



## Animated Persona

### The Ontological Status of a Deceased Person Who Continues to Appear in This World

In this paper, I propose the concept of the “animated persona,” a soundless voice that says, “I AM HERE” and appears on the surface of someone or something. This concept can bring clarity to the experience of perceiving a kind of personhood on a corpse, a wooden mask, or even a tree. In the first half of this paper, I will examine some Japanese literature and a work of Viktor Frankl’s that discuss these phenomena. In the second half, I will analyze the concept of *animated persona* from five perspectives: (1) a compelling power, (2) surface-ness, (3) religious experience, (4) universality, and (5) the meaning of “I.” Lastly, I will discuss the relationship among the three layers of biological object, animated persona, and self-conscious being. My aim is to shed new light on the meaning of the encounter between the living and the dead.

KEYWORDS: person—death—Watsuji Tetsurō—Tanabe Hajime—Victor Frankl—phenomenology

Since the great East Japan earthquake of 2011, many tsunami victims who lost family members are reported to have encountered their loved ones in their homes, at the seashore, and in other nearby places. Some saw their images in living rooms, some heard their voices in the wind. From the perspective of modern science, these phenomena would be interpreted as delusions brought about by overwhelming emotions over the tragedy of family members lost to the disaster.

In this paper, I would like to propose a new philosophical framework to have another look at these phenomena, which occur to ordinary people in everyday settings, and offer an alternative explanation. In the first half of this paper, I will examine some of the literature that discusses these phenomena from a philosophical point of view. In the second half, I will propose the concept of *animated persona* and attempt a phenomenological and ontological analysis of it. My discussion relies heavily on the writings of Japanese authors, but I believe that the theory of the *animated persona* applies equally to a variety of phenomena experienced by ordinary people around the world. The central challenge of this paper is to examine how we might interpret the encounter between the living and the dead from the perspective of contemporary philosophy.

#### CONVERSATIONS WITH A BRAIN-DEAD BODY

It is interesting that even those who do not believe in the existence of a soul can have this kind of experience. For example, Yanagida Kunio (1936–), a well-known Japanese journalist with a rigorously scientific mind, acknowledged the experience of having “conversations” with his brain-dead, unconscious son Yōjirō in the hospital.

In his autobiographical memoir *Gisei (Sacrifice)*, published in 1995,

Yanagida recounts his experience of sitting at the bedside of his brain-dead son, taking hold of the still warm hands and calling him by name as he reminisced on their time together in life.

“My son’s body ‘converses’ with me without spoken language,” Yanagida wries. “This is a mysterious feeling.”<sup>1</sup>

Even though Yōjirō was brain-dead, when Ken’ichirō 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. Despite the scientific evidence that a brain-dead person is literally a dead person who has no consciousness or use of the senses, I was convinced that the brain-dead body of our beloved held great meaning for those of his family who were joined by a living, spiritual bond.<sup>2</sup>

This was a very strange experience for Yanagida, who had the strong feeling that there was someone, some living person, in front of him, although his son was in the state of brain death, lying unconscious on a bed. As an objective observer, Yanagida clearly understood that a brain-dead patient has lost self-consciousness permanently, but as a father, he could not help noticing “a remnant of personhood” on his beloved son’s brain-dead body.

We find similar narratives in the memoirs of any number of families of brain-dead patients. In an impressive memoir, the parents of a brain-dead daughter write vividly of their attempt to communicate with her. Her mother would put perfume on their daughter’s warm feet, and every time her father would leave the hospital room, he would call out to his daughter, “*Gambariya* (Hang in there)!” They understood that their daughter had lost self-consciousness in the state of brain death, but at the same time, they perceived a mysterious something on their daughter’s body. It was the overwhelming power of that “something” that prompted them to act in this way.<sup>3</sup>

Another example is taken from a letter to a newspaper written by Watanabe Ryōko. She had requested that in the event she were to become brain dead, her organs were to be donated immediately. One day, her father fell into a deep coma (in his case, brain death was not diagnosed). She writes:

1. YANAGIDA 1995, 129.

2. YANAGIDA 1995, 129. Ken’ichirō was Yanagida’s first son.

3. FUJIWARA 1993, 21.

To touch the body of my unconscious father and to feel its warmth is *the sole dialogue between us* at present. It is different in quality from everyday communication through words and expressions. As I do so, I feel my sensitivity broaden and deepen limitlessly. I soothe myself and make preparations for the inevitable parting with my father.

It may be that my father's warmth heals me. His present condition may go against his will, but it is of great significance for those of us who keep holding his hands in ours.

I myself wish to be an organ donor. But having gone through this experience, I have come to think that I should forgive my family if they wish to share my warmth for as long as possible—for a day, or even for just an hour. Just as things are with my father now.<sup>4</sup>

What is most impressive about these narratives is that those who recount them believed that *a dialogue or conversation without spoken language* had taken place between a brain-dead person (or a person in a deep coma) and their family members. Scientifically, it makes no sense to claim that one can converse with someone who is unconscious. But then, who were the family members talking with?

#### WATSUJI'S CONCEPT OF *PERSONA*

Let us now turn to the important Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960). In his essay “Mask and Persona,” published in 1935,<sup>5</sup> Watsuji talks about the Japanese Nō play and its relationship to the idea of *persona*, a Latin word that originally referred to the “mask” worn by an actor.

An actor in a Nō play dances on stage while wearing a mask. Watsuji remarks that, by itself, the mask looks like the face of someone who has died a sudden death, but once worn, it becomes expressive like the face of a living person. The bodily movements of the actor seem to breathe “life” into the dead mask and allow it to show various emotions of a living person. What at first appears to be a death mask is gradually transformed into a thing of beauty through the dance of the actor until at last it seems to sparkle with life. In the dreamlike illusion of a *mugen* Nō (夢幻能), the protagonist is a

4. WATANABE 1997; emphasis added. For further examples, see KINJŌ and MORIOKA 2011.

5. WATSUJI 1935.

departed soul wandering the world, and it is on his mask that the soul alights to restore life to the deceased. The mask is the point at which life and death intersect in the one who has died.

Watsuji identifies two phases occurring on the Nō stage. In the first, the actor's bodily movements breathe "life" into the mask he is wearing. At this point, the mask is being controlled by the dance and gestures of the actor's bodily movement. This is followed by a second phase in which the Nō mask, which the actor has made to come "alive," becomes the locus of personhood and begins to control the body and limbs of the dancer as if they were its own. In the first phase, the actor is the subject of the body; in the second, the mask takes over as subject. This conversion of actor and mask is one of the most impressive parts of Watsuji's argument.

A Nō mask on its own lacks any self-consciousness or rationality. It is nothing more than a wood carving. But no sooner is it worn by an actor performing in front of an audience than it takes on personhood and begins to govern the whole body of the actor. Watsuji calls what appears on the surface of the mask "*persona*."<sup>6</sup> It is not the inner personality of the actor, but rather a mysterious something that emerges from the interaction among the protagonist, the other actors, the audience, the story line, and the music.

Watsuji's theory of *persona* as outlined above suggests that even a wooden mask, devoid of self-consciousness and rationality, becomes a kind of person when animated by an actor's movement or some other force. I propose to call this type of personhood *animated persona*. In doing so, I am fully aware that such an idea contradicts the modern European concept of person as a self-conscious subject equipped with free will and the power of reason.<sup>7</sup>

6. Watsuji writes, "The mask or face has a central significance for human existence. It is not only a part of the body, but also the locus of the subject that governs its body, that is to say, the locus of personhood. All things considered, it is very natural here to imagine (the word) *persona*" (WATSUJI 1935, 21.) Here he himself writes the word "persona" in Latin, and later in katakana.

7. Two years later, in 1937, Watsuji published the first volume of his *Ethics*, where he systematically discussed the concept of person in the opening chapter, where the idea of the *animated persona* is present in germ. For example, Watsuji writes that when we go to meet up with a friend, we never try to find a body that resembles our friend, and then try to find our friend in that body. However, he does not proceed here to a discussion of the *animated persona*, which for some reason I cannot fathom he seems to have kept separate from his philosophical system of

I would argue that the mysterious “something” that made its presence felt on the body of Yanagida’s brain-dead son is none other than the *animated persona* Watsuji identified on the Nō mask. I am also persuaded what many authors who write about the relationship between the living and the dead mean by “the deceased” also falls under the definition of the *animated persona*.

An *animated persona* appearing on a Nō mask (Watsuji) and an *animated persona* appearing on the body of a brain-dead patient (Yanagida) should not be considered *merely* an illusion or projection. It is something *actually perceived* by the audience or the family members. Of course, this does not commit us to believe in *the soul as an entity* present in the corpse, on the surface of a mask, or somewhere in one’s imagination. We cannot directly see, touch, or hear an *animated persona* as such, but we can perceive its appearance with our whole body and communicate with it without spoken language. In other words, the *animated persona* is a “soundless voice” that can be heard by those with a special relationship to a deceased person in a state of brain death, or by an audience deeply immersed in a Nō drama being enacted before them. The message of that soundless voice is simply “I AM HERE.” This is the essence of the appearance of an *animated persona*.

#### VIKTOR FRANKL AND THE *ANIMATED PERSONA*

The phenomenon of the *animated persona* is hardly unique to Japan or other cultures where an animistic worldview seems to have survived the test of time in a large portion of the population. I would point out similar descriptions in Viktor Frankl’s masterpiece *Man’s Search for Meaning*.<sup>8</sup>

In the concentration camp, where he was forced into hard labor, Frankl remembers the image of his beloved wife, who had been sent to another camp and of whom he does not know whether or not she is still alive:

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*Ethics*. For my part, the idea of an *animated persona* is more attractive than the idea of person discussed in his *Ethics*, especially when it comes to the relationship between the living and the dead. See WATSUJI 1937, 99.

8. FRANKL 2011.

I resumed talk with my loved one: I asked her questions, and she answered; she questioned me in return, and I answered.... A thought crossed my mind: I didn't even know if she were still alive. I knew only one thing—which I have learned well by now: Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his [the beloved person's] spiritual being, his inner self.<sup>9</sup> Whether or not he [the beloved person] is actually present,<sup>10</sup> whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance.... There was no need for me to know; nothing could touch the strength of my love, my thoughts, and the image of my beloved. Had I known then that my wife was dead, I think that I would still have given myself, undisturbed by that knowledge, to the contemplation for her image, and that my mental conversation with her<sup>11</sup> would have been just as vivid and just as satisfying....<sup>12</sup>

Once again I communed with my beloved. More and more I felt that she was present, that she was with me; I had the feeling that I was able to touch her, able to stretch out my hand and grasp hers. The feeling was very strong: she was there [*sie – ist – da!*].<sup>13</sup>

Frankl's experience of conversing with his beloved wife and feeling that she is in his presence is an impressive example of the appearance of an *animated persona* in sense I have just described.

Frankl also writes of a young woman who is set to die shortly:

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 [*ich bin da*] – I am here – I am life, eternal life.'"<sup>14</sup>

Here, too, Frankl talks about an *animated persona*, a soundless voice that announces, "I AM HERE"—this time through a tree. I am struck by the fact that the young woman uses the words "I am here (*ich bin da*)."<sup>15</sup> She may or

9. "das geistige Wesen des geliebten Menschen, sein 'So-sein.'"

10. "seine körperliche Existenz."

11. "diese geistige Zwiesprache."

12. FRANKL 2011, 31; German, 64–5.

13. FRANKL 2011, 33; German, 68.

14. FRANKL 2011, 56; German: p. 107. "Er hat mir gesagt: Ich bin da – ich – bin – da – ich bin das Leben, das ewige Leben...."

may not have heard that voice as an actual sound wave, but she believed she could perceive an *animated persona* actually appearing on the tree. This would seem to indicate that not only a deceased person but also a God or spirit can appear as an *animated persona*. If so, the range of the concept of *animated persona* is broader than we at first thought.

Because Frankl was a Jewish thinker, it may seem misleading to speak of him as having perceived an “*animated*” persona. Nonetheless, I believe his case is a clear indication of how people throughout history can experience such phenomena irrespective of time and place; it is a truly universal experience.

#### INTERACTION BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DECEASED

Before moving on to a philosophical analysis of the *animated persona*, I would like to take up other discussions in Japanese philosophical literature on the interaction between the living and the dead.

The philosopher Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) wrote in an essay entitled “An Ontology of Life or a Dialectics of Death?” that living persons can communicate with the deceased and establish an “existential cooperation” with them.<sup>15</sup> Tanabe argued that the love of the deceased toward the living person and of the living toward the deceased resonate in a mutual “existential cooperation” of love that amounts to a “resurrection from death.”<sup>16</sup> He calls it “a cooperative sympathy through mutual love between the living and the dead.”<sup>17</sup> What is unique about Tanabe’s thinking here is that he believed that the living and the dead can *actually* communicate with each other in this world, reminiscent of conversations between brain-dead patients and the members of their family. He argues that cooperative sympathy involves, first, a catharsis of the deceased and then, secondly, a purification of the living under the influence of the deceased. This suggests that the starting point is the deceased, not the living.

Tanabe’s concept of “existential cooperation” is echoed in the historian Uehara Senroku’s (1899–1975) book *The Living and the Dead*. Uehara writes

15. 実存協同, TANABE 1958, 245.

16. 死復活, TANABE 1958, 293.

17. 死者生者の交互愛における協同感応, TANABE 1958, 294.



that he *actually* felt the continued existence of his late wife when he sat in front of her Buddhist memorial tablet.<sup>18</sup> It was “a presence that is not dead in spite of having already died.”<sup>19</sup>

Uehara then came to think that he *actually* existed with his late wife, lived with her, and fought social injustice with her. He calls this “a co-existence, co-living, and co-struggling that goes on between the deceased and the living.”<sup>20</sup> He appended a special chapter to the book to expose what he saw as the medical misconduct his wife suffered while hospitalized. The chapter was written as a result of their joint struggles against injustice in which his wife had been the leading figure, so that it was the deceased and not the living who was passing judgment. It is also worth noting that in the course of this confrontation he could *actually* hear his late wife’s voice at times. Furthermore, he was persuaded that it was the deceased and not the living who initiated the communication between the living and the dead.

The critic Wakamatsu Eisuke (1963–) also speaks of the presence of his late wife and refers to her ontological status as “the living dead.”<sup>21</sup> In his words, “The deceased accompany us. They actually feel pain, grieve, feel sorrow, and rejoice with us.”<sup>22</sup> For Wakamatsu, the deceased have their own inner emotions:

The deceased always exist side by side with the living, and have to look at the face of the living who are weeping over them. The deceased also feel the living in the midst of their sorrow. The sorrow indicates a cooperation taking place between the living and the deceased.<sup>23</sup>

All three authors mentioned above believe that they have had *actual* interactions with a deceased person. In my view, their accounts can be interpreted as examples of the *animated personae* I have been discussing in these pages.

18. UEHARA 1988, 40.

19. UEHARA 1988, 16.

20. UEHARA 1988, 3.

21. 生ける死者, WAKAMATSU 2012, 7.

22. WAKAMATSU 2012, 221.

23. WAKAMATSU 2012, 222. In his book, he discusses the philosophies of death in Frankl, Tanabe, and Uehara. I consulted his work frequently in composing this paper.

A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE *ANIMATED PERSONA*

The concept of *animated persona* as I am describing it differs from the concept of *persona* as understood in mainstream European philosophy, which requires self-consciousness, free will, and rationality as necessary conditions for identifying a person. In a word, I would define *animated persona* as “a soundless voice saying *I AM HERE*’ that appears on the surface of something or someone.” Based on the brief explanation given above, I would now like to consider some salient characteristics of the *animated persona* in more detail.

1. *A compelling power and the reaction to it*

A striking feature of the *animated persona* is that it has a compelling power to make the one who perceives it react in some fashion. Sitting alongside his brain-dead son, Yanagida unintentionally began “conversations” with him, and Frankl, perceiving the appearance of his wife in the air, began “conversations” with her.

Once a voice that makes no sound has come to me, it is difficult to ignore it or erase it from my mind. An *animated persona*’s compelling power *forces* me to react to the voice in some way. Whence does this power arise? One possible explanation is that the ultimate cause is located outside the body or object in which the *animated persona* is thought to reside. For example, in the case of the brain-dead son, the ultimate cause would lie in the father’s overwhelming emotions, or in the case of the wooden mask, in the movements of the actor and the setting of the play.

That said, if we put ourselves in the position of the perceiver, the situation changes dramatically. We may describe it as follows: In the first case, the appearance of an *animated persona* in the brain-dead body of the son was followed by a reaction to the soundless voice emerging from it. In the second case, the appearance of an *animated persona on the wooden mask* in the course of a beautiful dance moved the audience.

From the position of a detached bystander, then, we see things one way; from the position of the actual perceiver, we see them another. Here I have been taking the second standpoint, obliging me to pay special attention to the latter perspective: an *animated persona* appears first on the surface of someone or something, which triggers the perceiver to recognize its appearance and react to it. We recall that Tanabe and Uehara emphasize that the

starting point of the communication between the living and the dead is in the dead, not the living.

## 2. *The surface-ness of an animated persona*

An *animated persona* appears on the surface of a body or an object. In the case of the brain-dead patient, the soundless voice comes from the surface of the brain-dead body, not from within. The place that emits the voice is the surface, not the interior.

Here we need to make a “Copernican revolution.” As moderns, we are inclined to think that what is most essential about a human being is hidden beneath the surface. We tend to think that our inner character is more important than our exterior appearance or behavior. When it comes to the *animated persona*, however, the reverse is true. An *animated persona* appears only on the surface of the object. The *animated persona* originates from the surface. It is impossible for it to exist inside something.

For an *animated persona*, what appears on the surface is everything. There is nothing that is hidden inside. The essence of the *animated persona* and what gives it its ontological status is its *surface-ness*.<sup>24</sup>

Husserl’s concept of other minds is different from the concept of *animated persona* being proposed here. When Levinas talks about “the face,” he views it as the trace of the advent of “the Other,” which is destined to escape from my every endeavor to grasp it. But here, too, Levinas’s “Other” differs from the *animated persona*, even though his concept of “face” shares with the *animated persona* its attention to the surface. Moreover, in our experience of an *animated persona*, there is no delay in Levinas’s sense. The soundless voice reaches me simultaneously with my perception of the *animated persona*. In the future I plan to return to a more detailed analysis of the difference between *animated persona* and these kinds of phenomenological concepts, giving special attention to the relationship between the perceptible and the imperceptible.

Where might an *animated persona* appear? It appears on the surface of something, but it can also appear in the wind, in my memory, or in my imagination. In each case, *animated personae* do not occupy a physical place. This suggests that there are two kinds of *animated persona*: those that have a

24. Surface-ness does not entail shallowness; it can have depth.

physical place and those that do not. The question then arises as to whether an *animated persona* that occupies no physical place can be said to appear on the surface of something. This is complicated, but in the case of an *animated persona* that appears in memory, we may say that it appears on the surface of memory because there is no “inside” to memory. The same applies to imagination. This, too, calls for further investigation.

### 3. *The resemblance to religious experience*

Each time I perceive the appearance of an *animated persona*, I hear a soundless “I AM HERE” emerge from the *animated persona*. This is not unlike what we call religious experience.

There are numerous accounts of people hearing the voice of God or spirits without the use of their auditory organs. Frankl’s second example is instructive here. The young woman heard the voice of God proclaim, “I AM HERE” when looking at a tree outside her window. This is a typical religious experience of encounter with the divine, but it is also quite similar to the experience of perceiving an *animated persona* on the body of a brain-dead family member or on a Nō mask.

In this sense, we may say that the perception of God or spirits and the perception of an *animated persona* share an important characteristic, namely, that while I do not see, hear, or touch anything clearly, I am able to directly perceive with my body as a whole a soundless voice telling me, “I AM HERE.” This perception is so real that it is almost impossible for me to doubt the truthfulness of the presence of an *animated persona*. In the Spanish movie *Marcelino, pan y vino* (1955), the protagonist, a boy called Marcelino, sees an apparition of Jesus on a crucifix hanging on the wall of a monastery cell, reaching out to gently take hold of the boy’s body. From the boy’s perspective, he hears the voice of Jesus and sees the movement of the arm. In the movie the movement of Jesus’s arm and his voice are beautifully depicted to show something that actually occurred in the boy’s subjective perception at that moment, but I would suggest that it is an artistic visualization of the boy’s encounter with a soundless voice telling him, “I AM HERE.”

Strange as it may seem, this may further suggest that the very act of encountering someone might itself be a kind of religious experience. That is to say, each time I encounter a human being and perceive an *animated persona* on that body, I am swept up in a religious experience in the midst

of everyday life. As will I discuss later, we can perceive an *animated persona* not only on dead bodies, but also on living human bodies and other material objects. When I see a friend in the classroom, I can hear the soundless voice that says, "I AM HERE" on the body of that friend. Everyday experience may well be filled with small religious experiences like this. Meeting someone, in essence, is a kind of a religious event.

#### 4. *The universality of the animated persona*

Is the appearance of an *animated persona* on another's body an objective or a subjective event? If subjective, we have to say that it is a phenomenon peculiar to the subject who perceives it and hence lacks universality.

For example, a brain-dead patient may appear as an *animated persona* to family members, but may not appear as such to a hospital doctor or a bystander. In this case, we can say that the appearance of an *animated persona* is a particular subjective phenomenon and not a universal one. This is the reason the *animated persona* is often dismissed as an illusion or projection. While I disagree with the conclusion, I have to admit that *animated persona* seems to lack universality.

For some, an *animated persona* is an irreplaceable reality; for others, it is nothing more than a subjective phenomenon limited to those close to the subject. An *animated persona* is not an external object open to everyone to see or touch or smell. Its appearance is restricted to a select group of people. This does not necessarily mean that an *animated persona* is not important, or without value. When the family member of a brain-dead patient perceives an *animated persona* on the patient's body, the appearance is invaluable and irreplaceable to the perceiver. There is no cause to heartlessly negate the experience. On the contrary, we have every reason to respect and protect the experience even when it cannot be shared. This must be our basic moral attitude toward those who undergo the experience of an the *animated persona* in someone close to them.<sup>25</sup>

Imagine a sacred statue revered by a certain religious group. Most if not all of the believers are able to perceive a certain kind of *animated persona* on the surface of the statue, perhaps because their teachings or beliefs lead

25. This is what I argued in my book *Brain Dead Person* published in 1991. An English translation is available for download on the internet.

them to accept it as sacred. In this case, we may say that an *animated persona* appearing on the statue has universality within the confines of the religious community. But now, what if this religious group spreads rapidly until almost everyone on earth has become an ardent believer? Then, perhaps, we may speak of the *animated persona* of the statue as having attained universality, even if some continue to dismiss it as an illusion. Theoretically speaking, it is sometimes hard to distinguish collectively held subjective beliefs from what we consider to be objective reality. This opens the possibility of a subjective universality in addition to our usually objective understanding of universality.

##### 5. *What is “I” in the “I AM HERE”?*

The *Animated persona*, as we have been saying, implies a soundless voice announcing its presence. What are we to make of the “I” in the phrase “I AM HERE”? In my view, the “I” stands for the subject that appears on the *surface* of a body or an object, not the subject that exists *within* the body or the object.

Then, what exactly can such a surface “I” mean? I have not yet made up my mind on this question, but my sense is that this “I” signals the “starting point” of the voice. In other words, the soundless voice comes into being at that point, which the perceiver regards as a subject, an “I” that can deliver messages to others. When I perceive an *animated persona* on the surface of a body or an object, what I perceive is a *soundless voice* emitted from the body or the object, and I think of the “I” in this voice as the starting point of a trajectory that reaches me as its end.

I cannot intentionally control where and when this starting point makes itself manifest. In this sense, it transcends the realm of my control. This means that the advent of the starting point, which can also be named the advent of the “I,” resembles the advent of “the Other” in Levinas’s sense. Earlier I noted that Levinas’s idea of “the Other” differs from my idea of the *animated persona*, but I would now add that the “I” perceived as the starting point of the soundless voice could also be considered another name for “the Other.” The question then arises as whether there was anything there before the starting point. Did it appear *ex nihilo* or was there something or someone who prepared the way for the voice? I leave this question for future research.

## CONCLUSION

Up to this point I have centered my remarks mainly on the concept of *animated persona* as a kind of personhood appearing on the corpse of a brain-dead patient, on someone fallen into a coma, or on the surface of a mask. But this concept can also be applied to living human beings and to other non-living objects, like robots and dolls.

Say I enter a classroom and find one of my friends there. She smiles at me and I say hello to her. Why did I say hello to her? The reason is that I noticed someone who can have a conversation with me. But why did I think that she was such a person? Because when I caught sight of my friend, I perceived an *animated persona* on the surface of her body. The reason was not that I noticed a human being equipped with self-consciousness inside her body. She might actually have turned out to be a well-engineered robot without any self-consciousness at all.

And what of Watsuji's example of the Nō player? Clearly the members of the audience do not believe that the wooden mask has some kind of inner self-consciousness. Still, they are able to perceive the appearance of an *animated persona* on the surface of the wooden mask. In short, the appearance of an *animated persona* is independent of any belief about the presence of self-consciousness behind the mask.

All of this leads to the hypothesis of three layers of perception that can be applied to any object, human beings included. First is the layer of the biological object. Second is the layer of the *animated persona*. And third is the layer of the self-conscious being.

For example, a friend sitting opposite me is a biological object, but also appears as an *animated persona* and is someone I consider to be self-conscious. In the case of the Nō actor, the mask is not a biological object (it is made of a piece of wood) and while it nevertheless appears as an *animated persona* to the audience, it is not considered a self-conscious being.

*Animated persona* is not just another name for the soul or spirit of a dead person. It is a layer that can be found as well in living human beings as in brain-dead human beings, and in inanimate masks and mementos. It is also interesting to imagine whether we can perceive an *animated persona* on the surface of a well-engineered robot. Theoretically, an *animated persona* could indeed appear there as well as on any inanimate doll.



This suggests that our theory of the *animated persona* could have implications on robotic studies and AI research which has begun to question whether robots could be engineered to such a level of AI that they might be regarded as a true person. In any event, we are driven to reconsider just what it is that constitutes personhood. As for myself, I am inclined to take the possibility seriously and not dismiss it simply on the grounds that something lacks a “human soul.”

Finally, I would like to add a brief comment on an *animated persona* and the process of human death. Futuristic discussions aside, I accept as fact that an *animated persona* can appear distinctly on the body of a person approaching death or who has just passed away. My reasoning is as follows. When someone is still alive, even though I perceive their *animated persona*, the power of linguistic communication overshadows it. But when that same person is approaching death or has already died, communication through language disappears and in its place the presence of their *animated persona* suddenly looms large. To use a well-known analogy, the sun and the stars are all out in the daytime, but the light of the sun blocks out that of the stars. Only when the sun has set do the stars that were there all along begin to shine for us.

The appearance of an *animated persona* becomes most visible in the starlight that the darkness of death brings with it. Just then, for the first time, am I able to notice the *animated persona* appear and to hear the tiny soundless voice that says, “I AM HERE.”

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