Studies of Identity in Modernity: Literary, Phenomenological, and Psychoanalytic Approaches

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Abstract

This paper analyzes challenges to conventional notions of identity in Pirandello's novel *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*, towards understanding new conceptions of meaning and identity in the early 20th century. The aim is to provide a multi-plural study in the Italian modernist tradition (1890-1945), with the goal of understanding how technological, industrial, and socio-geographical changes of the period were felt across a range of fields, and centered on new ideas of the self in society. A study of how Pirandello's literary style addresses the complex socio-geographical climate of Italy and Europe in the early 20th century is put in conversation with Martin Heidegger's phenomenological approach to being, and the alterations of personality and cohabiting identities charted by psychologist Alfred Binet. The complementary and conflicting accounts of selfhood taken from these thinkers and their work is used to understand prevailing notions of identity during the period, what might be responsible for these shifts, and their representation in literature. A synthesis and concluding section is used to assess the takeaways from the study, and what can be broadly understood about identity in Pirandello's fiction and the period of literary modernism.

1 INTRODUCTION

Unprecedented social, technological, and political shifts in the early 20th century posed new challenges to conventional notions of the identity and role of the individual in society, and elicited a resounding response from literature and art. Literary modernism was a movement in art, literature, and the broader humanities that began in the late 19th century and continued until the mid-twentieth century. It addressed the challenges of technological innovation and socio-political changes, among others, and sought experimentation in artistic and literary forms. Individuals closely associated with the movement include Picasso, Pound, Joyce, Hemingway, Woolf, Eliot, and Beckett. The Italian literary tradition dealt acutely with these challenges; and *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*; a novel by Luigi Pirandello, intersects with the fields of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and literary theory in its conversations around identity. The protagonist of the novel, Vitangelo Moscarda, has a revelation that no one around him, not even himself, truly knows who he is. So begins a destructive and cynical investigation into modernist notions of selfhood set against the socio-geographical and technological shifts of the early 20th century. The thesis uses literary, psychoanalytic, and philosophical critique, beginning with Alfred Binet (1857-1911), a psychologist which paved the way for discussion about alterations in personalities, and helped normalize discussions of flux in identity as opposed to a rigid psyche. Newfound ideas of selfhood are also found in the work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), in his writings on being, and later essays touching on the role of art and challenges of a technological world. *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand* interrogates the function of narrative, the nature of the relationship between a narrator and his audience, and challenges the reader at every step. Mass migration from rural to urban areas and changing ideas of work, family, and gender roles required that artistic mediums adopt new approaches to an entirely new subject matter. Rapid technological innovation, a more connected world, and modern warfare challenged previous views of the world and the individual's place in it. Selfhood and identity would come to be thought of as more fluid, complex, and nuanced than before. This offered new challenges to the placement of the individual in society and potential for greater freedom and self-expression.

In *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*, Luigi Pirandello challenges conventional notions of identity through his innovative narrative style, drawing on modernist literary techniques like stream of consciousness narration and experimental usages of time and space. This changing idea of selfhood addressed by the novel

is a response to broader societal shifts at the turn of the 20th century, which are echoed in psychoanalysis and philosophy in the works of Alfred Binet and Martin Heidegger respectively. Studying these fields and thinkers in synergy offers the chance to understand how changing political and socio-geographical conditions led to new, innovative notions of identity in the modernist period, and how these changes were reflected in literature and art.

2 METHODS

This paper first uses extratextual perspectives, with a focus on Pirandello's biography and the circumstances surrounding literary modernism, in addition to the aforementioned psychoanalytic and philosophical analysis. Intratextual analysis of the protagonist, method of narration, and layout of the novel is then used to better engage with the text itself, with less usage of outside perspectives. This textual literary analysis considers the novel on the basis of its own literary value and its qualities as art and fiction that affect the reader. The intratextual analysis in this paper rests on the scholarship on the novel from within the Italian academic canon as well as original insights, while discussions of authorial context come from the articles and significant body of work written on Luigi Pirandello's life. Discussions of Binet and Heidegger come primarily from the original texts, with fewer secondary sources. These methods are used to better understand the literary qualities of *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*; Pirandello's intent; and the impact of the work continuing to present studies of identity. Extra-textual analysis allows an understanding of the text's broader impact and its placement within important movements and innovations of the modernist period. Though this is a broad focus, the use of a diverse range of critique is necessary to do justice to a work as multifaceted as *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand* and the question of the self in modernity.

The industrial, urban, and socio-political shifts in Europe at the start of the 20th century created a unique atmosphere of uncertainty, change, and experimentation that drew responses from the arts, humanities, and sciences. *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand* could not take place in a different historical moment, and the novel is a reflection and product of literary modernism and the period in which it was written. As scholar of Italian literature Mimmo Cangiano notes in his analysis, "The new existential situation thus becomes a space of individual freedom, a space of a subject who, rejecting the presumed 'cages' of Being, modifies alienation into independence and mystifies the structure of domination (that created by society) in the domain of the metaphysical concept"[1]. This quote offers a solid starting point for discussion. The excerpt illustrates the challenges and innovations of modernity in understanding new ideas of identity, and the role of broader socio-political structures in the formation of selfhood. This paper aims to illustrate how Pirandello explores identity in the novel, and its relation to the work of Alfred Binet and Martin Heidegger.

3 LUIGI PIRANDELLO: SOCIAL & HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The novel begins when the protagonist's wife makes a seemingly innocuous comment about his nose. From this point, Moscarda understands that every person who knows him or who has known him has a different image of him. This causes a crisis of the self, and he decides in a fit of cynicism and anger to erase himself entirely from his own gaze and that of others. To do this, he begins a systematic destruction of his personal and professional relationships. He lashes out at his wife, Dida, and their dog. He behaves erratically at the bank, a former property of his father. Moscarda then threatens to evict a poor couple, Marco di Dio and his wife Diamante, before having a rapid change of heart, and giving them wealth and housing. This, among other interactions marked by sudden changes in mood and aggression, alienates him from the townsfolk. Interspersed between his erratic outbursts are fleeting reflections on his fragile selfhood and what dictates a coherent identity. Towards the end of the novel he is wounded by gunfire after an encounter with one of his wife's friends. At the court hearing he refuses to commit to, or be defined by, a single sense of self. This frustrates the magistrate, and the judicial system's necessity of treating him as a coherent, single subject elicits his irritated cynicism. As he recovers, he reflects on the environment around him, saying "I am reborn new and without memories: alive and whole, no longer in myself, but in everything outside"[2]. This is an uncertain conclusion. Contrary to his previous outbursts and aggression, he is now far more pacified. Pirandello's intention is open to interpretation, and difficult to pin down. Moscarda seems calmer and at peace, though there is also a sense of resignation in this conclusion, as he finds himself physically and emotionally distant from himself and others.

It is necessary to first understand Pirandello's own biography and the novel's socio-historical context. Luigi Pirandello's life was fundamentally tied to the history of Italy and Sicily in the early 20th century. He was born shortly after the unification of Italy, and he saw a profound sense of disappointment and tragedy with the promises of unification and the overall improvement of the nation[3]. He would observe the prominent divide on the basis of both culture and industry between North and South[4]. This national tension and uncertainty features heavily in his work. Throughout his fiction he talks about technology and industrialization, but in *One,*

No One, and One Hundred Thousand this sense of irreverence can be seen more poignantly through Moscarda himself. Pirandello's attitude can be characterized as an intelligent cynicism, an interrogation of society but also of the self. This perspective probably comes from an atmosphere of uncertainty and change during this industrial period of a young Italy. The specter of unification and modernism haunts his fiction, with complex and diverse manifestations throughout his career. Pirandello's relationship with his father was complex, and the author felt closer to his mother in childhood[5]. Stefano Pirandello is thought to have presented a masculine, overly-intimidating, and forceful demeanor. The figure of the father poses an interesting challenge in analysis of the novel and ties into Pirandello's broader body of work. Pirandello and his father came into conflict over the former's area of study and career, as well their profound differences in personality. Later, the collapse of the sulfur mines would drive Pirandello's wife, Maria Antonietta Portulano (1871-1959), to a mental breakdown from which she would never recover. They had enjoyed several years of peaceful marriage, but after the accident she would become unpredictable and at times violent towards the children and Pirandello. For some years he was unable to pay for her treatment, which caused persistent conflict in their home[6].

Still, Luigi Pirandello and his family depended on his father's sulfur mines for financial support, which led to dual senses of resentment and obligation. This dissonance with the paternal role is found throughout Pirandello's works. Pirandello's father continued to influence his son even after his death, and the specter of this paternal figure can be seen throughout the latter's fiction. In *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand* there is Moscarda's literal late father, as well as Moscarda's view of him, and his influence diffused across their town. The protagonist's father exercised significant financial influence over the entire area, not unlike Pirandello's father, and as such, Moscarda encounters specters and reminiscences of him throughout his interactions and excursions into the village. His father has a strong influence over him, yet is not literally present. There is 'hauntology' here, a causative factor that is neither here nor there, neither present nor absent[7]. Moscarda's father owned the town bank, and he continues to live with his wife in his father's home, facing those who were impacted by or did business with his father's bank. Thus, his father's power and image remains perhaps more forceful than his son's even after his demise. This legacy is entrenched within the town itself, and an effort to escape it may be responsible for Moscarda's efforts against a coherent selfhood. The protagonist lashes out against the presence of the paternal as a disciplinary and guiding force within the institutions of the village, and as a specter he cannot escape. Moscarda is neither willing nor reluctant. He is implied to have led a passive and compliant life before the events of the novel. He is instead rendered as the object of these paternal forces and the specter of the father. He reflects on the role of the city in identity:

> Let us say, then, that what we call peace is to be found within ourselves. Does it not seem so to you? And do you know where it comes from? From the very simple fact that we have just now left the town, that is, a world that is built — houses, streets, churches, squares — not for this reason alone, however, because it is built, but also because we no longer live for the sake of living, like these plants, without knowing how to live, but rather for something that is not and which we put there, for something that gives meaning and value to life, a meaning, a value which here, at least in part, we succeed in losing, or of which we recognize the grievous vanity. Hence comes your languor and your melancholy. I understand, I understand. Let-down of nerves. Afflicting need of self-abandonment. You feel yourself relaxing, you abandon yourself[2].

And so, when he not only subverts, but ends up discarding and mocking these conventions of self and country, these acts are distinctly anti-paternal. Considering how the desires of the father have influenced him, and continue to shape his life, when Moscarda begins to destroy his sense of self this is mostly a rejection of internalized filiation, and this "given" sense of self. In a sense, the thrust of the novel centers on matters of paternalism. Moscarda's father is never alive in the novel's diegesis[1], but is ever-present in his son's ego. And given the period of the novel's publication, and Pirandello's own biography, there are parallels with discussions of Fascism as well. Pirandello's relationship to the Italian Fascists was complex[8]. Though he joined the party, he continued to be considered under suspicion, and his work offered implicit subversions of Fascist ideology. The Fascist leader embodies a hyper-masculinity, a disciplinary paternalism, tying into the discussions above. There is certainly room for further scholarship on this point. Questions of the role of the father abound in One, No One, and One-Hundred Thousand, and speak to Pirandello and Moscarda alike. This advances the hypothesis that these difficulties underlying the conception of the family entered Pirandello's works as a constant and malevolent specter. In contending with the influence of his father, Moscarda raises the question of the capacity to forge a new identity beyond formative circumstances. Many of his sharpest criticisms are towards the remnants of his father's influence, and the

[1]The diegesis is the internal universe, logic, and narrative in a story.

aspects of himself in which his father remains, as well as his inability to escape his shadow. As Moscarda notes, in this process of destruction he sees his father in a new sense:

> I saw then my father for the first time, as I had never seen him before, externalized in his own life, but not as he had been to himself, not as he had felt himself to be, which was something I could never know; but rather, as a being that was wholly strange to me, in that reality which, as I now beheld him, I might suppose that others had imposed upon him[2].

As Moscarda undergoes the disintegration of his identity he gains a sense of clarity, though it doesn't last. He begins to understand how his father has impacted his life in ways he hadn't understood before. For the first time, he sees his father in a more vulnerable light, understanding that even a somewhat antagonistic figure faced similar struggles around others forcing a sense of identity upon him.

Pirandello is well-known for his plays and fiction, though he also wrote on philosophy, notably putting forward the idea of "umorismo"[9]. It is based on a meshing of tragedy and comedy, what seems initially ridiculous or comical is in fact profoundly tragic. It is a play on expectations, is paradoxical, and is present in much of his work. There is humor here, but also a sense of tragedy. And though this tragedy comes from contradiction, it cannot exist in this sense without humor. The human experience is fundamentally one of complexity and is not easily classifiable. The contradiction of human experience and the reflection on opposites is a principle of Pirandello's work. There are two things at the same time, with a moment of realization. There are already parallels here between Pirandello and Heidegger's work[2]. Yet it is in the modernist rejection of dichotomy that these irreconcilable parallels can achieve a newfound identity. This is also present in Pirandello's famous play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, which deals explicitly with the limits of fiction and diegesis[11]. Here, six characters meet a director in the process of directing a show. The divide between fiction and reality is blurry for characters and viewers. There is an absurdity here, a strange ridiculousness, but also a sense of unease. While the situation might be funny or absurd at first, it becomes shocking, as many of the characters suffer tragic fates. The ease with which Pirandello's drama switches between the darkly comical and human tragedy is jarring at times, but reflects an incredulity towards an either/or perspective, with both made possible by the other, or co-dependent.

[2]The idea of "being-as-paradox/undefinability," or something along these lines is key to both Pirandello and Heidegger's work. Present in "L'Umorismo"[9] and *Being and Time*[10] as well as *The Basic Writings*[10]

Pirandello's final novel is profoundly autobiographical, assuming a fragmented, diary-like approach[6]. This makes the thematic project of One, Nobody, and One Hundred Thousand more difficult to define. Some of Moscarda's reflections are perhaps repackagings of Pirandello's own thoughts or contemplations, the protagonist's actions perhaps the exercise of his author's curiosity. The character of Moscarda can be thought of as Pirandello's literary rebellion against precedent and the systematic, both in social conditions and notions of identity. Moscarda's internal destruction, a contempt aimed at both the self and the world, suggests an alternative interpretation. It is possible that the protagonist embodies an internal conflict for the author during these difficult times. In a more optimistic reading, Moscarda could be taken as a vehicle for Pirandello to explore and work his own discontents and troubled identity. The work may be a destructive effort for the protagonist and a reconstructive one for the author.

4 LITERARY CRITIQUE OF *ONE, NO ONE, AND ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND*

One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand is likely the most modernist of Luigi Pirandello's works. Pirandello's liberal treatment of space and time is not unlike Joyce and Woolf's narrative styles in *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* respectively, and his work is at home in the broader modernist canon. Pirandello's fiction deals intimately with problems of identity and historical and geographical contexts. *The Late Mattia Pascal*, one of Pirandello's other novels, also describes an individual's struggles with selfhood as they attempt to adopt a new identity. Some of Pirandello's writings, such as his short story "The Train Whistled," touch on an unstable protagonist, rebellion against convention, and the intersection of real and fantastic[12]. Though the struggles of Pirandello's protagonists certainly speak to the broad human experience, they are also tied to the challenges of the period acutely felt in Italy. The economic, cultural, and social disparity between Northern and Southern Italy has played a major role in the nation's history and remains a topic of contention[4]. Pirandello, hailing from Sicily, would have felt the impact of this divide, and the prolonged underdevelopment of the South was in many ways only accentuated by industrialization.

The method of narration is unusual in that the focus is on Moscarda's perspective itself, instead of giving a clear account of events. Moreover, rupture of the everyday is a theme of Pirandello's work, and a rupture of sanity is the central conflict of the novel. Pirandello writes of ego-as-fiction, always under threat of madness, of disorder as the undoing of coherence.[3] Moscarda's

[3]The method of analysis stems from Jacques Derrida's *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*[13]

selfhood is written as profoundly unstable, and with a tenuous connection to reality. In discussing the divide between the metaphysical and the psychoanalytic and Moscarda as concept and character, it is also necessary to frame these concepts around narrative and technique. Pirandello's literary style is key here.

Moscarda is an unreliable narrator in the conventional sense. Yet, if his view of the diegesis is the only one the reader receives, how can truth and untruth be separated on the novel's own terms? Is there a 'real' diegesis beyond his narration? Moscarda must be considered an unreliable narrator in the sense that his philosophy and recollection is incompatible with our expectations of coherence in narrative. If he does not remain with a degree of stability, or with a cohesive perspective, can he be considered a single narrator? Can a narrator be an individual, but in fact, be a multiplicity? What makes him an unreliable narrator is that he is not thought of as a single person, and therefore cannot give insight in relation to a single ego as reference to the reader. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in his reflections at the beginning of the work, where he consolidates his notions of self we have just discussed.

4.1 Reflections

> 1. That I was not to others what up to then I had believed that I was to myself;
>
> 2. That I could not see myself living;
>
> 3. That, not being able to see myself living, I remained a stranger to myself, that is, one whom others believed they saw and knew, each after his own fashion, but not I;
>
> 4. That it was impossible to stand this stranger up in front of me, in order to see and know him. I could see myself, but could no longer see him[6].

The points are useful in understanding the state of his identity at this point in the novel. These reflections are a far cry from the chaos that might be associated with the disintegration of ego. Rather, Moscarda's reflections are methodical, regimented. These reflections establish where Moscarda's project stands at this point in the novel. In contrast to the more chaotic second-half of *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*, these reflections are more ordered, and demonstrate the extent to which Moscarda's identity has remained intact at this point, and how much further it is to slip. They allude to a reflective, but profoundly cynical sense of self, and the idea that knowing or seeing oneself truly is impossible.

Moscarda doubts even his own beliefs and ego, which problematizes the world of the story relayed through his hesitant narration. He is forced to balance narration with his aim of self-effacement. The shifts and stumbles in Moscarda's narration are indicative of his own selfhood(s) and this retelling can be read as breaks in his own ego. The world of *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand* is his world. It is *only* a reflection of Moscarda's inner state. He goes so far as to mock the reader in his narration. The reader is addressed directly, inquired as to how they know themselves, or if the features of their identity are as certain as they seem. Moreover, Moscarda's narration distorts a clear chronology, at least in terms of how the reader should view casualty. He discusses past recollections, current plans, musings, and speculations within his narration, which is complicated by his own radical self-doubt. It is therefore difficult to ascertain how he views the bearing of the past on his present situation, and if he can guess at any kind of future for himself at all, given that Moscarda hopes to erase his own ego. Similarly, the reader is given no broad sketch of town at the novel's onset, but rather Moscarda discusses or visits locations as they gain some importance in his broader project. Each location he visits or describes is steeped in his own past and memories, and bears further significance to his own project. There is a profound dualism or multiplicity to Moscarda's narration, and studying it as conflict and confluence of different selfhoods is promising. The creation and disintegration of selfhood in relation to internal and external factors features throughout Pirandello's work[14].

The registers of philosophy and psychoanalysis are useful as a means of tackling the question of Moscarda's ego, and how Pirandello's presentation of the self speaks to real shifting social views of meaning and identity. The nihilistic and existentialist aspects of the period in which the novel was written are something that Mimmo Cangiano takes up. "Those aspects have begun to be exalted which, pertinent to the sphere of existentialism, nihilism and the philosophy of life, refer to the entry in crisis of metaphysics, of logos, of systematizing reason and of the very idea of objectivity"[1]. Cangiano notes the shifts in philosophy at the turn of the 20th century, and the open question of "being" at this time. Changes in philosophical notions of being around the turn of the 20th century are woven into the novel, with Moscarda's implicit interrogation of previous philosophical notions of being that offered a greater sense of stability, like those found in the German Idealist tradition, while Moscarda's project instead reflects a sense of "becoming" or a process ontology[4].

[4]German Idealism was a 17th-18th century movement in philosophy driven by figures like G.W.F. Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Friedrich W.J. Schelling. It worked extensively in aesthetics, epistemology, and metaphysics, while those that came after Kant attempted to derive a unified or absolute philosophical system (roughly) based on his work[15]. Process ontology is a view of "being" that focuses on becoming, emergence, and the idea that being is a process instead of a static state. It is associated with Phenomenology in the early 20th century, and figures like Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty

This offers insight into changing notions of being in the philosophical tradition, and the influence of modernity on understandings of the self. The later section, "Martin Heidegger," will explore this in greater depth.

The next section places the literary interpretation of the protagonist alongside prevailing psychoanalytic theories of the period, towards understanding the true nature of human personality.

5 ALFRED BINET

Alfred Binet is well-known for the intelligence test he developed alongside one of his colleagues, and he is considered a pioneering figure in education and psychology. Alfred Binet's work draws heavily on his prolonged case studies on patients with personality disorders. He accounted for their periods of expected behavior as well as any lapses into differing states. As a clinician, his aim was to help his patients achieve a greater sense of stability in their lives. His work *Alterations of Personality*[16] is notable in its exploration of studies involving shifts in identity and personality over the course of an individual's life. In the preface he aligned his own studies with those of others in the field, and alludes to broader shifts within physiology and philosophy. Binet spoke of different fragmented "consciousness" that can appear in the individual, each with distinct identities and interior systems[16]. He presented various studies, including a discourse on somnambulism, as he attempted to provide a survey of various personalities existing in one individual, alterations, and the emergence of these changes. Part II, Chapter IX, "Plurality of Consciousness in Healthy Subjects" is Binet's approach to what he views as actions of the unconscious, and understanding underlying mental factors. This section is notable in that Binet applies similar ideas to healthy individuals, and tries to understand the extent to which these alterations and fluctuations in personality can appear outside of a strictly clinical setting. However, it should be noted that Binet does maintain a division of "hysterical" and healthy individuals, though his analysis does explore how underlying psychic phenomena are present in both groups. One of Alfred Binet's greatest contributions is a new way of interpreting the self and mental disorders. Crucial here is that he did not view disruptions as coming from the outside, but rather as emergent from within the self. He believed that human subjectivity and psychology are vulnerable to changes in personality and disposition to varying degrees. Binet adopted a more analytical mode, instead of an outrightly discriminatory one.

Alfred Binet worked on a more specific level in determining how different personalities or aspects of the individual emerge, and the line between the ordinary and unusual manifestation of personality and the self. His work concerns what constitutes these abnormal personalities, and what causes their emergence implicit in the discussions of abnormal personalities and "normal" ones from the perspective of the observer and broader society. According to Binet, personality alterations can happen at any time in life, and do not appear to be something that marks an individual at birth. This focus on the range of known and unknown determinative factors of identity ties into the work of Sigmund Freud, often considered the father of psychoanalysis, and an early innovator in both psychoanalysis and psychology. Freud's case studies (The Rat Man, Little Hans, The Wolf Man, etc.[17]) address the systems and structures that influence identity, both based on childhood experiences and reinforcement/emergence in adulthood. This continues in his studies on the interpretation of dreams and emphasis on childhood development and identity formation[18]. Freud's work aligns well with Binet's and the broader movements in psychoanalysis at the turn of the 20th century, and these questions of identity are clearly present in Pirandello's work as well. It is a comment from his wife that triggers Moscarda's efforts. This could be considered an environmental stimulus, but it is unlikely in an external setting that this alone would cause such changes. This is a literary choice. However, it is possible that unacknowledged stressors had remained dormant in Moscarda's mind, and thus his wife's comment was the breaking point that brought all his conflicts of identity to the forefront. When discussing his relationships, his family, and his finances, it seems that these issues existed before, and he was not as acutely aware of them. These alterations can come and go in someone's life, problematizing a static sanity or insanity.

6 MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Moving from narratology and psychoanalysis to phenomenology, there is a transition from discussions of mind and ego to "being"[5]. Phenomenology is centered on tangible, lived experience, and the world as it is encountered through consciousness. It is more grounded in the individual's encounters with the world rather than abstracted analysis. This ties into Moscarda's process of exploring his identity in the novel. He posits claims or ideas about himself and the world around him before testing these ideas through deliberate actions or encounters with others. His narration is speculative, but thoroughly grounded in his experiences and interactions throughout *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*. Moscarda's approach to selfhood is not overtly phenomenological, but both Heidegger and Pirandello interrogated views of identity that centered on a constant or rigid structure, while exploring how individual identity is affected by relationships, environ-

[5]Metaphysics focuses on being, existence, reality, and the principles that underpin or precede these concepts

mental factors, and modern technology.

Martin Heidegger is one of the most famous phenomenological philosophers, and his attention to the search for meaning and identity, and what it means to live and dwell, situate him well for analysis of the novel. Heidegger's unique approach to "being" is most evident in the term he used to fundamentally describe the human condition, *Dasein*. *Dasein* is a complex, sometimes paradoxical casting of the human condition, that is meant to describe how human beings uniquely interact with the world and themselves through an emergence or process. Heidegger saw the process of revelation or "coming into presence," a key term in his later works, often in a paradoxical light. With the idea of a "rediscovery" of "being," there is a certain theological or primordial slant to his thought. This kind of engagement with the self and the world is uncertain, and Heidegger saw this journey to authenticity as a process of "becoming." Like his teacher Edmund Husserl, Heidegger placed great emphasis on how humans engage with others, act, and express themselves. Many previous views of "being" considered it as static or ontologically consistent. Heidegger's thought interrogates living and engaging in modernity. One of his foremost aims was learning how to *dwell*. As he explained, "the proper dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals search anew for the essence of dwelling, that *they must ever learn to dwell*" [19]. Heidegger felt that societies had, in the course of human events, lost a manner of dwelling or thinking that allowed us to meaningfully engage with ourselves and others. Individuals live, but they do not dwell, or inhabit spaces as consciously as they could. It is a rediscovery of this character of life that is the objective of Heidegger's phenomenology. But for Heidegger, "being" is a process without completion. There is no "being," rather *dasein* is constantly becoming. Individuals define and redefine themselves in their engagements with their surroundings and the other people, as well as with the knowledge of their own death. Put forward in *Being and Time* is being-towards-death, as one's death is wholly one's own and something that cannot be experienced in their stead. "Being" is being-towards-death, marked by the knowledge of *dasein*, and being defined by its conclusion. Death is constitutive of *dasein*, as one's own death cannot be taken away or known prior to its event. The death of others can be experienced, or one's own death can be contemplated, but each individual's own death cannot be taken away or experienced in place of the self, and is wholly unique. How this knowledge trickles into decisions influences the life one leads, and death is thus a defining characteristic of each individual's life. Heidegger's work is difficult because this rediscovery or return is almost more of a state than a clear objective. It is an awareness and appreciation of death as one's ownmost, and an understanding of the flux of selfhood. This self is paradoxically not necessarily within the self. Heidegger gave the example of a trucker who feels at home on the road, though he does not literally live there, or how in dedicated carpentry the hammer almost becomes one with the self in performance of an action [10].

Central to both Heidegger's and Pirandello's thought is a transgression of precedent. Pirandello's fiction critiques both the Italian literary tradition preceding it, and static ontologies and presentations of identity [20]. Heidegger felt that philosophy could not proceed without dealing with "being." He started with some studies of Aristotle and his conception of "being," but for the most part he felt "being" itself had been neglected. Heidegger's work transgresses several philosophical boundaries. The first is the weight of previous philosophical traditions. While it is legitimate to argue that his work draws from a tradition of late 19th century thinkers, his main conception of "being" has its main connection in classical thought. Thus, his work almost subverts predecessors in philosophical traditions, choosing instead to revise and rethink Aristotle. Then there is his most direct attack on Cartesian metaphysics. Descartes's work postulates a clear separation between the self-conscious observer and the external world, a mind-body dualism [21]. Descartes argued that the only thing he could be certain of was his own doubt—"I think therefore I am." But for Heidegger and subsequent metaphysical thinkers, any separation between self and the broader world is problematized. "Being" is inextricably linked to the presence of the world and people's relationships with entities and equipment that cannot be completely separated from the individual. Linked to this is the idea of "thrownness," which describes how humans engage with the world. Heidegger observed that individuals are 'thrown' into a pre-existing state of affairs, and must learn to live in and alongside it. These connections and entities do not begin with birth, but are precedent. People face a world and system that is not designed for one specifically, and does not always make it easy to acclimate. He later wrote more specifically on art and poetry, after what is called "the turn" in his thought. The "*Kehre*" or "turn" in Heidegger's thought represents a shift in the focus or subject of his work. His project in *Being and Time* deals more with his re-conception of "being" using an immanent phenomenology, and the role of time as the horizon of "being" and death as its defining quality.

Heidegger wrote of art that "the artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other" [19]. For him, these entities existed together in the construction and perception of an artistic work. This ties into Heidegger's broader view of "being" as well. Moscarda can be seen as a means of "revealing," but this ontological journey is too "certain," not "open" in the Heideggerian sense, and decidedly destructive and distancing in practice. Heidegger did not advocate

isolation. While it is true that he wrote much about *Being and Time* in isolation in the city of Todtnauberg, the philosophy he created and supported does not encourage this destruction of connection. Indeed, this is almost impossible in Heidegger's understanding of "being." This total isolation from the outside to find a sense of self is impossible in light of the German philosopher's transgression of object-subject. The protagonist and Heidegger share a desire for authenticity, but their starting points are different. The biggest problem that stands in the way of reading Moscarda's in-depth study through Heidegger is the protagonist's desired abstraction of himself. If Moscarda takes these other interpretations of himself to be false, implicit in this is that a self must be true, or that it is engagement with others that leads to falsehood. While Heidegger felt that *Dasein* finds its meaning in death, Moscarda's vision in the novel instead places the search for meaning against exteriority. This conception of "they" plays a role in Heidegger's philosophy, but it does not grant *Dasein* its meaning. The protagonist's project works better in a Cartesian framework, which is precisely what Heidegger argued against. Moscarda believes that the external representations of him are false, that there is a deception in our relations with others and how they influence us. Heidegger advocated for an awareness of these attachments. A complete separation is nearly impossible in his view, and detrimental to the self. A goal of Heidegger's philosophy is living and guarding a sense of wonder or appreciation, a way of interacting with the world, objects, and entities, in-of-themselves. Against this effort he placed *das mahn*, or a great social plurality. This pre-existing entity threatens the goal of true self-engagement and authenticity. "Fallenness" is the state of having forgone one's own relationships, to embrace a pre-set means of interaction instead of discovering these relationships for oneself.

To conclude, it is necessary to address Heidegger's antisemitism, and open support for the Nazi regime and values. He personally and professionally endorsed Nazi views, and enacted their decrees in his academic position. In terms of his philosophy, in the process of this "rediscovery" of "being," there can be read an implicit longing for a thing before that never existed, a discovery of the ideal or the "before." This has unpleasant connections to the Nazi mythos of rediscovery or return to a previous state of affairs. Still, his warnings against falling into social pluralities and losing the self run contrary to Fascist ideology. To a certain extent, Heidegger's philosophy can rebuke his personal views. Heidegger's thought has more nuance that requires discussion, but this abhorrent aspect of his thought must be noted.

7 CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand uses a unique narrative style interspersed with self-aware, poignant reflections on the nature of "being" to interrogate how individuals know themselves and how others perceive them. Pirandello does not offer a simple solution, but instead chronicles the draw of truly knowing oneself as well as the dangers that come with such an attempt. This intersects with the case studies of Freud and Binet into determinative factors of personality, how individuals can change and shift selfhood over their lives, and the extent to which aspects of identity remain unknown even to the individual. Heidegger takes a metaphysical approach, and amid what he views as the encroaching threat of modernity, prescribes an individual project of awareness. This is an awareness towards the social pluralities we engage with, social constructs, norms, and conventional ways of thinking and acting. He also advocates for an increased sense of 'intention' with how we live and work, appreciating actions and relationships in of themselves, as opposed to a means to an end.

Binet and Pirandello explore similar concepts through different means. Both thinkers discuss shifts in a sense of identity, though Binet's aims are more clinical whereas Pirandello's are literary. Still, this is emblematic of broader shifts in modern notions of identity towards an acceptance of the mutability of selfhood based on both interior and exterior factors, and the difficulties that can result. Both thinkers foreground the awareness of this change and flux as necessary in understanding subjectivity. Binet does not cast these alterations as are abnormalities, but present to varying degrees in the psyche.

Pirandello aptly diagnoses a kind of numb cynicism towards oneself and others which has only grown more pronounced. It is difficult to say if Pirandello had an answer to this question of meaning in the industrialized/modern world, as Moscarda scoffs at every institution the other villagers hold dear. Though Heidegger's work can be difficult, it acknowledges Moscarda's struggles in knowing himself, and to engage in such an effort is commendable. But, Heidegger offers awareness and appreciation where Moscarda searches for destruction. Phenomenology is a philosophy of immediacy, of that which appears to us, not of an abstract, ever-elusive selfhood. This is paradoxical, in that identity is not immediately apparent, but ever-present. It is a network of connections to work, relationships, and how people relate to the world they encounter everyday.

Binet's work is oriented towards the pathological, the clinical, and diagnosis and treatment. While there are implications for perceptions of the self from a social perspective in his work, he is not intended to diagnose an entire era. His concern was with the individual in a medical sense, whereas Heidegger saw people from a

phenomenological perspective, as an unfolding of "being." There is also the question of Moscarda. For Binet, the resolution is ambiguous. Moscarda resigns himself to an institution in the countryside, where he spends his days with superficial reflections on nature, himself, and what is far away from him now. There is a sense of peace and solitude here, but still no cohesion of self. At the end of *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*, Moscarda ceases his investigations. And for Binet this is not ideal, because he still does not have a stable sense of identity, or a means of interacting meaningfully with the world. There is a sense of passivity here, a calmer life, but without real commitment. And for Heidegger, the verdict is similar, but with a more metaphysical accusation. In Heidegger's phenomenology a true sense of authenticity is ideal, but to literally distance oneself is futile. With this renunciation of his relationships Moscarda becomes undefined in the ontological sense, without the determinations of others but also with the definitive decisions of the self.

This research is situated not as a final statement, but hopefully as a contribution to further study in Italian literature and the unique conversations around identity in the tradition. Modernist literature has a wealth of scholarship behind it, but there remains work to be done in the Italian tradition and its ties to other fields and movements of the period. It would be interesting to study the novel using later metaphysical conversations around language. An analysis of the novel, or Pirandello's broader work, using Derrida's metaphysics of text would be fascinating, and there are parallels between Derrida and Moscarda's projects. Derrida explores the dyadic (two-part) view of language as signifier/signified, questioning the connection between the two terms, and if either can ever fully be present or absent. Here, meaning can only be found in reference to other connotations, leading to an infinite chain of meanings. In Derrida's metaphysics, meaning is always deferred to the next term, and never static or fully at-presence. This has loose ties to the Pirandello's "l'umorismo" and the central conflict of *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*, and a study of the author's broader body of work in conversation with Jacques Derrida's thought would be fascinating. While Heidegger looks at phenomenology for "being," Derrida looks at language and texts. Pirandello interrogates selfhood from a more ontological or psychoanalytic perspective. But it would be worthwhile to undertake similar investigations of identity in modernist texts with a focus on gender roles or economic conditions. But there is room for scholarship on the representation of women or gender dynamics in Italian literature, and understanding how Italian modernism compares/contrasts with broader European modernism in this regard would be an interesting investigation.

Moscarda's crisis speaks to questions of selfhood in the modern era. For Moscarda, existence is an open question, one to which he finds no meaningful answers. The tragedy of his life is that he finds no answers, but perhaps encourages readers to question how they view their own sense of self. The modernist literary canon maintains a strong resonance with contemporary readership, and the struggle to find meaning remains a pertinent one. Binet and Heidegger are instrumental figures in their respective fields, and their insights contributed greatly to contemporary discussions of the self. These thinkers tackled issues of alienation, authenticity, and identity in literary modernism. It is an incomplete, ongoing process, but a valuable one nonetheless. Heidegger, Binet, and Pirandello opened new avenues of thought in their fields of study, and raised interdisciplinary questions that are still discussed today. It's important to remember that with these thinkers there is a shared sense of "discovering," of a process not towards defining authenticity, but of a continual search. These thinkers, and the period of literary modernism in general, leave a difficult legacy. To live and work in an effort towards an equitable and authentic selfhood is one of the toughest tasks one can face, but perhaps, it is also one of the most important.

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9 EDITOR'S NOTES

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