

Identity from a Theatrical Perspective

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Abstract: The present paper aims to revisit the definitions given to identity from the perspective of social sciences and philosophy in order to eliminate the variables and extract the constants that might form the basis of a conceptual tool which can be used from a theatrical perspective. The analysis of the notion of identity is based on the idea that it is not synonymous with the notions of self, ego or soul. The fact that identity, from the perspective of psychology, may be a result of the oscillation between interiority or the inner ego and exteriority or the outer ego is also taken into consideration. Furthermore, the meaning of the notion of identity is put in relation to *thymos*, the ancient concept. And, at the same time, we try to apply elements of this conceptual tool to Luigi Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in an attempt to investigate the way identity is seen and treated by the playwright.

Keywords: identity, self, thymos, interiority, Pirandello

At the beginning of 2022, an actor stated in an interview: "A character does not replace your identity, it fulfills it. I cannot lose my identity as an actor. I withdrew myself and the character entered"¹. From this point of view, the notion of identity seems to be a synonym of the notion of *self*, perhaps even of that of the *ego* or of that of the *soul*. Probably this perspective on defining the notion of identity is also to be found in the expression: "... I use the term [identity] to refer to *all aspects of the image of oneself*..."². However, we notice a small difference. In the first case, *identity* refers to the meaning of the term *self*, and in the second, *identity* is understood as only the *image* of the self. For that reason, does identity, as a notion, somehow, identify with the self or define the *self*? Or is it an effect, a consequence of any of these cases? A consequence in direct relation to the source, to the cause of its manifestation, which should be the movement of the self, of the soul in the reality and in the world. As might be expected, these would be only two of the meanings the term could have if

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¹ Mareş, I., 2022, *Interviu cu Adrian Titieni*, our translation, at <https://www.filmsinframe.com/ro/interviu/interviu-adrian-titieni/>, published: 22.03.2022, accessed: 29.09.2022

² Vignoles, V. L., 2011, *Identity Motives*, in Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, Vivian L. Vignoles *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, New York: Springer, p. 404

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we accept as irrelevant the perspectives in which either the self or perhaps the soul is inseparable from its reflection or can be separated from it. We also note that our intention is not to assimilate the concept of *self* with that of the *soul*, or with that of the *ego*, but only to alternate them for emphasizing the idea that in both cases the paradigm from which the notion of *identity* is seen remains constant. At the same time, we also do not claim that in the case of an expression like: *character does not replace identity*, this may mean that identity has been identified with self, soul, or ego, but only that it is a sufficiently ambiguous statement that could give rise to such interpretations.

However, the problem we face is that the term *identity* might be used in a somewhat inappropriate way, a much too reductionist way. We know that: “Identity has a wide number of meanings today, in some cases referring simply to social categories or roles, in others to basic information about oneself (as in my identity was stolen)”³, but this number that tends to be in continuous growth seems to make the word *identity*, in Eugène Ionesco’s terms, *a word good at everything*. We use the word *identity* with great respect for its meaning, but do we really know its meaning, do we know what it means? Or do we only have a vague idea of its meaning? And if we still have a strong opinion about the meaning of the term, is this enough to avoid the far too often encountered situation in which the term is used in a way that makes us cry: *flatus vocis* in the context of a *via moderna* where it is rejected all that could be generally valid and only more or less subjective particularizations are accepted?

In modernity, the notion of identity seems to be extremely relevant, both in everyday life and in the scientific or in the artistic field. Probably because it is on this notion that we seem to base our incessant search for legitimacy. We do not intend to elucidate here the proper meaning of this notion. We only aim to question how it achieved such fame in contemporary times. The huge interest in the meaning of this notion proves that it remains one of the most powerful and important notions for human existence. Furthermore, if a notion due to its excessive theoretical use receives such a great number of contextual meanings, in such a large cultural area, in so many scientific fields of study, can it still be used with clarity? Can it still remain relevant in a rational way?

If we assume that we hear the word *identity* for the first time, the meaning of the word refers us to *identical*. We are dealing with a resemblance, a similitude. At the same time, this implies an equality, as it is mentioned in a mathematics book: „...l’egalité ou l’identité...”⁴. But a resemblance, similitude, equality presupposes an equation involving two parts. The identity of something with something else. However, beyond a simple comparison, the term presented also means series of data

³ Fukuyama, F., 2018, *Identity – The Demand for Dignity and The Politics of Resentment*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Kindle Edition, p. 18

⁴ Condillac, 1789, *La langue des calculs*, Paris: Imprimerie de Ch. Houel, p. 124

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by which a person can be identified. And from this moment, an avalanche of synonyms can be found in relation to the word *identity*: personality, specificity, originality, uniqueness, similarity, conformity, consimilitude, unity, ipseity, egoism, discernment, character, etc. It is worth pointing out here the paradoxical meaning derived from these synonyms. Conformity but also originality, specificity but also consimilitude, etc. However, if the word *identity* is synonymous with the word *character*, this does nothing but draw attention to the fact that we can speak about the character of the role, the personality of the character or the identity of the character. It is thus very difficult for us to accept the synonymy between character and identity. In this case it is obvious that the character does not replace the identity.

Moreover, to this notion cannot be applied only one aspect. The notion of identity seems to be functional on many levels in multiple references. That is why it seems that statements like: “Following the work of Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), I theorize identity to be a social phenomenon: people come to know who they are interacting with others (or imagined others) and knowing (or imagining) how others see them”⁵, does not cover the phenomenon in its entirety. As a tool for discovering what distinguishes us from the comparative element and what makes us be alike, identity cannot be reduced to interactions within the human species. Identity can also be thought in relation to other species, even in relation to objects or abstract concepts. However, the statement above highlights that identity is about interaction. Interaction conceived as both something that is experienced and something that is projected. At the same time, if we think of interaction as the movement between autonomy and dependence, identity could mark a position of balance between the two. In this state of dynamic stability, can identity still be defined as the antonym of alterity? It is possible that this opposition invalidates or renders inoperative the observation that a person’s identity cannot be the person itself, and the person cannot be wholly assimilated to what lies at the deep core of individuality. In fact, it can be said that “... the hidden core of an individual becomes accessible – through never fully graspable – through bodily gesture and action that ask to be read in order to arrive at an understanding of the identity of another”⁶. But even this understanding can only be partial, related to a specific issue, and cannot be exhaustive or definitive as long as the person we refer to is alive. However, identity does not seem to be the exclusive prerogative of an individual. We could distinguish several types of identities, such as individual identity, collective identity, pretended identity, objective identity, assigned identity, projected identity, etc., but such a categorization still gives us the sensation that we deal with partial definitions which become, in one way or another, inoperative.

⁵ Hammock, A. C., 2011, “Identity Construction through Theatrical Community Practice”, in *Qualitative Social Work*, vol. 10, issue 3, pp. 367-368

⁶ Piccitto, D., 2014, *Blake’s Drama – Theatre, Performance, and Identity in the Illuminated Books*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 113

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Identity seems to be a notion that cannot be relativized. Thus, this condition of identity to be defined according to multiple perspectives makes it difficult to recognize a single valid and all-encompassing definition of the notion. In this case, the multiplicity, the diversification of meanings, does not seem to improve understanding, but becomes a constant source of disorientation. “One source of confusion in the literature is that the term *social identification* has been used to refer to the content of the identity itself, as well as to indicate the strength of the association with a particular social category”⁷. Of course, it could be said that before thinking out a definition of the notion as widely accepted as possible, it should be necessary to begin with a clarification, a cleansing of the parasitic, subversive, contradictory meanings that populate identity. We note, however, that this necessary step, today, due to the proliferation of meanings or excessive symbolizations of this notion, is postponed indefinitely.

One cannot justifiably speak of the confusion of the term identity as long as we legitimize our judgment on the basis of an ambiguous notion in itself. However, if this happens, it is probably because we treat identity not from a rational perspective, but from a political perspective. If identity is a notion based on the (always failed) attempt at political legitimation, it must come from the fact that we treat “... identity as one’s feelings about one’s self, character, goals, and origin”⁸. Operating with this politicized tool in order to catalogue the positioning in reality does not contain, however, only this aspect. “Identity, which had formerly been a matter for individuals, now became the property of groups that were seen as having their own cultures shaped by their own lived experiences”⁹. We observe, therefore, that the significant impact of the sense in which identity operates is reduced to living, both in the case of *lived experience* and in the case of *living* personal characteristics. As one would expect, accepting that the *lived experience* is not just a simple pleonasm, the living to which the two previous statements seem to refer include in their semantic universe the following synonyms: feeling, sensation, impression, emotion or soul. And, thus, we return, somehow, to the inappropriate equating of identity with soul. In fact, as an art of the possible, political thought seems to be centred on building acceptance, and identity seems to be an idea that is sufficiently permissive in its imprecise aspect and, consequently, susceptible to being used as a basis for political legitimation. In order to still be used in the context of political logic, identity had to undergo more or less adequate redefinitions.

One of the most important revisits of the meaning of the notion seems to be the following: “The modern concept of identity unites three different phenomena. The

⁷ Ellemers, N., Russell Spears, Bertjan Doosje, 2002, “Self and Social Identity”, in *Annual Review Psychology*, vol. 53/2002, p. 164

⁸ Fearon, J. D., 1999, *What is Identity (As We Now Use The Word)?*, at [What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf \(stanford.edu\)](http://What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf (stanford.edu)), published: 11.03.1999, accessed: 08.31.2022, p. 10

⁹ Fukuyama, F., 2018, op. cit., p. 94

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first is *thymos*, a universal aspect of human personality that craves recognition. The second is the distinction between the inner and the outer self, and the raising of the moral valuation of the inner self over outer society [...] The third is an evolving concept of dignity, in which recognition is due not just to a narrow class of people, but to everyone. The broadening and universalization of dignity turns the private quest for self into a political project”¹⁰. Thus identity seems to be described in a similar way to the way the soul was considered in European antiquity. “As is well known, Plato thought of the human soul as possessing or comprising three functions: reason (*logos* or *logismos* or *logistikon*), desire or appetite (*epithumia* or *to epithumetikon*), and spirit or emotion (*thumos* or *to thumoeidēs*)”¹¹. At the same time, one notices the association between the tripartite theory of the human soul and the political organization of a city. “... Proculus says, he [Plato] wanted to show how the virtues in the soul are analogically related to the political classes, and therefore defines them in terms of which parts of the soul rule, and which are ruled”¹². We thus have the soul that unites three aspects: the rational part, the appetitive part and the passionate/fiery part: “... just as there were three classes in the city that held it together, the money-making, the auxiliary, and the deliberative, is the spirited part a third thing in the soul that is by nature the helper of the rational part, provided that it hasn’t been corrupted by a bad upbringing”¹³. Paradoxically, we cannot get rid of the impression that in this definition *identity* becomes a substitute for the *soul*. Perhaps this impression also comes from the meaning of the Greek word *Θυμός* (*Thumos*). “... *Θυμός* is also cognate with Latin *fumus*, and [...] can be presented as a kind of breath”¹⁴. Nonetheless, it seems inappropriate to equate the Greek word *thumos/thymos* with the longing for recognition, or to equate it with what today, under the influence of psychology, we understand by emotion. The Platonic structuring of the soul seems to be found also in Freud, where the *ego* seems an equivalent of the *logos*, and the *id* seems an equivalent of the *thymos* or even a fusion of *epithumia* and *thymos*: “The ego represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions”¹⁵. Here, then, is how the discourse on identity moves the concept onto the coordinates of equivocation.

It is possible that all this ambiguity comes from the fact that “The term *thymos*, for which there exists no adequate English translation, designates for Plato

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 38

¹¹ Powell, S. M., 2016, *The Impassioned Life*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p. 8

¹² D. MacIsaac, D. G., 2009, “The Soul and The Virtues in Proculus’ Commentary on The Republic of Plato”, in *Philosophie antique*, issue 9/2009, p. 124

¹³ Plato, 1997, *Complete Works*, Edited by John M. Cooper, Associate Editor D.S. Hutchinson, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, p. 1072

¹⁴ Cairns, D., 2014, “Ψυχή, Θυμός, and Metaphor in Homer and Plato”, in *Études Platoniciennes*, vol. 11/2014, p. 10

¹⁵ Freud, S., 1927, *The Ego and The Id*, translated by Joan Riviere, London: Hogarth Press, p. 30

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that part of faculty of the soul occupying an intermediate position between reason and bodily desire and responsible for mediating between them, through the forceful imposition of the dictates of reason on the unruly appetites of the body. [...] The Platonic *thymos*, also called the *thymoeides*, is associated with a narrower range of psychic phenomena that what is normally designated by the English word ‘emotion’, notably fear, boldness (*tharros*), ambition (*philotimia*, *philonikia*), and above all anger. The literary roots of these association are to be found in Homeric epic, where *thymos* plays a central role in the inner life of the heroes”¹⁶. Obviously, it is also difficult to translate it in Romanian. “It is difficult to translate the Greek word *θυμοειδής* (*thymoeides*) [...] etymologically the word means *smoke*, seen in association with fire. So translating the derived adjective *θυμοειδής* with *flaming*, *inflamed*, seems justified to me”¹⁷. The emphasis placed on the dimension of *thymos* in defining identity leads to a redefinition of the meaning of the term. However, these meanings cannot rewrite the original meaning by ignoring some meanings that do not correspond to the forms that want a certain type of discursive legitimation. If Fukuyama considers *thymos* as longing for recognition and understands it as one of the three *different phenomena* that structure identity, the third phenomenon, that of dignity, also finds relevance in recognition. In this case, are the first phenomenon and the third phenomenon different? To what extent? Do we deal with a double recognition? Or do we deal with a necessity for recognition that, once fulfilled, transforms itself into a sense of dignity? Can these phenomena exist independently of each other? We cannot answer these questions with certainty as the conceptual structures which seem to be related give the impression of coming from referentialities which have no points of convergence, thus, building deceptive conjectural structures.

As a matter of fact, only taking into consideration the level of the illusionary existence might throw light on the notion of identity. From a theatrical perspective, the identity seems to be a notion in which both the aspects of the reality and the aspects of the imaginary are involved. Identity is thus not limited only to the aspects of the reality. If we start from the *distinction between the inner ego and the outer ego*, we can assume that we deal with two complementary aspects that either form an entity, or, if they do not form a single entity, enter in an attraction/rejection relationship, like two magnets do. Thus, if about the inner ego we have a representation of the mind as a conscious self, regarding the outer ego we notice that it is not clearly defined being understood as the image that the mind projects in relation to otherness. Not having precise demarcations from the environment in which it manifests, the outer ego seems

¹⁶ Jorgenson, C., 2018, *The Embodied Soul in Plato's Later Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 6

¹⁷ Cornea, A., *Note in Platon*, 1986, *Opere*, vol. V, ediție îngrijită de Constantin Noica, Petru Creția, cuvânt prevenitor Constantin Noica, trad., interpretare, lămuriri preliminare, note și anexă Andrei Cornea, București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, our translate, p. 452

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to be perceived as having a rhizomic, imprecise consistency, being difficult to notice where the *ego* ends and the *you* begins. Obviously, it seems to be a matter of shifting or positioning of the conscious, for any *ego* is also a *you* when seen from the exterior. It seems difficult to identify the limit from where the consciousness can determine the positioning in *ego* or in *you*. But perhaps noticing a distance between these two hypostases of consciousness may be an error. What if we deal with only one paradoxical hypostasis? If we speak about a paradoxical existence? Not necessarily dual in its structure, but dual for it has a dual perspective. This would take us out of the paradigm of a narcissistic consciousness defined by the variables of the *ego*.

In the theatre, this situation seems to be the condition which the actor experiences. He is aware of himself to the same extent that he is aware that, for the spectator, he is the other. This paradoxical experience seems to make the actor's play possible. Thus, for the actor, the outer ego is assumed to be the quality of *you* that he has in the consciousness of the spectator. That being so, the *you* on stage does not have to coincide with the *ego* which generates it or be a direct consequence of it. The actor is acutely aware, or should be aware, that his subjectivity, from the perspective of another subjectivity, that of the spectator, seems to take an aspect of objectivity. So, the actor's performance, eventually, seems to have as main objective to reverse the spectator's mirroring. A good performance makes the spectator empathetically recognize the ego, the subjectivity of the character. Perhaps here we deal with an inversion of roles. Perhaps with even more. A putting in the paradoxical situation where we accept ourselves as both subjectivity and objectivity. Object of perceptions, both of one's own subjectivity and of other subjectivities. A paradoxical state which avoids, even for a short time, the narcissistic experience.

Thus the actor's identity, when he acts on stage, should probably be seen as having, at least, a double facet. A dimension of identity of the inner ego and one of the outer ego which does not overlap the former. Naturally, one could also discuss a third dimension of identity that is characteristic of the otherness, of *you*, of which the actor should be aware in the relationship with the spectator. These three dimensions, which are different from each other, but which also share common areas, could be considered as the actor's identity as a character. From another perspective, this temporary hypostasis in which the actor finds himself should have as a consequence the developing of the capacity of distinguishing between imaginary, self and otherness so that he can remain aware of the experience he goes through. We deal, thus, with this paradoxical state in which identity, or rather the assuming of stage identity can no longer be defined in the terms in which "... the individual and collective identity are always and inevitably based on a logic of opposition to and exclusion of the Other"¹⁸. From the point of view of the stage identity of the actor, we deal with a logic of

¹⁸ Weir, A., 1996, *Sacrificial Logics – Feminist Theory and The Critique of Identity*, New York: Routledge, p. 6

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distinction that should not be confused with a logic of difference, of distinction that is no longer based on the exclusion of the other, but on empathizing with him/her. It is a logic of collaboration in which what is noteworthy becomes essential precisely from the perspective of overcoming the state of confusion that inevitably arises in a scenic experience.

The outer ego, from the point of view of the theatre, seems to be a construction through which we present ourselves in front of others in the hypostasis of *you*, of otherness, starting from the way we imagine ourselves as a representation of the inner ego. This process can also be derived from what can be understood by *thymos*: "... *thymos* is rooted in our capacity to form an image of ourselves..."¹⁹. However, forming an image of ourselves is not the whole process, but only the beginning of this process and this can be seen in the construction of the role that the actor carries out.

What does the actor actually do? In order to be considered by the other, in the case of the actor, by the spectator, he must gain respect for not disturbing the condition of the spectator. Naturally, the spectator's limits of acceptance can be discussed here, but this is not the subject of our research. Therefore, we notice that the same strategy or one similar to that found in the *thymos*-ic phenomenon seems to be involved in the construction of the role: "Starting from the commonly held view that the distinctive object of thumotic desire is honor, [...] the pursuit of honor requires us to be able see ourselves through the eyes of others, to form some idea of the opinion that they have of us"²⁰. So, can the outer ego be a construction by which the inner ego is put in the hypostasis of being viewed by someone else through the mediation of the outer ego? If this is the case, then this is a process in which the imaginary must be involved. We cannot really see ourselves from the outside without losing our connection with reason, but we can imagine ourselves as looking at us from the outside. This also seems to be the technique of role construction. Thus, identity cannot be considered as existing in the absence of an imaginary part. Because of this we can consider that in the construction of an identity, somewhat similar to the construction of a role, a good dose of narcissism seems to be involved. But can identity not be achieved without a narcissistic attitude towards one's own existence? Negotiating the correct or acceptable dose of narcissism, like the mental process involved in role construction, could make the difference between acquiring an identity, even temporarily, and losing one. We consider here the loss of identity as a process by which the rational structures of the ego fade, or as the adherence to an identity that is no longer centred on one's own interiority, but on an imagined external structure.

But if from within life an imaginary construction can be concocted, even temporarily, from within the imaginary life cannot be created without narcissism

¹⁹ Jorgenson, C., 2018, op. cit., p. 15

²⁰ Ibidem

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pulverizing life itself. We think that this perspective on identity can be found in the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello.

We advance the idea that, in this play, identity is no longer treated as a substantial attribute, but as a process. Identity is not supposed to be a visiting card, but instead designate an unfolding. Thus, it can be considered that identity is viewed under its aspect of psycho-mental mechanism. The concern with the issue of identity in Pirandello's plays has been noted, but the lack of it has often been talked about. "In his works, there is a search for self and identity. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and *Henry IV*, one can trace these psychological aspects, the lack of identity and self"²¹. We notice the same identification of the identity with the self. To some extent, we can consider that identity and self are treated as a single entity, probably in the form in which identity remains an aspect of the self. However, even in Pirandello, identity as appearance, presentation, showing of something that cannot be shown, cannot be considered as being in a symbiosis with the self. Something that is shown is related not only to that which generates the determination, but also to the one who receives this determination, appearance, showing. Identity could be thought of as what can be received from what manifests as self. And yet, Pirandello specifies that the six characters should be visually differentiated, even through masks, from the other characters. The six characters do not share the same identity as the actors. "*The CHARACTERS should not appear as phantoms, but as created realities, changeless constructs of the imagination, and therefore more real and substantial than the ACTORS with their natural mutability*"²². The six characters should not appear as ghosts.

In this context, can identity still be considered as an image of the self? If we consider the self to be equivalent to the soul or spirit it is obvious that Pirandello rejects this interpretation. The six characters are not apparitions that mediate between the visible and the invisible so that, in one way or another, *the invisible becomes visible*. The identity of the six characters, whether we consider it as a group identity or as an individual identity, even if it is obviously meant to be understood as an artificial, unnatural construct, seems to be the very self, their interiority. But in this case, if the self is the same as the identity and there is no split between them, two interpretations become possible. If we call this self-identity entity the self, we can say that the characters have no identity. If we call this self-identity entity identity, the characters have nothing but identity. We can say that there are only these two variants because even if we refer to an identity of the self, this means that the identity can be

²¹ Nasari, A. J., Shadi Sharaz, Nabieh Filinezhad, Shamsaldin Jamali Nesari, 2011, "A Study of The Lack of Identity in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV*", in *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Science*, vol. 28, p. 898

²² Pirandello, L., 2014, *Six Characters in Search of an Author in Three Plays*, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Anthony Mortimer, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 7

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applied to elements other than the self. The self is not synonymous with identity and therefore does not create, even paradoxically, a single entity.

However, where can this confusion come from? In this context, the dimension of illusion may be put into discussion. This dimension is fully exploited by Pirandello. “The unknown reality of the life and the illusion of known identity are both challenged by Pirandello”²³. Therefore, identity, in this play by Pirandello, should be considered as defined by other characteristics than those identifiable in the definitions with which we are accustomed. It is quite possible that an important role in these characteristics is played by the dimension of illusion. Identity is no longer seen as a homogeneous whole, but as a plurality. “Identity in Pirandello emerges as a *plurale tantum* of interchanging personalities and perceptions. Madness, mask and illusion prevail in a world that fuels personal instability and deconstructs concise selfhood”²⁴. Thus, we do no longer speak about a single identity, but about identities. And, yet, the six characters seem to present themselves on stage with the aim of doubling themselves, and their problem seems to be precisely that they remain a homogeneous whole unlike the characters of the actors. In other words, the actors play, but the six characters do not play, as they are fully involved in their own identity. But what if, contrary to how they have been seen so far, the six characters do not search for an author to give them an identity? If their identity is already consolidated? They are what they are and show what they are. If the six characters do not lack identity. We note here that this identity of the six characters appears to have at least two dimensions. An individual and a group identity. They cannot renounce either of the two conflicting dimensions. Maybe that is why they need an author. An author who can eliminate the conflict. How can this conflict be removed and the two dimensions of identity reconciled? What could they be missing?

To be able to formulate a possible answer to this question we should consider the following line, often ignored, from Pirandello’s play: “... get the stage ready for the second act of *The Rules of the Game*”²⁵. Thus, the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is performed in the scenic space of the play *The Rules of the Game*. Why does this reference seem so important? We have to take into consideration also the fact that it is performed in the playing space of the second act of *The Rules of the Game*. However, what we think is worth noting are the references to Bergsonian philosophy: “... it’s a fine game reason plays with Bergson, making him think she has been dethroned and slighted by him, to the infinite delight of all the feather-brained philosophizing females in Paris! He maintains that reason can consider only the

²³ Mahmoudpour, N., Bahman Zarrinjooee, 2014, “Self-Identity in Luigi Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author”, in *Journal of Novel Applied Sciences*, vol. 3, Issue 7, p. 779

²⁴ Nikitas, Z., 2022, “Metatheatre and Identity: An Examination of Luigi Pirandello’s Plays”, in *Journal of Arts & Humanities*, vol. 11, Issue 2, p. 18

²⁵ Pirandello, L., 2014, op. cit., p. 3

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identical and constant aspects and characteristic of matter. She has geometrical and mechanical habits. Reality is a ceaseless flow of perpetual newness, which reason breaks down into so many static and homogeneous particles...”²⁶. These comments on Bergson contained in the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* remind us that “... the last consequence of Bergsonianism is that it replaces intelligence with intuition and being with duration, with pure becoming or change, annihilating the being of things and annulling the principle of identity”²⁷. We think that the impact that Bergson’s philosophy has on the identity of the six characters can derive from the following meditation of the French philosopher: “The principle of identity is the absolute law of our consciousness: it asserts that what is thought is thought at the moment when we think it: and what gives this principle its absolute necessity is that it does not bind the future to the present, but only the present to the present: it expresses the unshakable confidence that consciousness feels in itself, so long as, faithful to its duty, it confines itself to declaring the apparent present state of mind”²⁸. Thus, if Pirandello challenges, in one way or another, the Bergsonian perspective, we consider that it is possible that he also challenges the *principle of identity*. If at the basis of consciousness lies identity or the identity principle, and consciousness *recognizes the current state of the soul*, we could have the following possibilities: either identity governs the appearance of the soul (or state of mind), and this is identical to its appearance, or the appearance of the soul (or state of mind) becomes visible to the exteriority through identity. It does not seem possible to have the following interpretation: the identity or the principle of identity has as its appearance the state of mind or the soul and thereby becomes manifest. However, probably the philosopher considers the *principle of identity* as an absolute. And if we have seen that in mathematics equality is identified with identity, “... in the physical world equality is not synonymous with identity”²⁹. Therefore, it is possible that Pirandello relativizes this absolute by treating both identity and state of mind as manifestations. In Pirandello, the manifestations seem to be the unfolding of a mechanism that does not hide, does not protect anything. Behind the identity is not necessarily a self, or the appearance of a soul or an ego. Identities may simply be artificial, fictional mechanisms.

And then why do the six characters search for an author? What for? Perhaps the author could give them a self or an ego or a soul that could have an appearance. What we notice, however, is that they revolted. They wanted freedom. And they got

²⁶ Pirandello, L., 1969, *The Rules of the Game*, introduction and edited by E. Martin Browne, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 128

²⁷ Adămuț, A., *Studiu Introductiv in Henri Bergson*, 1998, *Eseu asupra datelor imediate ale conștiinței*, trad. Diana Morărașu, studiu introductiv Anton Adămuț, Iași: Institutul European, our translation, p. 24

²⁸ Bergson, H., 1950, *Time and Free Will – An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Translated by F. L. Pogson, London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, p. 207-208

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 63

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it from the author. At the same time we may deal with a situation where identity is seen as autonomous from the individual or collective self. Empty identities, devoid of content, which appear to be existences, but remain only unfinished characters. The claimed freedom is no longer someone's, a human individual's or a social group's. It is a revolt of the forms without content. But do these forms *really* exist? "Although, in life, the transient self burdens many of Pirandello's characters (who strive for a consistent identity), in theatre the same lack of self is a safe haven of freedom. The actor, Pirandello seems to insinuate, is the only person who is safe (and sane) in a world of flux. Acting means changing identities and the actor is the only human that becomes, in a way, harmonized with the transitional nature of the world"³⁰. So, the loss of identity can be replaced by a consolidation of identity until the moment the identity becomes independent?

In conclusion, identity must be identifiable, at least from the perspective of theatrical practice, at the intersection between what you are (which seems to be an imponderable), what you think you are, what you do (as a result of what you can do and what you think you are), what others perceive you (your being, doing and thinking), what others think you are, and what others recognize you to be. Identity, however, should not be treated as the ultimate reality of one's existence. We are more than our own identity, and we are probably more than we think we are or are told we are. We are not identity, we have identity.

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³⁰ Nikitas, Z., 2022, op. cit., p. 18

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