

Where are you? Mobile ontology

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I'm on the train; I digit a number and the 'client I have called' replies. The first thing I ask is 'where are you?'. Until just a few years ago, the question would have seemed absurd: 'where do you think I am? I'm here, just where you called me'. The cell phone has changed all that, has transformed the presence. But the biggest transformation is the fact that, despite appearance, *the cell phone is a writing instrument, like a typewriter*.

Cell phones have *letters* on their keys, and not just numbers. The letters are not just to help us remember codes, as on the old dialling phones. Rather, on the cell phone, the letters are there for composing messages. And even the *numbers* in their turn are there not just to 'dial the number' of the person we are after, but to text to someone in an exam that Columbus discovered America in 1492 (where the number is a date), to set an alarm (the number as a time), to get a result out of the calculator incorporated in the phone (and here, the number is not a code, nor yet a PIN for a credit card, but, so to say, a real number, the genuine ideal object).

Even if we decide to use the cell phone only to talk, it *will write* to us. It will tell us when the client we have called can now be reached, that the recharge has been registered, that we have only €3 euros of traffic left, that we have left Slovenia and are entering Croatia (if we are Italians), that we should go to vote, or (if we are British Muslims) when it is time to pray towards Mecca. And so on.

Here we have the *System*, which traces a dialectic that Hegel would have delineated in terms of the alliance and not the opposition between the telephone and the typewriter. The Thesis is the landline phone and speaking. The Antithesis is the personal computer and writing. And the Synthesis is the cell phone in which speech and writing come together, with the latter having the upper hand.