8.1. Names

'ODYSSEUS: What shall I call him, Circe? Who was he when he was human?
CIRCE: What relevance does that have? Call him Gryllus, if you like.'
Plutarch

***Synopsis**: Names of humans (1–2); It is states that make the naming of humans possible (3); Names of Things (and non-human Beings) (4); An identification algorithm requires a registry; it is the information platform that is the state that provides that registry (5); The use of names as an individualisation mechanism is a way of giving meaning and creating understanding that is peculiar to humans (6); Individualisation in the digital world (7); Logins and passwords (8); Domain names (and other unique naming attempts) (9); Names of computer programs (10).*

1. Names of humans*

Names serve to individualise humans. They are used to refer to specific individuals, differentiating them from any other human on the planet before or after them. They uniquely identify a human in space and time.

Names are created and used as a result of human language. Other animals have individualised distinct characteristics (e.g. smell, external look etc.) that are discernible both to members outside and within their group, but they carry no names, they have no linguistic expression of this uniqueness.[330] Names are a quick and certain way to refer to a specific human.

Why do humans have names? Simply because they are humans.

2.

Names have become more complex over time (presumably, as human numbers grew and communication increased). Last names were added

330 A particular smell or look is not, ultimately, unique in space and time (see also Chap. 8, par. 7).

as recently as the Middle Ages in Europe. In antiquity only first names were used, followed by the name of the state whenever needed. The latter was the case, however, only occasionally, for just a very few individuals,[331] given the locally restricted lives that the vast majority of humans lived until very recently. Within small, closed communities individuals would have been known by a single name, perhaps followed by other, more relevant identifiers. This is visible today within workplaces (e.g. John from Marketing, Mary in Geography class) or in other small and close-knit groups of individuals.

In the Middle Ages the state lost its explicit inclusion in the name of an individual and moved into the background, although it continued to be implied on each use (locality still being relevant in human lives). It has remained in the background ever since, a silent but ever-present third party whenever any two humans interact.[332]

3. *

It is states that make the naming of humans possible. A human's name may have been created by language, but without a state to grant and warrant it each time the specific individual it refers to interacts with another, it would be unusable.[333]

A name is granted to any newborn human in accordance with a state's regulations, both in terms of content (choice of name) and in terms of procedure. Name-giving, although usually a small-circle ceremony, is necessarily followed by (some type of) registration of that name with the individual's state; it is through registration that the name actually comes into existence, with immaterial information thus materialised in the analogue world.

4. Names of Things (and non-human Beings)*

States not only make possible the naming of humans, who in this way become individuals (and state citizens), but also create the processing

331 For example, authors; see, for instance, 'Thucydides of Athens wrote…'.
332 See Chap. 7, par. 3.
333 See also Chap. 7, par. 4.

environment necessary for their citizens to live in.[334] It is on states, as information platforms, that humans name Things and other (non-human) Beings (first at the category level, and then sometimes as individuals within these categories), so as for these to become processable information by them (these names are usable only on that platform that is their state). In other words, it is states that make human language possible.[335]

This is the result of human individualisation. Once individualised and (already having been) equipped with language skills, humans were able to serve their need (of all needs) to augment their information processing.[336] Enthusiastic information processing in the analogue world (which has never stopped and is unlikely to do so in the future) created new words for Things and Beings, be they artificial, human-made or found in Nature. As soon as an individual assigned a name to an invention or a discovery that name was used to describe this new information in the individual's state, which was warranted and made possible by that same state.[337] Subsequently, this name may have seen widespread use if individuals in other states, on becoming aware of it, adopted it too, either translated into their own language or used in the original form.

Languages were therefore created and developed within states, by their citizens. Language is the information processing tool of individualised humans, the only way for them to materialise their immaterial information, to understand and give common meaning to the analogue world, and to accommodate their ever-expanding information processing needs. As such, it lies at the base of the information platform that is the state—but could not have existed without it.

5.

The use of names, therefore, is an identification mechanism, an algorithm for that purpose (identification), that is used by humans to serve their need to process information. An identification algorithm, however, requires a

334 See also Chap. I1, par. 3.
335 After, of course, language (i.e. human names) gave birth to states; on their intertwined relationship see note 8/1/4.
336 See Chap. 5.1, par. 2.
337 See also Chap. 6, par. 4.

registry; it is the information platform that is the state that provides that registry.[338]

It is up to humans to decide how far identification goes, that is, whether certain categories of Beings and Things (animals, organisations, boats etc.) after being named as such, also need to have specific names for their individual members (and to what extent), so as for them to become uniquely identifiable in space and time among their kind; for example, planets are individually named; ships, too; elephants are not;[339] only some drones are.

6.

The use of names as an individualisation mechanism is a human trait and development, one which is not found in any other Being. While it is true that organisations have names, these are given to them by humans, they were not developed by themselves—in the same way that dogs, for example, are given names in some parts of the world.[340] Things, of course, do not process information themselves,[341] however they are sometimes given unique identifiers by humans.

The use of names as an individualisation mechanism is a way of giving meaning and creating understanding that is peculiar to humans. For the moment, at least, no other Being[342] has used names—assuming, of course, that our way of understanding and processing information is their way too.

7. Individualisation in the digital world*

Individualisation is critical for human understanding and information processing. But at least for the moment, it is a matter of debate in the digital world. Although the information platform that is the state also extends into the digital world,[343] in the digital world individuals have been transformed from citizens into users.[344] From this point of view, the equivalent of the digital world today can be found in the colonial era of the analogue world,

338 See Chap. 7, par. 4.
339 See also Chap. 8, par. 7.
340 See also Chap. 8, par. 7.
341 See Chap. 3.
342 Only Beings can and will process information, see Chap. 2.
343 See Chap. 17, par. 12.
344 See Chap. 17, par. 11.

as it is mostly private actors that are expanding (and giving meaning) to it.[345]

Early as it may be in the history of the digital world, however, some preliminary remarks can already be made with regard to names (as individualisation mechanisms).

8. Logins and passwords

As soon as the digital world emerged, human identification in it came about through the use of 'credentials', composed of a 'login name' and a 'password'. Thus humans had to become individuals in the digital world too, to be able to continue the augmentation of their information processing unhindered. In the analogue world each individual is identified by a name and citizenship; in the digital one, by a login name and password.

Of course one might ask how, if states are natural to humans, as argued in this analysis, the digital world has worked for humans so far, and is able to keep expanding? After all, it is not states that give out the credentials needed to (identify) individuals in the digital world.

However, we need to be careful before making any assumptions: in the digital world, credentials from the state have, for the moment, been replaced by those provided by the private online platforms.[346] Any credentials today are valid for a specific platform only, they uniquely identify an individual only on it. When using the platform, they are necessary for humans; outside of it, they are of no use. In other words, while the digital world's credentials (login name and password) correspond to an individual's name in the analogue world, that individual's citizenship (to complement the unique identification mechanism used in the analogue world) is implied in the digital one: it is the platform on which these credentials are valid.

The above-described mechanism for unique identification in the digital world is easily viewable in the structure of email accounts: the @ symbol[347] specifies, in essence, citizenship (individuals are allowed to choose their name in the first part). Similarly, even when so-called anonymous communications are allowed in the digital world, individuals' aliases are registered with and work only on each specific online platform.

345 See also Chap. 7.1, par. 5.

346 On digital territory (whereby private online platforms are themselves found in the (digital) territory of their respective states), see Chap. 17, par. 12.

347 Meaning 'at', as in 'of', see, for example, '"Thucydides of Athens wrote ...' or 'Herodotus of Halicarnassus ...', see par. 2.

In recent years the situation of having multiple digital world credentials has increased to the extent that, first, specialised software was developed to manage them (humans being able to remember only a limited number of passwords) and, subsequently, centralisation occurred, as is the case with the option to 'log in with Google' or 'with Facebook' or other popular private online platforms. When this latter option is replaced with 'log in with your state's credentials', states will have moved decisively towards claiming the digital world for themselves.

9. Domain names (and other unique naming attempts)*

Very few internationally coordinated (non-state run) unique naming attempts have been noted so far in the digital world. These offer informative examples of the requirement for individualisation and the, ultimately unavoidable, need for state involvement. The first is the registration of domain names.[348] In the early days of the Internet this task was undertaken by private parties, centrally at first (in the US) and then allocated per country to the rest of the world. Soon enough, however, states took over either directly (domain names in the vast majority of national cases are managed through regulation) or indirectly (by appointing state agencies to control the relevant activity).

Other attempts to uniquely and authoritatively identify individuals in the digital world have been made on an as-needed basis, for example, in the cases of celebrities or researchers. In both these cases increased use of the digital world by such categories of individuals means that their digital identity needs to be officially warranted. Tellingly, while private online platforms have taken over this task, what they do in practice is use the analogue-world information of the persons concerned to 'lock' an online profile to them.

10. Names of computer programs*

As previously noted,[349] names are necessary for humans to understand and process information around them. They are therefore assigned to identify categories of Things and other Beings, as well as to individualise humans

348 Themselves digital-born information, see Chap. 1.1, par. 17.
349 In par. 4.

themselves and the few other specific Things or Beings that humans thought it was necessary to individualise. Importantly, however, so far in history, when humans have interacted with another Being, they do so on an individualised basis, meaning as an individualised human with another individualised other human or, even, with a similarly individualised organisation. Of course, humans may also interact with individualised Things (for example, the planet Mars or the ship Titanic or long-gone states or empires that became Things after their demise) but this has always been a one-directional interaction, that is, Things do not process humans' information in return (as is the case with other humans or organisations). Artificial Beings (languages, money, computer programs), in spite of their in-between nature, did not escape this treatment by humans.

However, there is a recent, specific case, among computer programs, that does not follow this rule, that of the AI assistants developed by software companies and installed on our personal information processing devices (mostly phones, but also computers). Today each one of us can communicate with 'Siri', 'Alexa' or 'Cortana', or even with 'ChatGPT'. Importantly, these are non-individualised, essentially nameless[350] Beings: they are whatever each of their creators decides to make them each time they are used.

This is a first, for humanity. Siri (to denote collectively all AI assistants) is different from an organisation or another human (including slaves), or even domestic animals. All of these Beings are named and individualised as the only imaginable way for humans to interact with them. Siri, however, is a nameless (non-finite) artificial Being (a computer program) that claims to single-handedly carry out personalised interactions with each and every one of us—the same single personal assistant for billions of humans.

It is this realisation that helps explain the fear that AI has instilled in humanity. Until now, humans have communicated only with humans or other Beings, with all their identifiability and also their known characteristics and limitations. A nameless and essentially unaccountable counterpart would previously have been unheard of. A centuries-old way of communication, and society-building, is being challenged from the ground up—its very premise—and needs to be carefully rethought and reassessed.

350 Siri is not a dataset, because it is not set (see Chap. 1, par. 2). Basically, Siri is not a name but a characterisation—, essentially the same as God.