

Introduction: Masks and Identity

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In general, a mask does not change the personality of the human being who wears it, because the self is immutable and it is not affected by any of its contingent manifestations. The mask, however, implies a certain risk: trying to catch someone else's power and substance by means of its magic, the masked person may become, in turn, possessed by this symbolic image of the Other. Being the symbol of a temporary doubling process, the mask has occasioned, more than once, dramatic scenes in various artistic manifestations, especially when people identified themselves so much with the character, with the mask, that they couldn't get this object off their faces, thus turning into represented images and abandoning their individual characteristics. At least two famous literary motifs, the theater of the world and the parade of masks, were thus brought within the field of literature. After all, the world can be adequately expressed by the metaphor of "theatrum mundi", and the comparison of the world with the theater and of the theater with the world, as well as the association of these terms, has been known since Antiquity.

However, the tradition of using ritual masks is much older, attested since the Paleolithic Era. Thereafter, the symbolic or theatrical mask is present in the great works of the Greek classics. It was only during the dark times of the Middle Ages that the church intervened decisively, and sometimes outright violently, to prevent masks or to forsake them. Even

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