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## Identity and Artificial Intelligence in *The Adventures of Pinocchio*

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## **Identity and Artificial Intelligence in *The Adventures of Pinocchio***

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### **Abstract**

Pinocchio is, above all, what he is not. His identity is often played to the limit, imagined by himself and everyone he meets along the way. Pinocchio is the name of life that is simultaneously inorganic, human and animal. For this reason, it is the possible name of a radical desertion: to identify at the same time with oneself and with someone other than oneself. One question that can be deduced from *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is whether such an intelligent machine would like to become "human"? In fact, before Pinocchio becomes a real boy, he does everything that real boys do, including the disobedience to their parents.

**Keywords:** identity, artificial intelligence, Carlo Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Pinocchio

### **Identitatea și inteligența artificială în *Aventurile lui Pinocchio***

#### **Rezumat**

Pinocchio este, mai presus de toate, ceea ce nu este. Identitatea lui este adesea jucată la limită, imaginată de el însuși și de toți cei pe care îi întâlnește pe parcurs. Pinocchio este numele vieții care este simultan anorganică, umană și animală. Din acest motiv, este denumirea posibilă a unei dezertări radicale: a se identifica în același timp cu sine și cu altcineva decât cu tine însuși. O întrebare care poate fi dedusă din *Aventurile lui Pinocchio* este dacă o astfel de mașinărie inteligentă și-ar dori să devină „om”? De fapt, înainte ca Pinocchio să devină un băiat adevărat, el face tot ceea ce fac băieții adevărați, inclusiv neascultarea față de părinții lor.

**Cuvinte cheie:** identitate, inteligența artificială, Carlo Collodi, Aventurile lui Pinocchio,

Pinocchio

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## Identity

Pinocchio is, above all, what he is not. His identity is often played to the limit, imagined by himself and everyone he meets along the way. Pinocchio is the name of life that is simultaneously inorganic, human and animal. For this reason, it is the possible name of a radical desertion: to identify at the same time with oneself and with someone other than oneself. (Escola 2020) Pinocchio has a double soul, a puppet and a child, resulting in a mysterious, symbolic and cursed character, a source of inspiration, adaptations, and rewrites, in all forms of media.

In search of his identity, Pinocchio goes on an initiation journey. The problem of identity leads to the duality of mind / body, to what constitutes one's essence. To what extent do we stay the same when we change our appearance? Hence the story of an awareness of one's inner need.

John Locke imagined what would happen if a prince's mind were transported to a shoemaker's body to replace the shoemaker's mind. Although on the outside it would look like a shoemaker, the feeling on the "inside" would be princely, "For should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler, as soon

as deserted by his own soul, everyone sees he would be the same person with the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions." (Locke 1976) For Locke, the shoemaker would be the prince only on condition that all past experiences, that is, his autobiographical memory, be preserved during the transfer of the mind. Thus, Locke sees autobiographical memory as the most important aspect of personality, which is very relevant to the assessment of Pinocchio's status. Pinocchio doesn't seem to have an autobiographical memory, so he doesn't pass Locke's personality test.

Also, Nina Strohminger and Shaun Nichols came to the conclusion that changing a person's moral foundation - rather the loss of memory - is the most important feature of the loss of identity. (Strohminger and Nichols 2014) The authors call this the "self-moral hypothesis", and propose it as a model of how people perceive the core of autonomy in others. In the case of Pinocchio, we can argue that his "moral basis" changes over time.

Parfit, on the other hand, synthesizes personal identity as a complex phenomenon: "personal identity over time just consists [...] in various kinds of psychological continuity, of memory, character, intention, and the like." (Parfit 1984) Thus, although Pinocchio possesses a non-biological, non-human structure, which disqualifies him, in time he transforms himself from an empty reply into a person with moral and emotional qualities like any human being.

Pinocchio's identity can also be demonstrated by the famous test of inductive reasoning: "If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably *is* a duck." (The duck test involves the fact that a person can identify an unknown subject by observing the usual characteristics of the subject. It is sometimes used to counteract brutal or even valid arguments that something is not what it seems). Pinocchio finally passes the duck test, convincing readers.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

One question that can be deduced from *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is whether such an intelligent machine would like to become "human"? In fact, before Pinocchio becomes a real boy, he does everything that real boys do, including the disobedience to their parents. Searle states that an artificial intelligence that would act like Pinocchio would be a more conclusive indication that it has reached human intelligence, than a measure with constraining parameters such as the Turing test. (Searle 2014) Computer scientist Alex Wissner-Gross argues that intelligence can be understood as maximizing future freedom of action. The desire for freedom and control is the nature of intelligence itself. "Pinocchio threshold" could be defined as actions of machines in ways that were not intended by their programmers and in ways that are intentional, even if they are difficult to understand. This threshold would have passed when intelligent machines began to act like Pinocchio. In this sense, the Talking-cricket could be considered as programmed ethical constraints. But if an artificial intelligence that crosses the threshold of Pinocchio decides that the ethical rules imposed must not be respected, this could be very dangerous for people.

Is it possible that the machines we build are smart enough to know that there are other options available than listening to the commands of imperfect beings like humans?

In Collodi's Italy, many poets, writers, and intellectuals, including Carducci, D'Annunzio, Marinetti, and Collodi himself, join the cautious proponents of technological and mechanical progress, often viewed through rhetorical and neoclassical lenses. The Marxist reflection on the ways of working in the capitalist economy and the mechanization of the workers' body, between the enthusiasm for the symbiotic machine and the concern for the effects of automatic repetition on the human body, which will determine the relevant reflections of Antonio Gramsci a few decades later, remains today. In visual transpositions, the wooden and angular Collodian puppet is

placed in an extensive genealogy of automatons and robotic creatures that celebrate or demonize the dawn of the first industrial civilization. (Pizzi 2017)

The hybrid nature of Pinocchio's body, sensitive and inanimate, is transformed into a prototype of a new humanity of "symbionts", (Longo 2003) equipped with technological prostheses and hybridized with technology: a virtual humanity, on the border between natural and artificial, life and death. (Pizzi 2017) As Massimo Riva suggests, Pinocchio is an ambivalent puppet: an artifact of mechanical parts and a virtual, supernatural being, an artificial intelligence. (Riva 2011, 201–14) Foreshadowing contemporary techno-humanism, Pinocchio is a liminal figure in which the artistic and scientific ways of our thinking and our fantasies of transcendence, redemption and palingenesis meet and clash, a reproduction by technological means aimed at complete recoding of our cultural and biological baggage. (Pizzi 2017) As Riva explains, "Pinocchio is probably an apologist who senses and predicts our own predictable destiny." (Riva 2011, 212)

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