a human shape.

Next, let us examine a master who often whips his slave for fun. No matter how much the slave cries, the master does not stop whipping them. In this case, the slave certainly appears to his master as a being more than a mere sentient creature with a human shape. It is clear that the master perceives the appearance of an animated persona on the slave's body. Because an animated persona appears on the slave's body, it becomes highly pleasurable for the master to whip his slave and make him moan and cry.

Let us consider this case from a different perspective.

Imagine a case in which you are watching foreign refugees being treated violently in a detention center. If no animated persona appears on them—that is, if you see the situation merely as a group of human-shaped objects being treated poorly—you will not try to stop it. However, if you are not a sadist (like the master whipping his slave), and you perceive the appearance of animated personae on them, and you feel a soundless voice saying "I AM HERE" emanating from the refugees, then you will be upset and try to find a way to stop it. This means that the appearance of an animated persona usually has the power to stop the violence or disrespect being inflicted on the human being upon whom the animated persona appears. In other words, in addition to the message of "I AM HERE," an animated persona emanates another important message to surrounding observers: "DO NOT KILL ME, DO NOT INJURE

ME, DO NOT ABANDON ME". Therefore, to perceive an animated persona on a human body or an object is to hear the message, "I am here, so do not kill me, do not injure me, and do not abandon me," emanating from the human being or the object. This shows that the layer of an animated persona is a layer of morality that revolves around the issues of killing, injuring, or abandoning someone. This is the central issue of the ethics of animated personae.

The reason the master enjoys whipping his slave is now clear—ignoring the message "I am here, so do not kill me, do not injure me, and do not abandon me" that emanates from the animated persona on the slave's body is extremely pleasurable to the sadistic master's heart. If there were no animated persona appearing on the slave, it would not be fun for the master to whip him because it would be equivalent to simply destroying a human-shaped mechanical machine. In the near future, a new type of entertainment show could be created in which a sophisticated human-like robot, which appears to many people to be wearing an animated persona, is placed on a stage, and the host entertains the audience by abusing and destroying the weeping robot. This thought experiment eloquently demonstrates that a soundless moral voice emanates from an animated persona and that an animated persona can appear even on a robot or a doll that is not normally thought to have inner feelings or experiences. The concept of an animated persona can serve as a helpful conceptual tool in robot ethics. I believe that this kind of entertainment should be basically regulated or banned in order to protect the foundation of the realm of our morality.

I must add here that I am not arguing that an animated persona should have the basic human rights that a living, self-conscious human being enjoys. A mannequin on which an animated persona appears does not have such rights, although we may have to show some *respect* for the feelings of those who have perceived an animated persona on it and for the soundless voice they have perceived.[17] However, the mere appearance of an animated persona is not enough to give a mannequin basic human rights. The reverse inference does not hold true. For example, the aforementioned slaves do have basic human rights and must be treated as human persons, even if the people around them do not perceive animated personae on them or enjoy abusing them. We may treat others in crisis very badly or ignore them if they are members of a group we have long hated for historical or other reasons, even if we clearly hear the soundless voice saying "DO NOT ABANDON ME" emanating from their personae; of course, this should not be justified in terms of basic human rights.

Conclusion

Table 1 shows variations of the combination of an animated persona and a conversation, as well as their correspondence with a human being and a non-human being. You can see the examples I have discussed so far, as well as others that have not been discussed.

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[17] One remaining problem is the clarification of the meaning of the words "respect for the soundless voice".

Table 1 Variations of the combination of an animated persona and a conversation, and their correspondence to a human being and a non-human being

	A human being	A non-human being
1. Animated persona and *objective* conversation	A living, conscious human being	A future well-engineered human-like robot; Some animals
2. Animated persona and *subjective* conversation	A brain-dead son	Frankl's tree
3. Animated persona and *potentially* objective conversation	A sleeping child	A future well-engineered human-like robot in silence
4. Animated persona and *no* conversation	My deceased father in a hospital room	A mannequin; A serving robot; A memento; A deceased person appearing in the surrounding environment
5. *No* animated persona and (potentially) *objective* conversation	A slave	Artificial intelligence software on a computer
6. *No* animated persona and *no* conversation	An unknown brain-dead human patient as seen by a physician	An object, such as garbage

The upper four lines show the world of animated personae. In traditional Western philosophy, many philosophers have drawn a line between human beings and non-human beings. From the perspective of animated persona theory, we should redraw a line above line four and below line five. In the world of animated personae, whether something is a human being or not does not have much importance. The important thing is whether a person-like something appears or not.

This further implies that all animated personae belong to the same category. This means that an animated persona appearing on a living, conscious human body, an animated persona appearing on a dead human body, and an animated persona appearing on a mere object, such as a mannequin, share the same ontological status. There is no animated persona that belongs only to the category of a living, conscious human being, and there is no animated persona that belongs only to the category of a mere object. Of course, there is a difference in quality between an animated persona belonging to the former category and that belonging to the latter category. This can be compared to how all the paintings in a museum are different in quality, but they all belong to the same category: paintings. Many people are accustomed to thinking that an animated persona appearing on the body of a living, conscious human being should be categorically different from one appearing on an object made of mere wood or plastic, but from our perspective, this is wrong.

I have attempted to stipulate a list of conditions that help an animated persona appear; however, it is still unclear how these conditions actually interact in the emergence process of an animated persona. An interdisciplinary contribution from psychology and other cognitive sciences is urgently needed.

In this paper, I have extended the concept of animated persona and applied it to various cases: a robot, everyday objects, a living human being, and others. I have proposed the concept of "the supremacy of surface-ness over behind-ness" for the

purpose of philosophically analyzing the appearance of an animated persona, and I have categorized various cases in which animated personae appear, which may serve as a clue for rethinking the Western concept of personhood.

Although many matters have not been fully clarified, I believe that the discussion in this paper will certainly contribute to future research into the philosophy of other minds and personhood.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The author declares no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript.

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