

Handbook of Research on Technoself: Identity in a Technological Society

Chapter on *Social networking and identity*



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The [online] person thing intrigues me. It's a chance for all of us who aren't actors to play [with] masks. And think about the masks we wear everyday.

(Multi User Domain participant in Turkle 1995:257).

INTRODUCTION

The realisation that social networks in cyberspace creates a different virtual setting where a Technoself can be created by the way an individual shape their self (body and identity) to their own as well as society's liking, elicits a notion that there was once either an ideal era of bliss or a Utopian promise of universal self-realisation. From a communicative perspective, this chapter will propagate how social networks and identity are consequences of the accelerating rate of change and the subsequent 'cyber revolution'.

The main thrusts of communicative perspectives and current research emphasising the increasing importance of the Technoself, especially on the 'cyber stage' of cyberspace further reiterated and ratified through previous research by Barker (2008) culminated in the 'discovery' of the theatrical self, also labelled the 'Beyond self' (or Technoself) as a logical flow following Levinas' notion of the 'I' (the self, the ego), the 'Other' (which is difficult to make sense of because it is a metaphysical face without an actual face) and the 'Third' (the way you look at yourself in the eyes of the other and 'correcting' the Other as a result). The main premises were based on the argument that a new formulation of the Beyond-self can be invoked in the cyber beyond modernist era, not only to facilitate social interaction among members, but more significantly to influence the way in which members create an identity through the presentation of this self to create a Technoself through the use of theatrical metaphors to the Others – whether this self is real, constructed, staged and/or masked.

It is hence argued that the creation of an identity through the presentation of the Technoself can be seen as an imperative facet of the modus operandi of informal social networks, virtual communities or settings, reflecting the complex social web in which the Technoself is acted and acted upon, embedded and entangled in complex disperses needing to respond to various critiques and elements in the emergence thereof. It will be indicated that, what an appropriate Technoself requires, is allowing the emergence of implicit, narrative and embodied knowledge (material and non material) to create an overall self which present an integrative self – a self that is constructed, masked, staged and/or real. Based on this, it will be deduced that the Technoself is produced based on expressions of the life-world own self to

create an identity which presents the contextual living action as experienced by the own self on cyber stage. Any theatrical environment or 'theatre of life' where roles are enacted through the presentation of this self, the audience can be evoked to a 'suspension of disbelief', the uncertainty as what is actual or real and what is fictional, acted, constructed, staged and/or masked. In social networks, the Technoself is probably represented, if not real, at least familiar or almost real. In terms of the theatrical approaches, the agent as actor implies an element of impersonation, which brings with it deception (persona/mask) which is usually expected by the audience.

This chapter therefore links to the overall objective of the handbook as it indicates how the presentation of the Technoself through interpretative communicative analogies can be seen as a deliberative process to reveal a constructed, staged, masked and/or real self and identity in social networks. The creation of identity through the presentation of this self will be critically analysed through investigating broad concepts and theories of social networks, identity and the dramaturgical setting or cyber stage taking into account the roles we play and act as well as linking it to a plethora of possible new paradigms for enacting oneself in social networks, drawing explicitly on some premodernist, modernist and postmodernist philosophical and beyond modernist perspectives. It will be argued that the beyond modernistic theory is not a metatheory, but the beginning of a virtual theory concerned to validate its own critical standards. It might also be possible to consider the realism of these theoretical descriptions to ensure the connection to the reality of experience, communicative praxis in everyday life and the quest in surge of the Technoself. In order to understand the Technoself in this real life-world, initial understanding of the collective meaning of the performer (actor) on cyber stage in which both the actor and those acted upon belong to the same 'universe of discourse' is needed. The masking of the real self in cyberspace is therefore not confined to the setting, but an act embedded in the context and embodied self as experienced in everyday life – in quit essence the symbolically constructed virtual Technoself and identity in social networking in cyberspace.

The above issues set the scene for the purpose of this chapter which further explores and outlines in broad and tentative terms the presentation of the Technoself in social networks in

*cyberspace through analogies with theatrical metaphors to create a techno-identity. Firstly, based on a discussion of key terminologies, the main theoretical approaches to social networks and identity, the chapter will combine a modified categorical communicative imperative with deliberative drawing on various philosophical and communicative paradigms. A brief exploration of the historical origins of the presentation of self will be presented in terms of various theoretical philosophical perspectives documented over time from the premodernist through to the modernist and postmodernist eras, after which some aspects of the approaches will be selectively investigated. This will form the platform for the theatrical performance discussions by briefly tracing the presentation of the self in the work of Aristotle (350 BC), the European Enlightenment thoughts of Kant, the contemporary thoughts of Ricoeur, Habermas, Bourdieu through to Kierkegaard, Sartre and Burke and ends with a strong focus on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspectives presented in his well-known book entitled *Presentation of self in everyday life*. The main premises are based on the argument that the idea of the world as a stage is not new, only the setting of the performance has changed. Useful insights through the use of theatrical analogies will form the basis for the discussion of the Technoself as a modest prelude of developing progressive accountings which can offer some explanations for the stretching of the Technoself ideal to create an identity in social networking.*

DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts will consistently be used and/or applied through analogies with concepts drawn from the theoretical philosophers based on interpretations and applications of these concepts.

Cyberspace

Cyberspace, which is defined by Shapiro (2010, p. 91) as the intangible, metaphorical 'space' that networked computers construct through and for electronic communication, began as an innocuous technology diversion, an unintended space, limitless, consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of users (Barker, 2008a). Nobody foresaw the

rapid emergence of virtual communities in the cyberspace context, mainly because it is a modern phenomenon, but the importance thereof in the presentation of the Technoself in cyberspace to create an identity in social networks has grown exponentially over the last couple of years. Some authors argue that virtuality extends the presentation of the Technoself in social networks in unprecedented ways opening up entirely new ways to present the self as human and social being – it allows individuals to conceive, construct, mask and present their self and their identities in almost boundless ways (Fernback, 1997; Rheingold, 1993; Turkle, 1995 & Wittel, 2001). Turkle (1996, p. 158) for example states that People become masters of self-presentation and self-creation. There is an unparalleled opportunity to play with one's identity and to 'try out' new ones. Introna and Brigham (2007, p. 205) argues that technology dissolves boundaries of self and place, and state the following from a post-modern metaphor perspective: What better way to express post-modern irony, ambiguity, fragmentation, plurality and globalization than through a virtual world, where anyone from anywhere can be anything – an “anything” that can be vaporized into nothing at the decree of its owner ... This in essence indicate the inevitability of virtual worlds as part of our daily lives, our life-worlds. If this is extended to the beyond modernism paradigm, people are responsible for their own world-view, constructing and presenting an individual own Technoself and identity based on knowledge from other's world views which becomes fluid, relativistic reality and is based on the masking of the real whereby the social networks in cyberspace become the facilitator or agent of knowledge creation and sharing (Barker, 2008).

Cyberspace, which creates different kinds of virtual settings, communities or social networks (ranging from those who have no social ties to the group to those with strong personal ties), can be seen as a culture of simulation, signification and communication as opposed to realism, representation and objective participation (Venkatesh, 1998, p. 667). On the one hand, cyberspace is a commercial space (multidimensional and non-dimensional where information exchange and sharing takes place, databases are established and networked or hypertextual links are established between people and their needs); on the other hand a private space, a new kind of social setting, a place for people driven by community concerns or hominoids, replicants, prosthetics – a place where artificial life, simulations and all kinds

of virtualities might emerge (Venkatesh, 1998), whether idle gossip, spiritual exploration, psychological support, or any other discourse which addresses human interests or needs.

Various analogies have been used in the literature to compare cyberspace with the real world based on different philosophical viewpoints. According to Gibson (1984) cyberspace refer to an 'alternative' world which he felt would develop through globalisation and integration of computer mediated communications. Bishop (2001, p. 1290) summarises contemporary viewpoints which are perceived as the disembodiment of the subject in cyberspace as follows: Froy's perspective of 'overthrowing the organic body', Benedikt's 'foreseeing humans ridding themselves of the ballast of materiality', Gibson's definition of cybernaut's ability to transcend their bodies 'online ... inside the system' and 'when consciousness becomes divided like beads of mercury arcing over an endless beach'. He concludes with the viewpoint that cyberspace is not a vague universe of disembodied spirits, but constitutes new independent space. It is argued that this space is where the real can be 'constructed', 'staged' or 'masked' in the presentation of self in cyberspace – thereby defining 'cyber alien beings'.

Virtual self (Technoself)

In a certain sense, the virtual or Technoself involves the interface and interaction between an individual and the external environment in order to increase his or her personae or identity. According to Harkins and Fiala (2002, p. 22-26) the virtual or Technoself is created to cope with the chaotic and constantly changing patterns of knowledge-driven choices, decision, impact assessments and novel or iterative next steps ...[which] defines much of personal capital. They further state that virtual selves act – often turbulently – to capitalize on diversity. According to them the creation of self in cyberspace is not incidental but intentional, it is positive and influential to attract attention, create own identities, strengthen commitment and involvement in online relationships. The virtual self or Technoself therefore allows to represent a complex, multi-layered, masked, iterative process in which individuals share a diverse set of drama-like information – a deliberate process of centre-staging or constructing a constructed, staged, masked or real identity in the cyberspace life-world.

Social networks

A social network refers to a structure made up of individuals (or organisations) connected by one or more specific types of characteristics (including friendships, common interest, dislike, relationships of beliefs, knowledge or values, etc.). A social network, which is a technically robust, highly bendable, integrated stage that offers relevant impressions and themes in an enacted conduct of performances, can be seen as a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them (Barker, 2009). Furthermore, it involves human dynamics and a Technoself that is presented in cyberspace in order to connect all through the acting of certain roles in this cyber setting or 'cyber stage'. It is argued that in order to create an identity through the presentation of the self in social networks in cyberspace, a combination of theoretical notions can be used to present a masked or real-real to the 'cyber life-world' out there (Barker, 2009).

Online social networks are webs of relationships that grow from computer-mediated discussions and conversations among people who share a common affinity (work for same organisation, department, or discipline) and who differ in other ways (distance, time comprehension, imbeddedness in single locations, etc.). In order to communicate across time and space, these conversations take place online, mostly through social online networks or discussion forums. Online social networks grow from personal interactions of human and the technological infrastructure that connects those humans. This means that growing a successful online social network requires social know-how as well as technical expertise.

Hence, cyberspace is seen mostly as a social space in which social learning is taking place and where the virtuality of social interaction becomes a reality. Although various key terminologies are used to describe this, namely 'brand communities', 'communities of interest', 'virtual communities of consumption' or 'Internet cultures', the most widely used and prominent terms used to refer to social networks are virtual communities and blogging communities.

Virtual communities (virtual setting or virtual stage)

Barker (2006) delimitates 'virtual communities' in terms of two interrelated concepts, namely virtual and community.

Firstly, the word 'virtual' refers to something that has an effect on another thing without being that other thing. Applied to a technological environment, this surmise to the idea that something is imitated in the sense that a state of being 'virtual' is contrasted with that of being 'physical'. Based on Bergson's concept of 'durée' or 'duration' or 'virtuality', which presents a more philosophical view on knowledge in cyberspace (where the virtual precedes any computer-mediated human-machine interactions and is used to problematise the experience of lived time and is used as an imminent state of the real as a state of experience that is real but not actual), Styhre (2003, p. 18) describes virtual as being 'real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'. This viewpoint sees virtual reality as a simulacrum of reality, not reality itself, or in the words of Grosz (2001, p. 80): The very term virtual reality attests to a phantasmatic extension, a bizarre contortion to save not the real (which is inevitably denigrated and condemned) but rather the will, desire, mind, beyond body or matter: this is real not quite real, not an 'actual real', a 'really real', but a real whose reality is at best virtual. Although this philosophical viewpoints creates confusion around the terms virtual, actual and real, Styhre (2003, p. 21) explains it in that the domain of virtual reality reproduces the 'real' through technology which creates 'reality' through technology-mediated images and perceptions in cyberspace (although in Bergson's perspective virtual is not a matter of technology, but of durée, of lived experience of time which is a different concept from mechanical, 'spatial time').

Secondly, to conceptualise the concept 'community', some theorists have traced its evolution and progress from the industrial to post-industrial society. According to Sennett (1978, p. 255), the notion of community has evolved from that of Gemeinschaft (where relationships are tied to social status and a context of cultural homogeneity) toward that of Gesellschaft (where relationships are individualistic, impersonal, contractual based on clear conception of rationality and efficiency). He explains this evolution in terms of the inextricable links between personality and community in the 19th century which led to the expression of

individual psyche, followed by the rise of industrialisation and the concept of mass society where people became atomised with a social order characterized by anomie, to the ideological component of community which refers to a sense of common character, identity or interests with social relationships that operate within specific boundaries. It can therefore be argued that the distinction between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft examined community within the precincts of the pre-industrial and industrial society where Gemeinschaft is characterised by an organic sense of community, family, etc bounded together through understanding, consensus and language and Gesellschaft is characterised by a form of hyper-individualism with mechanical, transitory and contractually oriented relations among people (Fernback & Thompson, 1995, p. 3). T'nnies (1988) argues that urbanisation and industrialisation would destroy Gemeinschaft and as a result the traditional community. This leads to the notion of community in the post-industrial area which contains elements of social interaction and a shared value and symbol systems (Van Vliet & Burgers, 1987).

Based on the above and for the purpose of this chapter, the following definition of virtual communities proposed by Barker (2006, p. 132) is pertinent: personal relationships in cyberspace where computer-mediated space integrates/facilitates knowledge creation and sharing through various participants ... with more or less specific, complex and common goals, value systems, norms, rules and a sense of identity that they want to enhance through electronic communication.

Blogging communities

Although blogging communities, also refer to as blogospheres by White, Chu and Salehi-Abari (2010, p. 662), are similar to virtual communities in many ways, the main difference is that it has no shared space, clear boundary or membership and is driven by personalities behind them. Subsequently Kim, Zheng and Gupta (2011, p. 1760) defines blogging communities (BCs) as virtual communities which allow members to post blogs on their website where blogs are an online version of people's daily diary, which allow anyone to share his or her thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, this type of community encourages the one-to-many form of communication with less interaction than VCs, but can include links

to other blogs, discussion forums, etc. The main advantage of this social network is that it can be used strategically to facilitate knowledge exchange between members (Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006).

Identity

Identity can be defined as an individual's sense of self. The answer to the question, 'who am I?' (Shapiro, 2010, p. 10). Identity, a state of an individual's consciousness based on personal characteristics and own personality, is created from the self, and determines to which particular social group or social entity it belongs based on social interaction where the creation of this self is developed by who we are by knowing or imagining other's see us through our interactions with the Other. The interpretation of identity is therefore underlined by interactions between society and the individual and how they perceive this self. Many determinants exist of characteristics of personality which can be biological, psychological, social and/or cultural in nature. An established identity is usually created by situations around you, whilst a created identity is made up by oneself by which they want to be interpreted by others, which is displayed and understood in the own self during social interactions. The latter will typically be a 'digital' identity where you can define yourself in multiple ways through the presentation of multiple selves to others.

The following notions of identity have been identified in the literature: it is a dynamic configuration of defining characteristics (Ruyter & Conroy, 2002); identity is fluid and a person presents different identities in different settings (Mead, 1934 & Code & Zaparyniuk, 2010, p. 1346); and identity is formed through social interactions (Harter 1998). Because we have multiple interactions with the Other, individuals adopt this identity to become socially acceptable and/or to guide interactions. Metaphorically or theatrically, this identity can be presented in numerous ways in everyday life, depending on the interpretations of this self and the meaning ascribed to it. If applied to the online environment, the identity is thus dependant on knowledge obtained through interactions and transmitted ubiquitously through social interactions without considering real-world consequences. The identity we create is therefore more easily visible and accepted if presented differently – and the identity created

more 'real'. If applied to the online environment, an online identity is created through a relationship of the defining characteristics of a person in an online environment or social network to make the person feel themselves and different from the Other (adapted from Kim, Zheng & Gupta, 2011, p. 1761 & Barker, 2008). In quit essence, you then interact with the Other through the images that represent who you are, who you want to be or an idealized version of yourself, and because of the anonymity of the online environment, this contributes to the interchangeability of the identity.

Although various aspects can shape identity in social networks and cyberspace, it is argued that identity is, inter alia, created through interaction between knowledge of social concepts, cyber relationships, the virtual body and the social body. Social concepts include a person's identity information and underlying social contexts which allows us to represent different types of identities in cyberspace. Cyber relationships is created through self-expression to facilitate the formation of relationships based on shared values and believes which is encourage through the relative anonymity of online social networks which enables identity experimentation and development. Virtual body is when individuals create visual presentations of the self using 'physical' embodiments and identities during real-life experiences with others in cyberspace, and where embodied self refers to a state of being in which the body is the site of meaning, experience and expression of individuals in the world (Shapiro 2010:3). Social body refers to an individual product and entity created through social and physical contexts (Shapiro, 2010, p. 142).

THEORIES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS AND IDENTITY

This section provides a brief overview of three of the main theories linking social networks and identity, including the social constructionism, social categorization and social identity theories.

Social constructionism

Shapiro (2010, p. 6) argues that social constructionism is a theoretical approach where societal structures (on individual, interactional and institutional levels) are products of social processes and not naturally or biologically predictable. What this means is that the forces shaping individual lives are created and recreated over time from social interactions with physical reality guided by societal worldviews. If applied to social networks and identity, the social networks can be seen as the intermediary between the Technoself and identity created to the external world to create a visible self of who we are (or who we want to portray through this identity). Although it can be assumed that identity and Technoself reside in the self we present, the presentation of this identity in social networks can be affected by various characteristics in or outside of bodies to tell the world who we want to be, not necessarily who we really are – a process of changing between our physical, social and mental selves to present a self we want to be and to create an identity that is acceptable in social networks. This can come about as a result of technologies that make it possible, but also the product of information technologies which allow us to be or portray what we want to be.

Based on various viewpoints, Du Plooy-Cilliers (2011, p. 59) concludes that social constructionists are of the belief that there is no ‘objective reality’ per se, but that realities are constantly produced based on interpretations of the situations and social networks people belong to.

Social categorization theory

This theory suggests that the identification of a person with any group is determined by the extent to which individuals categorize and associate themselves in a specific group in order to enhance their social identity (Turner, 1985). Code and Zaparyniuk (2010, p. 1351) identify three aspects used for this group formation, namely self-categorization; collective identity; and depersonalization. Self-categorization is a cognitive process which helps an individual to focus on contextually relevant and meaningful aspects of the world and categorizes it in terms of important or unimportant, in other words linking the self to a group based on salient characteristics in terms of attitudinal, emotional and behavioural

similarities. This in essence, allows individuals to go along with a group as an embodiment of the group. Self-categorisation is influenced by factors such as personal identifiability to other group members and attributes towards group or collective identity. Collective identification refers to the association between an individual and the group they belong to based on the psychological connections between the Self and social group (Jenkins, 2004). Depersonalization determine whether an individual will conform to group dynamics and behave according to group norms and gives a person a sense of anonymity in the collective identity.

Social identity theory

The main premise of the social identity theory links closely to the above, but holds that the way people present their identities through a categorization process, is influenced by behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1986 & Baumeister, 1998). According to Kim, Zheng and Gupta (2011, p. 1760) the social identity theory mainly refers to the fact that individuals are motivated to present an identity in everyday life through specific behavior which can be extended to online identities where behavior is encouraged through knowledge creation and sharing. In other words, this theory asserts that individuals communicate or present their identities in everyday social life through behavior.

Social identity theory contends two types of cyber identities are prevalent in this theory: personal and social identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Personal identity is derived from self-knowledge of personality traits and a belief of uniqueness of the self. Social identity is derived from an individual based perception of belonging to a specific group or what defines the 'us' associated with a specific group. Kim et al (2011, p. 1763) describes the difference as follows: if personal identity is prominent, an individual's behavior is mainly motivated by their needs, standards, beliefs; but when social identity is prominent, an individual's behavior is mainly determined through social categorization and comparisons to the Other based on the similarities and/or differences in terms of conditions, collective needs, goals and standards of the social network the individual belongs to. In this theory, categorisation is done in terms of two main aspects: self-categories in which people present themselves to

show identity; and comparison between groups they belong to. According to Code and Zaparyniuk (2010, p. 1350) identity experimentation is motivated by self-exploration on how others react, social compensation to overcome shyness and social facilitation of relationship formation.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CREATION OF SELF IN SOCIAL NETWORKS IN CYBERSPACE

The literature on the presentation of the Technoself has traditionally been dominated by discussion on the antecedents of the self from which identity is created and presented. Within this context, an important antecedent has been found to be the theatrical metaphors identified by various philosophers and communicators. It has consequently been argued that the need for constant face-to-face communication in the traditional context, is also applicable to the cyber world, or as Handy (1995, p. 46) puts it: paradoxically, the more virtual an organization becomes, the more its people need to meet in person. Social networks in cyberspace are characterised by either continuity in the membership of the group where a particular group of people regularly addresses ongoing issues; or discontinuity where it only exists to accomplish a specific role and then disassembles. In order to understand this dynamic, one of the most used approaches is that of theatrical metaphors to describe how the self is presented in various settings to create a specific identity.

The theatre as metaphor to present the self in everyday life can be traced back to the classical Greek theatre where human life was portrayed as tragedy and comedy, using various metaphors of dramatic representation which dates back to the time of Plato during the Middle Ages. This is followed by the Enlightenment era or “The Age of Reason” or “The Illumination” (dated between 1650 – 1800), which is summarised by Powell (2005) as “criticism and power” or “knowledge is power”, of which the main premises gave rise to new intellectual and critical thought and philosophical arguments based on rationality, equitability, natural law and scientific premises (Hamilton 1992, p. 48). According to Thompson (1992), the ‘modern’ world which originated in the West was in actual fact a product of the ‘twin revolutions’ of the late 18th century, namely the Industrial and French

Revolutions. During the modernism stage the master narrative of progress is characterised by the replacement of irrational with rational, and truth became important. Postmodernism came about in the 1970s and offered a wider and more dynamic understanding of contemporary representation (McRobbie, 1994, p.13), signalling an attrition of boundaries leading to disintegration, diversity, plurality and indeterminacy. In essence, it presents a shift from universalism to pluralism, with strong focus on the combination of reality and illusion, thereby creating ‘hyperreality’ or a ‘simulation of reality’ in daily lives (Hollinger, 1994). According to Lyotard (1984), premodernism was based on narratives or religion and myth where knowledge was a ‘body of stories’, whether good or evil. In contrast, modernism was based on ‘true’ knowledge. Furthermore, the strive during postmodernism era was on the attainment of absolute knowledge leaning towards metanarratives where knowledge is unified. This timeline of the development of the self and identity can therefore be traced back to the early beginnings of human communication in the premodernist era until the new virtual area which is loosely categorised as the beyond modernist era. The main theoretical thrusts of this era combine the philosophical ideas of Aristotle (what a thing Is as opposed to what a thing Has), Shakespeare (the world is a stage), Kant (singularity of space), Habermas (on deliberative communicative action), Bourdieu (on doxa and habitus), Ricoeur (relationship between life and narrative), Kierkegaard (existentialism), Sartre (constructionism), Burke (dramatistic viewpoints) and Goffman (dramaturgical viewpoints). Table 1 outlines the key theoretical thrusts of each approach in terms of the four stages of human communication – oral/aural, script, electronic and cyber communication in social networks indicated through a timeline.

	Pre-modernism (Early days)	Modernism (1650 – 1800)	Post-modernism (1900s +)	Beyond modernism (2000s +)
Focus	<i>Faith and reason Irrationality</i>	<i>Ideal and real Rationality</i>	<i>Rejection of modern focus on reality Reality and illusion/imaginary</i>	Material & non- material orientation; Integral self of life- world; Technoself/identity
Era	<i>Middle Ages</i>	<i>Enlightenment/ Age</i>	<i>Existentialism</i>	Virtuality

	<i>(Narratives made up of religion and myth; Self: supreme being; Knowledge of this being or self is only a first level of actuality)</i>	<i>or reason (Truth, justice and freedom; True knowledge – body of stories)</i>	<i>Constructivism Dramaturgical (Reality, subject and object; Unified/absolute knowledge – metanarratives)</i>	(Knowledge creation and sharing; Diversity and equality of own self/identity in cyber life-world; Technoself/virtual identity: constructed-staged-masked-real; Integration of embodied, tacit and narrative knowledge of the self to create an acceptable techno-identity or virtual identity)
Main philosophers	<i>Aristotle Shakespeare</i>	<i>Kant</i>	<i>Habermas Ricoeur Bourdieu Kierkegaard/Sartre Burke Goffman</i>	Various
Medium	Oral/aural communication (language)	Script Communication (typescript)	Electronic communication (telegraph, telephone, radio, television)	Cyber communication (internet, e-mail, wireless) Cyborg (combination of machine and organism) Social networking Blogosphere

Table 1: Evolutionary stages of human communication development (Adapted from Barker, 2009)

According to Olivier (2007, p. 37) premodernism is characterised by the fundamental role of mythical explanations of nature and society without rational and conceptually universalising understanding of the world; modernism replaces recognisable mythical explanations by predominantly focusing on rational, scientific ones and differentiation of rationality itself into different logical spheres; postmodernism rejects the validity of attempts to universalise through nature and society, with the emphasis on particularity rather than universality and understands the move into the electronic stage, ‘informatisation’ and ‘technoscience’; and beyond modernism refers to where the non-material dimensions of human self is emphasised and integrated with the material dimensions of the human self life-world – also referred to as the ‘cultural turn’, ‘new times’ and ‘integral self of life-world’ (Adapted from Burger, 2008, p. 62).

In Newman and Johnson’s (1999, p. 80-81) overview of new technologies from a postmodern perspective, they highlight a few key issues on knowledge: Firstly, Lyotard’s (1992) viewpoint that the IT revolution is one of the key components to change the nature of knowledge in the postmodern area and maintain that learning that cannot be translated into quantities of information, will be derelict. Secondly, that other postmodernists like Featherstone (1991) sees the impact of IT on global communications in terms of an epochal shift from modernity to postmodernity where human lives are redesigned and disrupted through new intensities and needs. Lastly, that instead of ‘information overload’ which characterises the social scientist perspectives, the overwhelm of information through IT produces what Baudrillard (1993) refers to as ‘a condition of hyperreality’, a world of proliferating signs which replace reality with no objectivity, no hierarchy or transcendental motive and philosophy. The present state of society is described by Rimskii (2011, p.88) in terms of the conception of the term ‘the postmodern era’ or ‘postmodernity’ which literally signifies that which is making or has made its advent since the modern era where the Renaissance is considered to be the beginning of the modern era, and the turn of the 20th century the beginning of the postmodern era. He further argues that during postmodernism,

the challenge between the real, the natural and the artificial disappears, making the differences between the real and imagined of equal value because it is only possible to distinguish between a copy and the original.

Following Levinas' notion mentioned before of the "I" (the self, the ego), the "Other" (difficult to make sense of because it is a metaphysical face without an actual face) and the "Third" (the way you look at yourself in the eyes of the other and 'correcting' the Other as a result), it can be argued that the a new formulation of the "virtual self" as the "Technoself" (the virtual self and own view of reality) can be invoked in the cyber beyond modernist era. Encounters with the self and identity then becomes the basis for the presentation of the Technoself – premised not on the real self, but the assimilation of the staged, constructed and/or masked real and the real-real of which the singularity or multiplexity of this real is to become "one of us" or to remain "faceless". In developing the premises of this real, the concepts of whether this real is real or masked is examined in conjunction with the premises of the dramaturgical or theatrical metaphors. It is suggested that the Technoself and identity in social networks is developed and presented throughout time based on these premises.

The next section presents a brief outline of some of the most prominent philosophers' viewpoints which set the scene for and can be applied to the presentation of the Technoself and identity in terms of theatrical metaphors.

Pre-modernism

Aristotle and beyond

Aristotle's demonstration through logic that a supreme being exists (the unmoved mover), that happiness is the goal of human existence and virtue is a precondition to achieve this goal, and that humans share a nature by virtue of intelligence, communication and divine intellect, influenced medieval Christian and Islamic thoughts and until the 17th century Western culture was grounded mainly in this Aristotelian thinking of human being (O'Boyle 2007, p. 477). Building on Aristotle's (350 BC) classical era point of view that primary

place of a material object is an 'enclosing surface' – where the location of this surface defines the location of the object, the 17th century philosophers defined material objects as objects possessing the 'primary qualities' which are according to Locke (1690) utterly inseparable from the body. Aristotle's nature possessed forces and qualities which could be detected through lucid perception, focusing on man (the self and identity), earth and the universe around them. Aristotle's early metaphysical theory of the Categories I and II categorises things respectively as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action and affection. These categories give an account of the correct application of words to things by making a clear differentiation between what a thing *Is* as opposed to what a thing *Has*. Applied to the self, the self (or thing) is either essential or merely accidental – thereby distinguishing between homonymy (when two selves share a common name but a different definition corresponding to it); synonymy (two selves share a common name and the definition of being corresponding to the name is the same); and paronymy (the self gets its name from something with only a difference in ending). Synonymy is the most important from an Aristotelian point of view because the definition stays the same in each case. In Categories II he also introduces his tetrachotomy Of things there are pointing out that there are different ways of using language (logos) to give an indication of the self and identity that is in all infinitely diverse, introducing two core notions of prediction and predictable, namely "said-of" and "present-in" as the primary units for classification of 'things' or the self and identity. Furthermore, in his Metaphysics, he indicates four kinds of being, namely being as substance, accidental being, being as truth and falsity and being as potential/actual. All these are of primary interest in the presentation of self and creating an identity in social networking, recognising the potentiality of self and identity in different situations, and that knowledge of this being or self is only a first level of actuality.

Shakespeare: Middle ages

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) used his theatre for a metaphor of reality (Van den Berg, 1985), with the most well-known phrase: *All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances: And one man in his time plays many parts, ...* (Lyman & Scott, 1975, p.3). The applicability of these theatrical

metaphors became popular mostly because of its significance in the sense that life is acting, that everyone is an actor, that life is a stage and relates more and more to the real life situations of today where we are constantly interacting with others in two extremes: on the one side, the so-called 'natural situations' where sensations of spontaneity predominates; and on the other side the so-called 'theatrical situations' where perception of behaviours are aimed at manipulating impressions. As an analytical approach, the latter can provide a tool for providing social encounters (Wood, 2002, p. 11). If applied to the Technoself, the actor manipulates impressions of the self and identity during social networking which relates to the real life situations in most cases.

Modernism

Enlightenment: Kant's viewpoints on singularity of space

The Enlightenment was a progressive movement affirming that rational human thought and human mind possesses the potential to restructure the world in utopian modes. According to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the motto of the Enlightenment was Sapere aude! (Dare to use your own understanding!) (Kant, 1784). This probably set the scene for the classical era viewpoints of the human mind and human being when Kant, a Transcendental Aesthetic, affirmed the complexity of mankind which demands a more complex view when he said that there are two pure forms of sensible intuition, serving as principles of priori knowledge, namely space and time ... the form of inner sense is time; outer sense being space (Kant, 1781, p. 36-7). Like other thinkers in this period, Kant prophesied the "Ascent of Man" in the world. The analogies of these two forms of sensible intuition are for Kant a priori necessity, and if applied to the self, these selves (the inner and outer) can represent themselves alongside one another. Kant (1781, p. 39-44) also refers to three important properties of space, which if applied to self, translate to the following: firstly, the singularity of self - if we refer to diverse selves, it implies only parts of one and the same self; the infinity of self where all parts of the self co-exist ad infinitum; and the empirically real self where the pure form of all outer experiences is presupposed, the true form of self which must equally remain unknown and unknowable. The other analogy, time, is also singular, infinite and

empirically real, but in its pure form time is far more mysterious, which if applied to the self, refers to the 'mystical' or 'masked' self and resulted identity presented in a particular place, in this case cyberspace. Based on Immanuel Kant's (1781) viewpoints more than 300 years ago on the creation of space as indicated in Critique of Pure Reason, an argument can be made for the creation of the self. Replace his "space" with "self" and the Kant text turns into very relevant truths for the self: We can represent to ourselves only one [self]; and if we speak of diverse [selves], we mean thereby only parts of one and the same [self]; and if we speak of diverse [selves], we mean thereby only parts of one of the same [self] ... these parts cannot precede the one all-embracing [self] ... they can be thought only as in it.

The Kantian thesis based on the notion of development of a plurality of space and time has been challenged by various researchers throughout time, mainly because these concepts are built around the concepts of dreams or imaginary or constructed 'selves' and 'identities'. Bishop's (2001) argument that the combination of virtual reality and the Internet – cyberspace – enable shared public access to a new space not contiguous to Earth, might seem to be a contradiction to Kant's thesis, but leaves it open to problems of the presentation of self and identity in this 'alternative world' dubbed cyberspace. Another Kantian categorical imperative crucial to understanding the presentation of Technoself and identity in cyberspace, is his argument that the simplest situation involves direct misrepresentation of a piece of information by one agent to another agent; and in more complex situations one agent has reason to expect one form of behaviour but receives another. If applied to the presentation of the Technoself and identity, the 'situation of agents' can be seen as the acts played by the different 'actors' in the social setting or network where the expected information and behaviour as a result are crucial to understanding the 'real' or 'masked' self and identity.

Postmodernism

The fall of the Enlightenment set the scene for the rise of postmodernism, a form of relativism rejecting any role for philosophy in providing ethical and moral compasses, focusing on

more complex and realistic pictures. A number of philosophers were prominent during the postmodernism era of which their main premises are consequently discussed.

Habermas' concept of communicative rationality

According to Habermas (1984), philosophical and social theory convergence can be seen as the reconstruction of rationality, and is complementary to the critical self reflection of human beings – thereby discarding the foundationalist metaphysics perspectives. Habermas (1984; 1987a) rejects a purely monological view of rationality and meaning proposing a dialogic, self-reflective and intersubjective view where meaning should be understood as something created between people – hence emphasising the importance of communication as a key human characteristic. According to this viewpoint (Habermas, 1996, p. 129), social agents (or 'actors') have to engage in communicative interactions to arrive at mutual understanding between 'participants in a practical discourse'. His concept of communicative rationality is therefore in line with this new view on the construction of rationality and allows for the construing of reason in terms of non-coercive intersubjectivity of mutual understanding and reciprocal recognition which provides a valid foundation on which the theory and practice of the presentation of self and identity in social networks or settings in cyberspace can be developed. His approach not only allows for a critical interpretation of the objectives of the self and identity, but also provides essential guidelines to potentially go "beyond ourselves" - changing the spheres of life. Habermas states (1984, p. 397): ... the human species maintains itself through the socially coordinated activities of its members and that this coordination has to be established through communication – and in certain central spheres of life, through communication aimed at reaching agreement – then the reproduction of the species also requires satisfying the conditions of a rationality that is inherent in communicative action. Communicative action is the verbal or non-verbal interaction between two or more actors attempting to reach mutual understanding of their performance and the presentation of the self and identity (Barker, 2009). Through Habermas' use of communicative action, language and rational dialogue, he supports the aims of the Enlightenment for truth, justice and freedom of the real self, but alongside social consensus.

Based on his argument that the utopian Enlightenment perspective of reconciliation and freedom is embedded in the conditions for the communicative socialisation of individuals, it can be argued that new forms of social relations can be created in the way people represent themselves as human species. In the increasingly individualised world created by cyberspace, the self and identity therefore has the potential to move from purely individualistic rationality towards communicative interaction through the way the self is presented in social networks within virtual communities and therefore forms the basis of newly formed social relationships and social networks individually chosen to satisfy the conditions of communicative rationality within virtual communities. His viewpoint is therefore complementary to the critical reflection of the self – proposing a dialogic, self-reflective and intersubjective view of the self. In order to understand the structures of the life-world, the self as actor needs to seek understanding of the meaning it has for them, thereby requiring that the actor adopt a performative attitude as a communicative participant in the social networks in which both the actor and the interpreter belongs to the same “universe of discourse” (Habermas, 1987b). In his view, the life-world stands “behind the back” of each actor in the performance sharing a life-world which only exists in this unique background. His interpretative approach with the object domain of “symbolically pre-structured reality”, gives rise to the problem of Verstehen (interpretative understanding) because in theatrical terms, the audience do not have access to the symbolically prestructured reality or stage (only through observation) and because understanding meaning (Sinnverstehen) cannot be controlled during the performance in the same way as in controlled real life-world settings. Habermas (1984, p. 108) states: In order to describe them [lifeworlds], he must understand them; in order to understand them he must be able in principle to participate in their production; and participation presupposes that one belongs. A verstehende self will therefore allow society (observers/audience) to be fully absorbed into the life-world ties to the perspective of the self and created identity moving back and forth between an internal participant and an external observer. This is directly applicable to the communicative rationality process in which the self and identity can be construed as inherently dialogic, interactive, social and collective in social networks.

According to McCarthy (1984), Habermas does not validate conceptually what his concept of communicative rationality demonstrates, and state that what is rational is, or will be, real and what is real is, or will be, rational, but to identify empirically the actually existing possibilities for embodying rationality structures in concrete forms of life, thereby arguing that communicative action remains in the social interaction that takes place which serves the formation of personal selves and identities. In order for the self and identity to be real and universally valid in a specific sense (Habermas, 1984, p. 137), the world-relations of actors should correspond to the concepts of objective, social and subjective worlds; rely on propositional truth, normative rightness and authentic sincerity; and mutual understanding based on common definitions or understandings of the situation/setting or social networks. Cyberspace can therefore be viewed in terms of two recurring narratives: firstly, the unidimensional perspective where people is seen as cybercitizens playing a fair game in seeking profit; secondly that people use cyberspace as a place to exercise freedom, establish a personal self and identity as a 'life world outside the system', an unintended space in a Habermasian sense.

Ricoeur's relationship between life and narrative

Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988, 1991) also draws on Aristotle's Poetics and the notion that emplotment (muthos in Greek) embodies both imaginary story (fable) and well-constructed story (plot). If linked to the central traditions of Western culture, it presents a new understanding of Aristotelian principles of emplotment, especially in terms of time, life and narratives. According to him, a narrative is adopted as the mediator between human experience of time and structures of temporality, thereby developing a philosophical understanding of the dynamic relationship between time, life and narrative. Firstly, his viewpoints on time refer to the gulf that exists between cosmic and phenomenological time, between time as we experience it, and time in terms of the universe. Furthermore, time is one and yet divided into past, present and future; time is 'inscrutable' and eludes our understanding; and that time is "the true master of meaning" (Barker, 2009). Secondly, he reformulates the relation between life and narrative and argues for a narrative identity, an identity that can be mediated through the narrative function. This emplotment is a dynamic

process mediating between multiple incidents and a unified story (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 22), and the plot is produced by a complex moving back and forth between events and plot structure until both are fitted together (Ezzy, 1998, p. 245). These narratives can be used as a form of communication and the elements of the plot take their place in a single unified story which endows the experience of time with meaning. He further states that stories are recounted, life is lived (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 25), thereby focusing on the relationship between text and reader, the experience of mediated acting and the symbolic meaning assigned to it, implying a relationship between narrative and personal identity: ... we learn to become the narrator and the hero of our own story, without actually becoming the author of our own life (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 32).

If applied to the Technoself and identity, the analysis and interpretation of his narratives and elements of the plots, is a worthwhile way to understand the emplotting of the Technoself and identity in cyberspace to reveal and articulate many forms of the self and created identity. Based on his arguments, it can be deduced that our experience is always mediated by symbolic stories, also those told to us by others. Therefore we are always reinterpreting our narrative identity to draw on narratives available to us through our culture, thereby presenting different selves in different settings to adapt to the way we want others to 'interpret' ourselves and the 'impression' we want to give to others in the narrative or imaginary story. The role of the imaginary story, or fable, which is part of muthos, is therefore important to communicate the self and reveal something about the human being and mind of the Technoself and identity.

Bourdieu: enactment through symbolic deliberation

One of the main premises of the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) relating to the self and identity, is probably that deliberation is itself a process of enacting symbolic deliberative deficits. Bourdieu (2001, p. 27) argues: The effect of symbolic domination (whether ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic) is exerted ... and action that are constitutive of 'habitus', ... below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will. In terms of 'habitus', he argues that it is patterned behaviour that delimits free choice, therefore you are

free to present yourself as an agent (actor) in different social settings and speak and behave in the different social networks. He furthermore refers to the concept of doxa, a concept used to capture the worldview of ideas and ethical and socially acceptable rules that people use when they act.

If applied to the cyber stage, these concepts help the Technoself to connect deeply held beliefs (doxa) and observable patterns of behaviour or enactment (habitus) in symbolic settings tacitly acceptable to other agents or actors in the process.

Kierkegaard and Sartre: existentialism and constructivism

In existential tradition – which is currently seen as outmoded and modernist - the individual, subjective, relational experience and perspective in developing our understanding of our world is prophesised. For existentialists, the self is a present and conscious “being” – not static, but a self who is constantly “becoming” through his/her actions in the world. This is in contrast to the constructionist approach which sees the self as a social construction of multiple selves to address the challenges of our everyday lives, thereby enabling the individual to reflect on and be aware of the “selves that develop through being” (Klugman, 1997; Cooper, 1999 & Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). According to Klugman (1997, p.304) for the constructionist, reality does not exist in any ultimate, empirical way, but it is rather a construction of the person who is viewing or experiencing reality at any given moment. So where existentialism provides a consciousness of the present and of future intention to act, constructionism presents reflection and awareness of influential factors on the self, both past and present. An example of the uniqueness of the self can be seen in Kierkegaard’s view of the individual, namely that the most difficult task each person faces is that of becoming an individual self – you need to recognise your own uniqueness in order to become yourself in the process (Woodhouse, 2002). He sees the personal self as the result of total commitment to such an extent that the self would be willing to sacrifice and, if need be, die for it rather than give it up (Kierkegaard, 1985, p. 6). Another example is that of Sartre (2000, p. 18) who developed the notion of consciousness or “being” as having different aspects – “being in itself” (en soi) – unreflective awareness; “being for itself” (pour soi, - reflection and a

heightened consciousness of ourselves in the world; and “being for others” (pour-autrui) – where we are defined in part by how others see us and our identities. From an existential view of bringing something into existence through action, as well as adopting a social constructionist perspective in constructing a self or being, it can be argued that the Technoself can be a real self, a masked self or a constructed self encouraged and enacted through the ongoing and relational acts people play in cyberspace (or social networks) to create a specific identity.

Burke’s dramatisitic pentad

Kenneth Burke (1989), a philosopher of language and communication, developed his dramatisitic pentad in the 1960s which allows for the exploration of what people are doing and why they are doing it, in other words the underlying motives for specific actions. According to him, humans exist in a world of action, a realm exclusive to the symbol-using person which allows for the planning of action before acting. His main thrust is that life is not like a drama, but that life is a drama (Barker, 1991). Based on his viewpoints, we are all actors playing out planned roles in dramatic contexts. The terms of his dramatisitic pentad therefore presents an analytical framework which allows the exploration of social networks in terms of the following: the act (what happened); the scene (the physical, geographic and cultural milieu in which the action takes place – the background of the act); the agent (or actor) – the individual identity and role during the action; the agency (the means to accomplish the action); and the purpose (the intended effect of the act and perceived outcomes) (Burke, 1989, p. 139-140). In social networks, conflict may exist between the actors, the text, the act and its interpreters, but according to Burke (1989, p. 142) his approach allows for this: what we want is not terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise.

Goffman: presentation of self in everyday life

*The influence of Erving Goffman is so great that he became synonym with the dramaturgical perspective. In Goffman’s (1959) classical work *The presentation of self in everyday life*,*

'actors' engage in 'performances' in various 'settings' for particular 'audiences' in order to shape their 'definition of the situation'. These actors use impression management to shape the expressions they 'give' and 'give off' to portray the image of the self and identity that they want to portray. In terms of Goffman's (1959, p. 22) dramaturgical perspective, people gives performances during interaction with the intention to present a specific impression of the self, thereby wearing a 'mask' or a 'front' to portray a specific identity (uniqueness and the idea of personal identity with an unique self) or self to the audience and the performers. This mask or front represents the 'self' which is part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance and these fronts are constituted by the 'settings' of the performance as well as the 'personal front' presented by the performer (Goffman, 1959). The setting (scene of the performance) therefore presents the scenic layout of the interaction as well as the presentation of the self and identity (through the actors) which is the product of the stage performance. Although his seminal analyses is related to one another's immediate physical presence (Goffman, 1959, p. 15), it is also relevant to environments in which two or more individuals are physically in one another's presence (Goffman, 1983, p. 2).

Translated into virtual terms, these interactions can take place electronically which according to Vaast (2007:336) can be viewed as other 'reduced versions' of the 'primordial real thing'. His argument is that the (personal) 'front' of virtual participants is much more limited than the non-mediated settings because of the lack of cues (like body language, gesture, clothing and so forth) that exist. Based on the dramaturgical perspective, the acts, staging and performing are important to the presentation of the self and identity in virtual communities or social networks in creating, developing and sustaining a virtual image of the self during virtual plays. Goffman's key propositions are that the more individuals in a setting orchestrate their performances, and at the same time accept one another's performances, the more likely they are to develop a common definition of the situation; and the more individuals develop a common definition of the situation, the greater the ease of their interaction becomes which unveils the masked real to present the real-real of the self. Furthermore it can be argued that the lack of access to the backstage of the virtual world creates the potential for greater 'mystification', which is according to Goffman (1959) the

distance between how people who present themselves and the audience, in other words to keep the audience to keep them wondering, surprised, amazed, and so forth – which can be translated in virtual terms to '@stupefaction' (Barker, 2009). Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory provides the fundamental foundation relevant to the presentation of the Technoself and identity: firstly, the more an individual in a setting orchestrate a performance and accept the other's performance, the more likely they are to develop a common understanding of the situation/setting; and secondly, the more the individual develop a common understanding of the situation/setting, the easier it will be to interact and reveal the real-real. This communicative action is the verbal or non-verbal interaction between two or more actors to ensure mutual understanding of the acts or selves they portray. According to Goffman (1959), the way in which the self and identity is presented is not moved by the moral desire of achieving certain standards and to present a real-real, but by the moral question of creating an impression of meeting those standards, which is consonant with the contemporary use of the Greek word for actor, namely hypocrite, thereby providing a perspective that impressions can be manipulated in any given setting – which in essence is a 'masking of the real'. Furthermore, Goffman (1959) emphasises the art of illusion, where the actor is a professional illusionist through the use of the dramaturgy, the stage is a metaphor and reality - two distinct things. This is in contrast to Burke who does not use drama as a metaphor for human action, but argue that the image is an image of interaction or drama. Goffman's (1959, p. 244-45) presentation of the self through dramaturgical terms, can be controlled and manipulated as he states: A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation – this self – is a product of a scene that comes off, and is not a cause of it. The self then, is a performed character, is not an organic thing to be born, to mature and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited. According to him these selves are in constant conflict with each other, but that the personal self is always stronger and control the social self during interaction. According to him, a difference exist between 'white lies' aimed at not offending the audience which are acceptable and deliberate lies used to manipulate the audience which is not acceptable and which can threaten the success of the performance. If the performance is seen as something false which is

painstakingly pasted together, one false item upon the other, it will not be seen as real or responsible impressions and the audience will not take it seriously or believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes presented or that they are what they appear to be (Goffman, 1959, p. 77, 28). He does not deny the existence of the differences in the character and the way it is presented, but rather that much of what we take a character of personality or self to be, consists of a creation of these fleeting selves. Goffman (1959, p. 45) therefore says: Thus, when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole. Accordingly it can be argued that although different selves are presented, whether real or not, it will still be in accordance to the rules, values and expected norms of that social network. If applied to virtuality, it can be argued that an actor does not only have a personal self (own-self), but also another self, a social self (constructed, masked, and/or staged real) which is presented in the virtual setting, depending on which identity they want to portray.

In summary: The parallels between the philosophical theorising based on theatrical metaphors are striking. The affinities noted between the different paradigms can be perceived as complementary and overlapping rather than juxtaposed as often perceived. The applicability of these theories of knowledge bases to the field of communication, specifically the presentation of the Technoself, is apparent. The utility of the theatrical metaphors and deliberation to the Technoself could be used as a moral starting point for bringing about knowledge on the Technoself, primarily as actors acting in social networks bringing about disparate selves setting aside the contentious, artificial and perhaps illusory self to present the ideal Technoself and identity.

Beyond modernism: going ‘Technoself’ and ‘techno-identity’

The most prominent theoretical approach to study virtual communities is the Knowledge Management theory. Earlier Knowledge Management studies focused mainly on the capture and dissemination of knowledge. Since the mid 1990s, the focus shifted towards the CoP ideas, which lead to the first community of practice (or communities of knowledge sharing)

which emerged in 1997 (Ardichvili et al, 2003, p. 66) and in the virtual world refers to VcoP's. Although most traditional approaches to knowledge management assumed this knowledge to be relatively simple, more recent approaches realise that knowledge is in fact complex, factual, conceptual and procedural. A tendency still exists to follow the tradition in thinking of communication as the transfer and processing of information, but the current state of affairs is towards a focus on knowledge creation and sharing. One of the key discourses of the knowledge management paradigm is that implicit and narrative knowledge are important phenomena and fundamental to all human knowing (Polanyi, 1958 & Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and an essential part of everyday communication because it allows for the transformation, sharing and processing of knowledge (Barker, 2008). If applied to the Technoself and techno-identity, it can be argued that the way in which the self and identity are presented, is shaped through this knowledge which is usually stable and to a certain extent contained within individuals. In order to understand the recent focus of knowledge management paradigms, a brief overview of earlier viewpoints from the 1960s onwards set the scene. In the life-world practice and context, knowledge management provides a non-reductionist and relational understanding to knowledge which is a move towards a beyond modernist viewpoint where knowing is realised through embodied acting and experiential processes of enactment instead of linear viewpoints of the premodernist areas. From this perspective, those involved in the life-world are embodied beings which provides a way to know through 'lived situations', wherein the 'living body' mediates between 'internal' and 'external' or 'subjective' and 'objective' experience and meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xii). This implies that as embodied beings, the self is part of the life-world and constitutes of the ways in which the self acts within it and which it acts upon the self, subjecting a perceptual self in a tactile, visual, olfactory or auditory way. If applied to virtuality, the 'absent presence' of the body (Shilling, 1993, p. 19), necessitates the need for a 'remembering' between body, embodiment and knowledge of the self and identity – thereby opening the integration of embodied, tacit and narrative knowledge of the self to create a self and identity which a person want to portray or act. Tacit and implicit knowledge provides the self with the personal skill or capability to rely on in everyday life without being aware of it or understanding it – this knowledge is also referred to as embodied knowledge (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4). This supports Merleau-Ponty's (1962, p. 137) viewpoint that the self is

consciously presented based on “I think”, “I can” or “I relate to” – not merely what people think about the self, but what the self “lived through” to present a spontaneous self and identity based on experience and actions. Against this earlier knowledge management, a beyond modernism perspective and philosophy that drives the self to optimise the utilisation of their knowledge sources, whether explicit knowledge (recorded in databases, etc) or implicit knowledge (in people's minds to fulfil job roles), is crucial to understand the link between knowledge creation, social networks and reality. In this new paradigm, which allows the activities of acquiring, selecting, generating, externalising and internalising knowledge in the decision-making process, creates from a virtuality perspective virtual knowledge communities where the integration of inter-organisational processes are displaced from the physical space to social networks in cyberspace (Barker, 2006). In these virtual knowledge communities, people are united through intellectual discourse and knowledge, and in the context of the self and identity, refer to the way in which the physical and/or social self and identity is displaced to cyberspace. The way in which this self and identity are displayed in social networks, also referred to as online identity, Internet identity, digital identity, may or may not correspond and/or may be an extension to the physical world and physical self. The online identity is thus presented through the knowledge people create and share as a way of communicating their identities.

This forms the basis for the beyond modernist approach in which it is argued that everyone is responsible for their own world view, own self and identity (whether constructed, staged, masked or real) based on tacit, implicit narrative knowledge of the others to portray a “Technoself” and “online identity”. It is further argued that a clear link exists between the real and masked self – whereby the real self tends to dominate the masked real and eventually surface to indicate the real-real through the personal interface of the different selves. In a study conducted by Turkle (1995), it was found that the MUD users studied present multiple fronts simultaneously in various virtual environments which equals a decoupling of the online self from the offline self. From a virtual and beyond modernistic viewpoint it can be argued that people present a diverse ‘self’ and identity that are either detached from each other or from the offline or real world. This viewpoint of the fragmented ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are supported by various authors who argue that the new technologies

allow for multiple identities constructed in online social situations through interactions where the Technoself and online identity is not necessarily freed from social constraints, social norms, privacy and/or hiding 'backstage' (Poster, 1995; Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995; Wynn & Katz, 1997 & Lamb & Poster, 2003).

Whilst many potentially important criteria exists that could impact on the Technoself, six notable antecedents are proposed by Barker (2009) which influence the way in which the Technoself and online identity is presented – whether constructed, masked, staged or real. Trust serves as an important aligning mechanism – the more members of a social network trust each other, the more the real self and identity will come to the forth resulting in coordinated action and mutual confidence. Shared understanding embraces the content of the performance and an understanding of each actor's role or expertise and how interaction should take place or be staged, in other words a relative rich personal relationship. The more they share a common understanding and get to know each other, the more they will be motivated to cooperate and collaborate in the virtual relationship and unveil the true self and identity. Relationships are usually based on personal face-to-face (synchronous – immediate feedback) interaction which is not prevalent in the virtual world (asynchronous – delayed feedback) – however, the more the different selves connect to the social network and the more frequent, familiar and meaningful the interaction, the stronger the relationships will become helping each actor to establish his or her own identity and willingness to participate in the relationship. If actors feel it is in their best interest to collaborate, where the benefits outweigh the risks, can reap potential benefits, especially if the lines of communication remain open and recognize the importance of knowledge creation and sharing to maintain a collaborative environment or setting. Reciprocity is when the self is valued equally with the Other which can unveil the vulnerability of the self. Lastly, multiplicity indicates that the self and identity are different, unique and equal with a diversity of life-worlds and views of knowledge which differs in different social networks.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: EVOLUTIONARY PRESENTATION OF TECHNOSELF THROUGH THEATRICAL METAPHORS

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework based on some of the most prominent philosophical viewpoints on the presentation of self (Technoself) and identity (techno-identity) throughout time and space based on theatrical metaphors discussed in the preceding section.

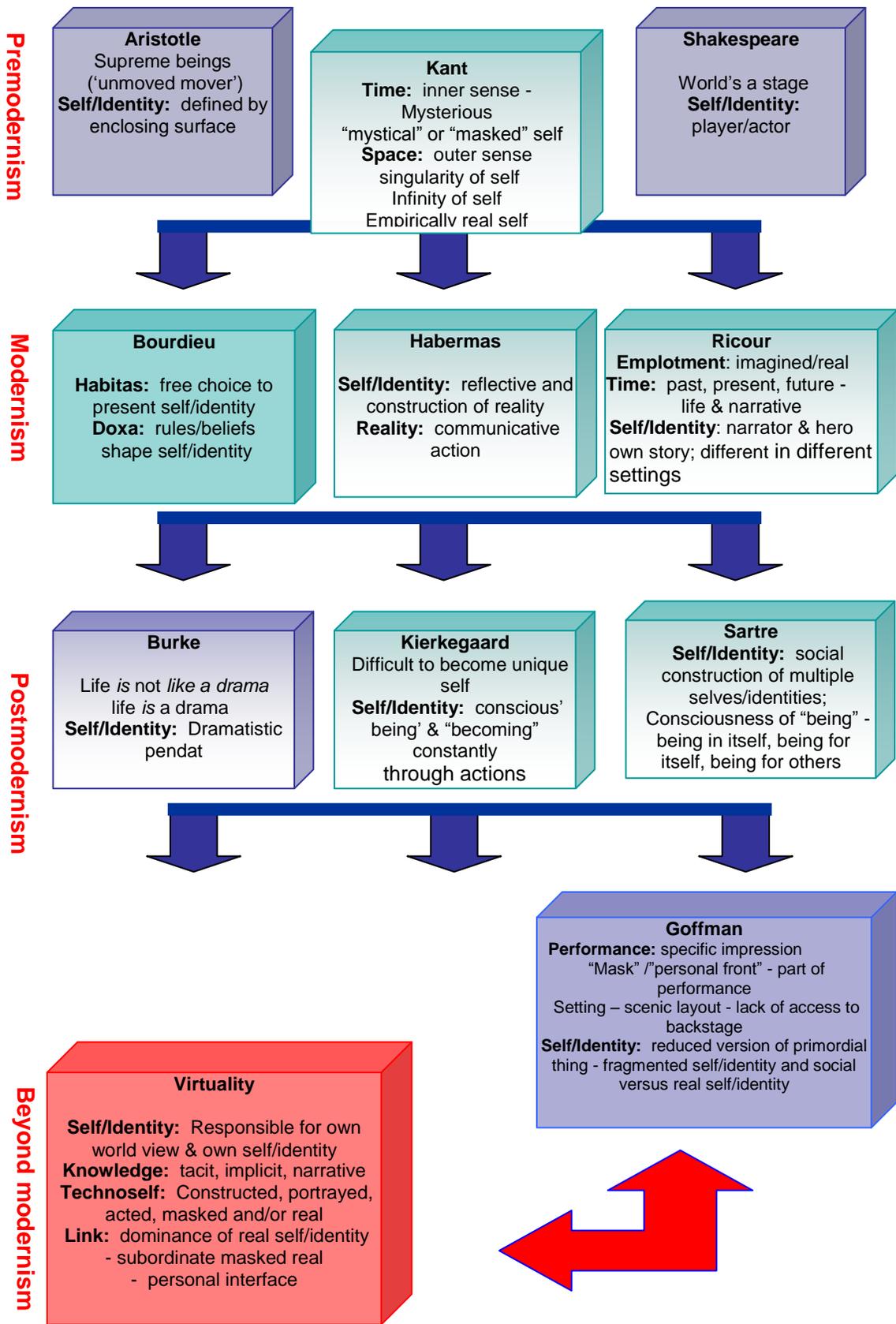


Figure 1: Conceptual framework: most prominent philosophical viewpoints on the presentation of self and identity throughout time and space based on theatrical metaphors (Adapted from Barker, 2009)

Three issues fall squarely within the thematic to present a Technoself and techno-identity in terms of a critical interpretative communicative analogy of the presentation of the self in cyberspace in terms of theatrical metaphors as a modest prelude to offer some explanations for the stretching of the Technoself ideal. Firstly, fundamental is the realisation that the way the Technoself and techno-identity are presented in cyberspace is an idealistic notion of a global utopia and that it should be accepted that the way in which it is presented, whether real, masked, constructed or staged, will possibly be an indication of the new virtual 'cyber life-world' and that the search for the true Technoself and techno-identity should be recognised and considered. Secondly, that theatrical metaphors have been universally applied throughout time since the early days, only the setting has changed and it is constantly becoming more and more difficult to enter the backstage to see the 'true self' and 'true' identity – this signifies the move towards the Technoself where a self and identity are presented which is universally accepted, but once trust, shared understanding, relationships, collaboration, multiplicity and reciprocity comes into play in social settings, the morally correct and true self and identity dominate and come to the forth. Thirdly, what contributes to this knowledge of the true self and identity, is no longer privacy, but the manipulation of the Technoself and identity to their own advantage to mould and reshape the social network they form part of by tapping into disposable knowledge to present a real self which is based on the moral, true referents of the self and identity in the beyond modernism era. A self and identity that have unlimited potential to increase social rationality, justice and morality to enrich daily life and at the same time draws on the rational of everyday life experiences. This encompasses unlimited potential and propensity for the emancipatory potential of the Technoself and identity – an integral connection between the constructed, staged, masked and/or real.

In terms of the theatrical metaphors, the Technoself is an actor which has embedded grids in their flesh that allows their performance to be interpreted in the virtual setting to control the

way in which this techno-identity is presented in real time. Although difficult to imagine actual body language and facial expression of the Technoself and identity, it still allows for creating self expressions through which a specific image will morph to visually represent the self and identity through emoting, possibly with the entire virtual body, thereby entering the world of the virtual rather than the virtual to enter his or her world. The success of the presentation of the Technoself and identity will ultimately be determined by the actor's willingness to participate; to share; and to use the performance to enhance it.

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND IDENTITY: THE TECHNOSELF

The presentation of the Technoself is seen as an imperative facet of the modus operandi of informal social networks, virtual communities or settings, reflecting the complex social web in which the self is acted and acted upon. It influences the behaviour, thoughts and emotions of embodied members through the creation of imagined or masked reals and identities – the constructed, masked, staged, real that shape the orientation of the everyday 'cyber life-world'. As masked selves, they create symbolic means through which they share and present their perceived identities using narratives, implicit and tacit knowledge to enact and act a self which is not only embodied in the self, but also provide a dramatic self and identity based on accounts of performances and accounts of life events as a medium one lives in or a stage one acts on. This Technoself is enacted in the moment of being told, and its existence is virtual, actualised and adapted in the context of the situation or setting in which the narrative takes place – acting out a role to create knowledge of the self as a human being. Actors or agents in the real or cyber world can be seen as a person, individual being, a social being, and a unique one-of-a-kind human being who at the same time is a member of some or other social network. This duality of actors/agents can be seen either as homo sapiens in real life or homo machinus in the virtual world. The actor/agent is a person in matter and spirit, the one corruptible, the other indestructible. But ultimately, the agent/actor belongs uniquely to the Technoself and identity it presents. The Technoself and identity can be entirely free from or oppressed by the social networks or environments or be reduced to an object or be valued as a human being acting a role in this environment. It can thus be deduced that homo sapiens refer to the selves and identities created through the

individualism of the oral/audio/script/stages; whereas homo machinus is the new virtual Technoself and identity and actors on the virtual “cyber stage”.

This means that the virtual human can present any front or mask, and if not accepted, not take responsibility for it. Or in the words of Andrews and Baird (1986, p. 149): When we are wearing a ‘front’ or playing some social role, we can always rationalize away rejections when they occur. After all it was not us they rejected, just our front. But if we present our true selves and are rejected, there is no place to which to retreat – our very essence has been deemed unacceptable. The Technoself and identity are therefore embedded and entangled in complex disperses and need to respond to various critiques and elements in the emergence thereof. What an appropriate Technoself and identity require, is allowing the emergence of implicit, narrative and embodied knowledge to create an overall self and identity which present an integrative self and identity that is constructed, masked, staged and/or real - including expressions of the cyber life-world, whether acted or real, to enable the existence of a Technoself and identity which present the contextual living action as experienced by the individual in cyberspace or on cyber stage.

Any theatrical environment or “theatre of life” where roles are enacted through the presentation of the self and identity, the audience can be evoked to a ‘suspension of disbelief’, the uncertainty as what is actual or real and what is fictional or acted (or masked). In social networks it is probably represented, if not real, at least familiar or almost real. In terms of the theatrical approaches, the agent as actor implies an element of impersonation, which brings with it deception (persona/mask) which is usually expected by the audience. In terms of an Aristotle point of view, it might be more appropriate to look at the agent in terms of character as the primary agents of the action of the play – not so much an abstract self or identity, but a quality where characters are what they are and do. An interesting example of this is the multiple roles played by any one actor, whether real or familiar or not to the audience. In the grand finale, no play can be produced and acted in any full sense. It depends on the interaction of many actors playing a variety of roles to present a specific act in the way they present themselves to the audience – whether profoundly or trivially, truthfully or falsely (Burke, 1989, p. 139).

CONCLUSION

The main contribution of this chapter is in making an explicit link between the Technoself/identity and theatrical metaphors through the use of the philosophical notions and analogies of presenting the self and identity in cyberspace. The main thrusts of the arguments were that throughout time, everybody used different masks in different settings playing convincing roles to make the self and identity acceptable by the audience. The only thing that changed in the beyond modernism paradigm, is the setting. In the social networks in the virtual cyber life-world, the Others do not have access to the backstage, which make it difficult and takes longer to see the true self and identity, but through the concepts of trust, shared understanding, relationships, collaboration, multiplicity and reciprocity, members become familiar with each other and drop the masked or staged or constructed to reveal the real-real. Furthermore, other issues like moral values, and so forth, also play a role to eventually reveal the real self and identity, even if it takes longer to do so.

This chapter indicated how the presentation of the self and identity in social networks through interpretative communicative analogies can be seen as a deliberative process to reveal a constructed, staged, masked and/or real self, which was labelled the Technoself. The discussion was based on sound theoretical philosophical notions of communicative action and identification of self and identity, but at the same time revealed limitations and/or debatable thinking on the beyond ideal. Through the use of metaphors and analogies the process of presenting the Technoself and identity was critically analysed through investigating broad concepts of the dramaturgical setting or cyber stage taking into account the roles we play and act as well as linking it to a plethora of possible new paradigms for enacting oneself in social settings, drawing explicitly on some premodernist, modernist and postmodernist philosophical and beyond modernist perspectives. It was also argued that the beyond modernistic theory is not a metatheory, but the beginning of a virtual theory concerned to validate its own critical standards. It is also possible to consider the realism of these theoretical descriptions to ensure the connection to the reality of experience, communicative praxis in everyday life and the quest in surge of the Technoself and identity.

In order to understand the Technoself and identity in this real life-world, initial understanding of the collective meaning of the performer (actor) in the cyber stage in which both the actor and those acted upon belong to the same 'universe of discourse' is needed. The masking of the real self and identity in cyberspace is therefore not confined to the setting, but an act embedded in the context and embodied self and identity as experienced in everyday life – in quite essence the symbolically constructed virtual Technoself and identity in social networks in cyberspace. It was indicated that the concepts Technoself and identity links to three relations contained in the cyber stage or setting: first the own embodied self subject as object to the life-world; secondly the relation to a social network and a world of acting and interaction with others; and thirdly the relation to its own subjectivity and the subjectivity of others. This not only involves a shift from changing the world view to a life-world view, but also the process of decoupling the life-world by creating a Technoself and identity which represent the constructed, stage, masked and/or real in the new "cyber stage". The foundation of this work is the realisation that it is possible to create any self and identity in virtual reality, whether conscious or unconscious, in spite of the incredible complexity thereof. What we present to the world is therefore a product of an amalgamation of all the experiences of our lives through an illusion of the self and identity, thereby masking the real or adapting it to the expectations of the specific social network to fit into the life-world of a specific virtual community at a specific time and place. It is argued that virtuality assists to develop the Technoself and identity you want to create, but this is manifested through the experiences and interactions with the "I", the "Thou", the "Others", the "Third" and the "Technoself" to become the self which is fairly accurately created in the representation of an constructed-staged-masked-real self and identity.

It can be concluded that this chapter proposed a new perspective for the presentation of the Technoself and identity and that it is clear that no specific approach can be used for integrating social networking and identity in social networks. Firstly, a brief outline of the relevant concepts and how it relates to the three main theoretical approaches to link identity and social networks, were presented. The emphasis shifted to the importance of the theatrical metaphors used by philosophers since the Middle Ages in the way the self and identity were presented to others – it was argued that people always constructed, masked,

staged and/or present a real self and identity, only the setting changed over time. Then, the most prominent evolutionary theoretical approaches were highlighted, with specific emphasis on the contributions by Erving Goffman's dramaturgical viewpoints on the presentation of self in everyday life. Lastly it was sought to identify the basic premises of presenting the Technoself and identity in a more explicit form, arguing that the Technoself and identity in social networks should be seen as a fourth dimension, following the notions of the I, the Thou and the Others.

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