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Is Fake the new Original?*

In the 19th century a massive production of fake¹ works was recorded in the arts, as well as in literature and material objects in general. As a result of this, theories appeared in the same period, which began to treat fakes favorably and promote them as a new kind of historical document.

This atmosphere is depicted in an outstanding way in *The Real Thing*² (1892), one of Henry James' masterpieces (1843–1916): A painter in order to illustrate a social novel in which the main characters are aristocrats, hires a faded genteel couple, which he initially considers to be the best opportunity for high inspiration. But surprisingly, the result is disappointing. The wife, once known as the *Beautiful Statue*, "looked like a photograph or a copy of a photograph" and "had no sense of variety".³ She was authentic but always the same and unaltered. A pair of every-day people who are professional models prove to be able to portray better the heroes of the book. The woman "[...] being so little in herself, she should yet be so much in others".⁴ Here the author vividly presents how the "fictional" can take the position of the "original", which he describes in its absolute decline in a transitional period, where the dominance of "appearance" over the real thing is made clear. At a certain point in the story the painter says: "I liked things that appeared; then one was sure. Whether they were or not was a subordinate and almost always a profitless question".⁵ These words, although written about the artistic creation at the end of the 19th century,⁶ echoed a perception that would generally characterize the era of modernity in the coming decades.

In the 20th century, the Dada and Surrealist artistic movements, the "objets trouvés" of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) and the collages of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) were a powerful blow to the notion of originality. The copy, the artificial and ultimately the fake, expressed the artist's exaggerated pursuit to be absent from his work, as well as his attempt to disclaim his

authority and act as an intermediary for works created through impersonal methodology. After the 1950's postmodern condition, producing a knowledge that "refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable",⁷ was the historical and the theoretical framework: loans, recitations, quotes, imitations, repetitions, the standardization and counterfeiting of technics, media, material, way of thinking, of style and content, of internal and external elements and traits had no limit or end: Robert Rauschenberg's combines (1925–2008), the cut-ups in the writings of William S. Burroughs (1914–1997), the "specific objects" of minimalist Donald Judd, Andy Warhol's photochemical reproductions (1928–1987), the repetitive patterns and modules by Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), the "death of the author" of Roland Barthes (1915–1980), the "fake" creations of Appropriation and Fake Art, were gaining in popularity.

At the same time, the development of scientific knowledge around the notion of the fake adopted a similar attitude. The depreciation of the fake had come to an end. Although for years everything seemed to work in a stable and universally accepted form – authentic = value / forgery = demerit – now the situation was changing. Aesthetics, art history, culture sciences, sociology, economic and legal studies, interdisciplinary approaches and academic debates reintroduced the issue from a new perspective. Fakes came to the center of interest, in the same way other issues, which until the middle of the 20th century remained obscured and taboo, came to the spotlight. This does not mean that conventional views and ideas changed or were replaced. Fakes have been given prominence but have not displaced the genuine and original. What, however, undoubtedly happened is that a new area of knowledge has been created, where the boundaries of theory and practice are tested and controlled, sometimes with unexpected surprises.

The Words and their Meaning

Original, Copy, Imitation, Forgery, Counterfeit, Fake: These are the key concepts around which the subject under investigation revolves. The dividing line between these terms is thin since their sense of content is largely coincident and overlapping, something that creates confusion. In the dictionaries, one quickly realizes that these concepts are poorly defined and in particular none of the nuances are recorded in their use in the field of art. Often, these definitions instead of clarifying are confusing or even contradictory.

Original

The word “original” comes from the Latin word *origo* (beginning, source, origin) and according to the dictionary, it is an object or other creation (e.g. narrative work) from which all later copies and variations are derived.

In the Early Modern Times, both as a notion and as a word, originality was the desideratum.⁸ The Renaissance humanists aimed to learn from the ancient texts, and in order to restore them in their original form, they sought authentic manuscripts. Archeologists and antique dealers gradually developed mechanisms and methods for their identification and evaluation. The scholars and especially the etymologists performed the research of the original words from which others were derived, and in the area of critical publications and translation the original texts were the “foundation”. But also in the natural sciences, mathematics and anatomy, originality was of similar importance, mainly in the concept of the starting point of reasoning and research.

With the Industrial Revolution from the late 18th century and mainly in the 19th century, and the prevalence of the machine as a means of mass production of standardized products in unlimited numbers, the concept of prototype gained a new dimension. In one way it ceased to exist, while on the other hand it was strongly associated with a better quality creation and the establishment of copyrights to the artistic product. The creation of identical and cheap objects, of material, technical and aesthetic precision in large numbers, brought the democratization of the market and of-

fered free access to many. The unique, handmade and signed products were available only to an economically privileged minority and imposed an elitist conception of the original.

In the 20th century, a time of exhaustive mechanistic reproduction due to new technology and the presence of media, such as photography and moving images, originality ceased to concern even the artists (who traditionally search for it) and was extinguished from the vocabulary of criticism. After World War II, an interesting issue was raised: is a copy less valuable, less authentic than the original? How can we distinguish and define the difference? Do these differences exist objectively or do we see them because we search for them? To such a question Jean Baudrillard gave the most convincing and successful answer, arguing that a simulacrum is not a copy of inferior quality but an actual truth per se.⁹ In the 21st century, the reflection on whether or not originality, as a notion, exists has led to its complete denial. Modern literary, visual and scientific thinking is characterized by the presence of lengthy references, citations, quotations and copies, stated in an unambiguous, and sometimes obviously provocative way. In the most characteristic version of this, the original is deemed to be determined by the duplicate, without which there is no original.¹⁰

Copy

The word “copy”, as John Ayto puts it, “has a very devious semantic history”.¹¹ It comes from Latin word *copia* (abundance) that came into English via the old French word *copie*. In addition to its central meaning ‘abundance’, Latin *copia* could also mean ‘power, right’, and it appears that its use in such phrases as ‘give someone the right to transcribe’ led to its application to ‘right of reproduction’ and ultimately to simply ‘reproduction’.¹²

A copy was considered for centuries a second-class work with regard to what it duplicated. The copier and its activity were placed at a lower level and sometimes forced to become apologetic. This perception, however, was discussed and challenged by many and different points of view. Walter Benjamin was the first to basically address the subject in 1935

in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*,¹³ without however having a clear position on the original-copy hierarchy.¹⁴

In 1996, Hillel Schwartz in his book *The Culture of the Copy*¹⁵ through the interdisciplinary approach of the subject reached the point of reversing the superiority of the original over the copy. Stating that culture was creating the natural order, he observed that the cultural course of man showed that the original did not make sense without the copy. We live through a continuous and endless copying process, and without distinct signs of originality, from where one can safely assert that copies derive: "Anything unique is at risk of vanishing. [...] An object uncopied is under perpetual siege, valued less for itself than for the struggle to prevent its being copied. The more adept the West has become at making copies, the more we have exalted uniqueness. It is within an exuberant world of copies that we arrive at our experience of originality".¹⁶

In addition, in order to support such subversive and, to some extent, "strange" as he characterized it, opinion he added "Copying is pedestrian. Copying is peculiar. On the one hand, copying makes us what we are. Our bodies take shape from the transcription of protein templates. Our languages from the mimicry of privileged sounds, our crafts from the repetition of prototypes. Cultures cohere in the faithful transmission of rituals and rules of contact. To copy cell for cell, word for word, image for image is to make the known world our own".¹⁷

However, even more strange is the question of whether it is possible to have an absolutely perfect copy. A copy can never be identical to what it duplicates. There are still – even if they are not obvious through simple observation – external differences, smaller or greater, mainly due to materials and techniques, but also internal ones that concern the creators, simply because people of different physical and mental state create them. Even if the original and the copy are made by the same person, again the absolute identification is excluded, since they are made under different objective and subjective conditions. But even if we suppose that there can be an absolute identification, then it is clear that we cannot talk about a distinction between the original and the copy and there cannot be any sort of hierarchy.

The dispute about the value of the original and the value of the copy may seem odd. This, however, does not diminish its importance, but instead it emphasizes it as it is supported by the fact that there were cultures where copying was a permanent and legitimate activity. In such cases, the phenomenon was either driven by practical reasons, such as the preservation and transmission of acquired know-how and the desire to maintain traditional forms, since in this way cultural and historical continuity was preserved, or even by simple nostalgia or admiration for the "glorious" past. On the other hand, copying was proof that collectivity was a living factor of social life. Through it, each individual was coherent to the whole and through the conventions followed in copying, general principles and order were created upon which this collectivity depended.

All the above have to do with hand-made copies. However, in modern times, the copies produced by various photomechanical methods dominate. These are the so-called "reproductions". These reproductions circulated in large numbers and in materials other than that of the original. Although Walter Benjamin in his essay on the evolution of art under the influence of technological progress¹⁸ seems to have reservations with regard to the handmade copy, saying that there is no "aura" of the original, he is positively inclined about the technical reproduction, on two main grounds: The first is the fact that reproductions make the work of art accessible to the public. A famous painting, which in the past, one in order to see it had to visit the collection/museum where it was exhibited, becomes accessible to everyone through its reproduction. The second is that with the mediation of the machine one can see the artwork from different angles. Close-ups, for example, are very satisfying and instructive and reveal details of the image that are impossible to spot and observe with the naked eye. In short, with reproductions the interventions are essential as the dimensions of space and time of the artwork change, and from specific, they become varied and volatile.

Mimesis-Imitation

The word “mimesis” derives from the etymologically devious Greek word *mimos* (*mimē*), the content of which is related to the Dionysian rituals and the beginnings of the theatrical act. Imitation, initially, involved the concept of action and energy. For the ancient Greeks from Pindar to the Pythagoreans it seems to mean that someone is doing something the same way someone else does it or something is done like something else. Through Plato and especially Aristotle, and then in all the periods of Western civilization it passed as a basic concept of art theory and was used by aesthetics and literature criticism but also the critique of visual arts with two different meanings: 1. to define the nature of literature and other arts, and 2. to denote the relationship of an artwork to something else, which worked as its model/prototype. In order to understand in which of the two meanings we refer to each time, in English we use the Greek word “mimesis” for the first case, and the word “imitation” coming directly from the Latin *imitare* (to copy) for the second.

Plato,¹⁹ without trying systematically to define the word mimesis, uses it with both meanings, often confusing the reader about what he means each time. Particularly interesting is that the significance of mimesis is broadened when the philosopher evolves his thoughts for mimesis as a characteristic of arts, poetry and painting. Plato’s position to art is not consistent. Its strange devaluation in the *Republic*, when he tries to determine the role of art in the ideal state, is based on the view that art is simply imitating the objects of the visible world that in turn are also the mimesis of ideas. That is, art gives copies that are copies of the copies. Although he considers mimesis as a withdrawal from truth and art a great lie, and for that reason detrimental, at the same time he recognizes the conventions art uses, exploiting the physical imperfections of man and especially of his eyes, to “correct” and render the things of the world. This is how he, perhaps unwittingly, expands the concept of mimesis. For Plato mimesis is not simple copying but as it involves mental effort and thought, it approaches the notion of creation and what Aristotle in his *Poetics* names as *eikos*, that is to say, verisimilitude or perhaps more correctly, a plausible represen-

tation. Furthermore, the meaning of mimesis is at the beginning of his famous definition of tragedy,²⁰ and is the property of art in which he often refers to in the *Poetics*. The way that both its “technical” characteristics as well as its deeper “cathartic” function are defined, outline mimesis’ true essence: its achievement is not the result of mere copying nor even a random transformation. It is a representation in the sense of transformation, of overcoming reality. As a product of imitation, the work of art is a creation of thought, not of knowledge, of a moral, redeeming and pedagogical character. It is therefore useful and necessary for man. In other words, Aristotle rebuts the platonic elimination of art from the human community.

Among those who adopted Aristotle’s perception of mimesis was Cicero (106–43 BC) in *De Oratore* and Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (ca. 35–96 AD), who believed that the artist can imitate but at the same time overcome the simple imitation of things.²¹ Through the Latin scholars, the concept of mimesis continued to exist in the Middle Ages, as we can see in the texts of Bonaventure²² (1217/21–1274), although symbolic values dominated in the fields of life and of pictorial representation during this period.

In the 15th century, during the early period of the Italian Renaissance, the concept of mimesis was established in the area of artistic practice and this lasted for centuries. Leon Battista Alberti²³ (1404–1472) in his work *De Pictura* addressed the issues of Beauty and Nature. Following the Aristotelian view, he argued that art was not a shameful copying of nature but an imitation of what regulates the laws of nature and leads to the selective rendering of things that are not only the most exquisite but also the most beautiful in the world. Mimesis was not an exercise of observation and copying but a personal interpretation of the artist. With a keen interest in the linguistic rules and narrative patterns that his contemporaries once again discovered in texts of classical antiquity, Alberti attempted to define the rules of grammar and syntax of the mimetic visual language. The focus was on the scientific perspective, a discovery of his days. The painting as a window to the visible/sensible world, became for the artists a field of gestural development guided by logic and experience, while for the common viewers it

functioned as aesthetic pleasure and as a realization of a new dimension of time and history.

On the other hand, the concept of imitation has nothing to do with the influences and effects that, allegedly, an artist or the art of a certain era or place have and which has been a convenient interpretive tool in the hands of criticism. It has primarily to do with the concept of repetition. The ancient orators and philosophers recommended to their students to adopt models established for every occasion or for every type of poetry. The literary and visual work in antiquity is very different from a modern one because it obeys steady regulatory principles in terms of form and style, which have been shaped over the years and sometimes by great craftsmen. Faith in tradition was obligatory and innovation was a problem. Originality was in the field of the combined effort and, above all, of the systematization of the different models, as well as their explanation.

Moreover, imitation of classical statues has been for decades the only practice of a number of sculptors around the world who had remained faithful to Neoclassicism. Furthermore, academic painters worked by imitating the technique and the themes of the great painters of the past, especially of the Renaissance.²⁴

From antiquity to the 18th century works were produced that were not innovative but served continuity. They were bound by the classical norms which they did not simply follow but were in dialogue with. Here lies the basic difference between copy and imitation. A copy is a repetition based on the greatest possible resemblance to the original, a similarity however, that ultimately ends up highlighting and pointing to the differences between them. On the other hand, imitation is a repetition that does not have to look exactly as the object it imitates, but above all needs to be credible and convincing.

Forgery-Counterfeit

A very common mistake in the terminology of fakes is the use of the words *forgery* and *counterfeit* as identical, while they are not.

For example, the same fake coin is labelled sometimes as forgery and sometimes as counterfeit. However, a coin can be either forged or counterfeited,

never both at the same time. A counterfeit is an exact copy. When an ancient coin is copied, at least externally, regardless of whether the weight or quality of the metal has been altered, it is a counterfeit. But if the counterfeiter is proven to be “creative” and makes a fake ancient coin copying for example the obverse and the reverse representations of two different ancient coins, then that coin, that does not have a genuine counterpart, is a forgery.

The same can happen with a painting. A forged El Greco – this painter was chosen because his work has been forged extensively – is an “original” work, which is in the style of El Greco but has not been done by him. Its creator is someone else copying or imitating the style, themes and pictorial habits of the Greek painter who lived in Toledo, Spain.²⁵ A counterfeit El Greco is a painting that copies an existing original painting of the artist, that is to say, has a directly identifiable point of reference. Such an artwork may pass as genuine in a number of ways, because of well-known practices of the artistic creative process or by the exploitation of particular conditions that appear over time. It can therefore be presented as a variation or repetition by Greco himself, which was a common practice even among the greatest artists for purely economic reasons.²⁶ The organization of their workshops and the presence of a large number of assistants, associates and pupils was extremely helpful to this direction. On the other hand, it is not unusual for “lost” works to reappear, when in fact they are copies based solely on reproductions, such as engravings or photographs and are not the genuine ones, which were obviously destroyed or lost. The looting and destruction of works of art during the Second World War brought such subversive paintings to the forefront. In conclusion, we can say that a counterfeit repeats something that exists, while a forgery is a work where all its individual elements pre-exist but it has never existed as a whole.

The counterfeit works of art are often confused with copies and imitations. There is really a common ground between them, since a counterfeit, a copy and an imitation are products of the effort to look exactly like their model. To be identical to another artwork is a basic feature of all three. However, in the case of the copy and the imitation we have the production of an

object that its aim is to make its model more widely known, or through it to offer the pleasure and aesthetic experience, at least to a degree, that results from it to a wider audience. Of course, a copy and an imitation are not the same thing. They are two different aspects of the reproductive process of an object or of the style of an era or of an artist. They both differ from the counterfeit, which is the result of the intention to cheat from the very beginning, at the stage of its production and when it later comes into circulation. Copy and imitation are never presented as genuine in the place of what is copied or imitated, as is the case with counterfeits. Of course, a copy and an imitation may be classified as counterfeits when at some point someone by intent or ignorance tries to present them as authentic. It is obvious, therefore, that along with the counterfeits, copies as well as imitations have a place in a debate about forgery, for another reason as well: This is the fact that it is often extremely difficult to prove fraud or even the existence of deception in the case of a fake work of art. This becomes even more complicated if one takes into account that such works were produced and traded in all periods in the history of culture. From another point of view, the counterfeit juxtaposes the forgery. The distinction and the main difference between them is that the forgery raises important claims of authenticity, which is due to the peculiar construction practices followed in his case. Their basic similarity is the intention of both of them to deceive and create a false impression of originality.

The forger and the counterfeiter are meant to deceive in order to reap a benefit, usually financial. However, deception may be committed also by a third person, who tries to promote as genuine, an artwork that was originally manufactured as a legal copy. This can happen as soon as the copy is taken out of the manufacturer's hands since it is more difficult to reveal fraud at a later time and under different circumstances. In both cases deception is intentional. But there is also the case of deception from ignorance. Not only ordinary individuals, but also experts and scientists may assume a forgery or a counterfeit as genuine, and even treat it and promote it as such.

If we attempt from another perspective to link copy, imitation, counterfeit and forgery, we could ar-

gue that they all work within the cultural environment to which they belong and are therefore dictated by and at the same time dictate the predominant taste and fashion. However, as they are closely involved with the aesthetic preferences of the period they belong to, it is considerably difficult for their contemporaries to characterize or reveal them as fakes. It is common that the same fake works that today can be identified as such at first glance, in the past could deceive and pass for authentic, especially the forgeries.

The notion of forgery can only be defined with respect to another opposite phenomenon which must in some way involve the perception of authenticity. In this relationship the fake artwork is considered to be negatively charged and of inferior value. But this issue from the point of view of the philosophy of art appears open to many explanations and is therefore problematic in many ways. The answer to the question of why a fake artwork is of less value than an authentic one, in terms of aesthetics seems to be impossible in actuality.²⁷ We cannot, for example, claim without concluding to an absurdum, that any genuine work is necessarily and aesthetically important whereas every forged has no aesthetic value and is thus insignificant. How is it possible to consider some works remarkable for years, publicly exhibit them and have the crowds fluttering to admire them, but when their falsity is proved, the public rejects them and the museums hide them in storages? But it also works the other way around with artworks, when the original doubts about their paternity are overcome; they are restored and are highly appreciated. This is a common phenomenon in the art market and in the world of auctions, i.e. when a truly indifferent print suddenly acquires the name of Henri Matisse (1869–1954),²⁸ its price rises, as is the public's admiration for it. It is logical to ask where the previous estimations were based.

In the forgery-original relationship apart from aesthetics, other factors come into play. Historical, sociological, economic, psychological, anthropological estimations are expressed, to the point where the internal value of excellence is not always distinct, making it difficult to separate fake from genuine based only on artistic quality. The aesthetic experience is itself a complex and complicated phenomenon and compli-

cates even more by references to issues of space and time, biographies and psychosocial factors of both creators and audience. The factor that plays a decisive role in the valuation of the forgery as of inferior value, is the offense of fraud, which of course shifts the problem from the field of aesthetics to that of ethics. A fake is not accepted, it is reproachable and reprehensible, even if it is an excellent work from an aesthetic point of view, because it offends the moral order since it is extremely close to deception. However reasonable this argument sounds, it does not stand to a more cautious review. Few forged artworks can be classified as criminal offenses. Most of them owe their existence to the absence of sufficient factual data and relevant information, misconceptions of experts, misunderstandings, misinterpretations and lack of knowledge or scientific insufficiency. Also other categories of works such as copies, imitations, replicas, reproductions may – as we mentioned earlier – fall into the category of fakes when someone tries to present them as genuine and original. We should also note that even a copy without the intention of fraud is also less appreciated than its prototype. In conclusion, the control of deliberate fraud (mainly for economic reasons) proves to be a difficult job. But in the fake-original dipole the concept of fake is not the only one that is vague and ambiguous. Equally fleeting and fluid is the concept of originality.

Originality is the demand in every era, and this is true also today. Its search gives work to historians, philosophers, architects, conservators, artists, and intellectuals. How far, however, the knowledge of the past is based on authentic, real facts is a serious question. The “renovation” of buildings, the restoration of monuments, the conservation and cleaning of paintings and sculptures and generally of cultural material documents, are interventions for which no one is confident as up to which point they can restore their original, authentic form. The more likely result is the creation of a partial, fragmentary or even misleading picture. Actually, instead of the original in all cases we end up with something that looks or seems original. The representation of events and material objects that the past bequeathed us with cannot be authentic as we do not have the ability to directly observe the past. We study it through information and things that come

to us altered, since neither the materials and the environment in which they were created, nor the intentions that created them, remain unchanged. The criteria of originality remain problematic and debatable, since for only a few things of the past we are absolutely confident that they are authentic. Non-originality becomes even more noticeable when modern interpretations, influenced by current knowledge, ideas, experience, technology, taste, fashion, are added. The look of a scholar or a simple viewer changes, he sees things differently each time, as he is affected by the standards of his time.

Conclusion

As we have already discussed, there is a tendency to disconnect forgery from a comparison to authenticity or originality. It is a historical reality that has mainly to do with technical skill and technology. The fake artwork is a product of manual labor and is undoubtedly part of the production process.

The skepticism that accompanies fakes is beyond any legal, moral, economic or cultural consideration. It reflects above all the predominant Western perception that everything original is admirable and anything fake is stigmatized as something of low quality and value. It is the same perception that elevated intellectual work over manual and considered the blue-collar worker inferior to the white-collar worker. Fakes, however (often due to their high quality), tend to resist to this separation and are promoted as a historical and cultural indicator.

But an art forger is a dangerous villain and should be treated as such.²⁹ He abuses history, either the artist’s personal history or the collective one, concerning the culture of a place or a period of time. The material evidences prove the existence of prior civilizations. We use them and try to decode them in order to interpret the life of a human being or a society – to approach their ideas, their beliefs and their worldview, but also practically to understand their lives. The forger comes, with the fake objects he manufactures, to blur the image. The fraudulent elements he is spreading lead to erroneous assessments and the creation of a deceptive picture of an artist’s oeuvre or of the past in general.

Although to the common mind there is no denying that forgery is a criminal act, the issue becomes complicated when society has to deal with a real case of forgery. A fake ancient Greek statue (i.e. the Getty Kouros³⁰) does not cause the same emotion to the Greeks, who feel that their cultural heritage is being distorted and to the Americans who bought it as an original, for whom it is nothing more than an unlucky purchase and loss of a few million dollars. Similarly, a fake Vermeer affects differently a Dutch and a Japanese.

Each case is different, depending on where, when, by whom and in what size the forgery has taken place, so there is no consistent handling at all times. But this situation is unreasonable because basically the distinction between authenticity and falsity is another form of the dipole truth-lie. All these four words/concepts bring together the visible world with the world of values and the way of their handling should be non-negotiable, beyond and over nations, cultures, time and space.

Although from the 1950's onwards a certain tolerance, and even acceptance of forgery as one aspect of human creativity³¹ can be seen, in terms of real life and history forgery is a nihilistic phenomenon that disorientates, confuses and weakens man and the continuance of life, even if one considers it as an unbearable nonsense that comes as a reaction to an equally unbearable society.³²

Endnotes

* This paper is based on the author's PhD thesis titled *Fake Antiquities. Another Aspect of the Reception of Cultural Heritage in the New Greek State*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki 2012. Available online (in Greek only) at https://issuu.com/annamykoniati/docs/mikoniati_book_for_issuu.

- The word "fake" is adopted throughout the text as a general term covering all relevant concepts that will be discussed (i.e. copies, forgeries, counterfeits et al.).
- Henry James, *The Real Thing*, <http://www.feedbooks.com/book/469/the-real-thing.pdf>, accessed 11.01.2018.
- Ibid., p. 16.
- Ibid., p. 12.
- Ibid., p. 10.
- Leon Tolstoy's *The False Coupon*, 1910 (also translated with the title *The Counterfeit Note* and *The Forged Banknote*) is another novella which introduces us to a darker area of forgery, the conflict between good and evil. Robert Bresson used the novella as the basis for his last film, *L'Argent* (1983), transposing the action from early nineteenth century tsarist Russia to capitalistic, present-day France.
- Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester 1984, p. 25.
- For originality and the value that has been accredited to it see Roland Mortier, *L'Originalité. Une nouvelle catégorie esthétique au siècle des lumières*, Geneva 1982.
- Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor 1994 and *Gesture and Signature. Semiurgy in Contemporary Art*, in: Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, New York 1981, p. 102-11.
- On the other hand, it is interesting that the concept of originality still exists and is actually highly appreciated even in the field of mass production. The concept of "limited edition" in all kinds of everyday objects of industrial design is in fact a post-modern version of originality. In this case of course there is no uniqueness, a vital feature of an original object. The unique object is replaced by the multiple, in limited number of copies. Otherwise the "limited edition" products are marketed in terms of the originals: they are signed, might differ slightly one from the other and their prices are similar to the ones of the originals. For this issue see *Modern Painters*, Dec. 2008–Jan. 2009, p. 89.
- John Ayto, *Word Origins*, London 2005, 2nd edition, p. 132.
- Ibid.
- Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, in: *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1, 1936, pp. 40-68 and Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Scottsdale 2010.
- Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, London 1981.
- Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy. Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*, New York 1996.
- Schwartz 1996, *The Culture of the Copy*, p. 212.
- Ibid., p. 211.
- Benjamin 2010, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.
- For the concept of Mimesis-Imitation in Plato see Manolis Andronikos, *Plato and Art*, Thessaloniki 1952 (only in Greek, original title: Μανώλης Ανδρόνικος, *Ο Πλάτων και η Τέχνη*).
- "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action of high importance, complete and of some amplitude; in language enhanced by distinct and varying beauties; acted not narrated; by means of pity and fear effectuating its purgation of these emotions." L. J. Potts, *Aristotle on the Art of Fiction. An English Translation of The Poetics with an Introductory Essay and Explanatory Notes*, Cambridge 1953, p. 24.
- Patrizia Castelli, *L'estetica del Rinascimento*, Bologna 2005.
- An Italian medieval Franciscan, scholastic theologian and philosopher. Regarding Mimesis see his work *Collectiones in Hexaemeron* in *Opera Omnia* that were printed in 10 volumes (1882–1902) and have been translated in many languages ever since.
- An Italian humanist author, artist, architect, poet, priest, linguist, philosopher and cryptographer; he epitomised the Renaissance Man. His works *De pictura*, *De re aedificatoria* and *De statua* have shaped to a large extent the perception and the course of the three arts in the modern era.
- For a case on the boundary among imitation, copy and forgery that upset the art scene of London in the 18th century and in which Benjamin West, the first American painter to excel in England, was involved, see Claire Barliand, *He Who Laughs Last*, in: *Modern Painters*, Dec. 2008–Jan. 2009, p. 74-77. An article written on the occasion of the exhibition "Benjamin West and the Venetian Secret" in Yale Center of British Art, U.S.A., January 2009.
- It is easier for forgers to forge works of painters whose work is characterized by great changes in style and has chronological and styling gaps. Forgers then create works that supposedly fill these gaps. This happened in the case of Jan Vermeer (1632–1675), the famous Dutch painter who has been a victim of the most famous forgery of the 20th century (for this case see Hope B. Werness, *Han Van Meegeren fecit*, in: *The Forger's Art. Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. by Denis Dutton), Berkeley 1983, p. 1-59.
- A very well-known case is that of Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), who made paintings that imitated the earlier period of his work,

because these had greater demand in the art market. Of course he did not hesitate to date them accordingly, and as a result we have up to 22 repetitions of the same artwork. See Carlo L. Ragghianti, *Il caso de Chirico*, in: *Critica d'Arte*, issue 44, 1979, p. 3-54.

27. As Rudolf Arnheim points out in his article *On Duplication*, in: *The Forger's Art*, 1983, p. 232, the same arguments are recycled and the same examples appear again and again. For the supporters of the theory that aesthetics has to do with the gaze and the senses, or in another way, with the appearance of things (appearance theory as a successor of formalism) that is the design, color, texture, structural elements, etc., both the original and the forged works of art could have aesthetic value or not. The philosophers of art, however, who place particular emphasis on extrinsic factors that affect the creation of an artwork (social and economic conditions, biographical details, etc.), conclude that a fake work is inferior to the original. For them originality and authenticity are aesthetic values and for their control, the main role is played by knowledge and not by the senses. There are also those who try to combine the two above theories. The arguments, however, and the conclusions are easily mutually exclusive because of the large and varied range of forgery cases and the different angles from which someone can interpret the same case. For the subject see Jack W. Meiland, *Originals, Copies and Aesthetic Value*, in: *The Forger's Art*, 1983, p. 115-130. Monroe C. Beardsley, *Notes on Forgery*, in: *The Forger's Art*, 1983, p. 225-230. Richard Wollheim, *Art, Interpretation and Perception*, in: Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and its Depths*, Cambridge (Mass), 1993, p. 132-143. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge (Mass), 1981. Mark Sagoff, *The Aesthetic Status of Forgery*, in: *The Forger's Art*, 1983, p. 131-152.
28. Andrew Harrison, *Works of Art and other Cultural Objects*, in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 68, p. 105-128.
29. For the consequences of forgery and the case of Konstantinos Simonides, one of the most versatile nineteenth century forgers of ancient manuscripts, see Anna Mykoniati, *Biographische Bemerkungen zu Konstantinos Simonides*, in: *Die getäuschte Wissenschaft. Ein Genie betrügt Europa – Konstantinos Simonides*, hg. von Andreas Müller, Lilia Diamantopoulou, Christian Gastgeber und Athanasia Katsiakiori-Rakl, Göttingen 2017, p. 87-106.
30. For the case of the Getty Kouros see Michael Kimmelman, *Absolutely Real? Absolutely Fake?*, in: *The New York Times*, August 4th, 1991 and *The Getty Kouros Colloquium. Conference Proceedings*, Athens 1993.
31. This attitude led to extreme declarations like the one of Eco, who commenting on the American reality wrote: "[...] the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake", Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes. Travels in Hyperreality*, London 1998, p. 8.
32. Paraphrase of Kathy Acker's famous quote: "The only reaction against an unbearable society is equally unbearable nonsense", in: Kathy Acker, *Art after Modernism*, New York 1984, in the essay about Goya.

Summary

In the beginning of the 20th century new theories on the importance of fakes in art have appeared. Aesthetics, art history, culture sciences, sociology, economic and legal studies, interdisciplinary approaches and academic debates reintroduced the issue from a new perspective that treated fakes favorably and promoted them as a new kind of historical document. This paper, through a linguistic, historical and philo-

sophical analysis of the terminology, attempts to test these theories and explain why, although forgery is an aspect of human creativity, in terms of real life and history, it is a nihilistic and disorientating phenomenon and should be treated as such.

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Title

Anna Mykoniati, *Is Fake the new Original?*, in: *Original – Kopie – Fälschung / Original – Copy – Forgery*, ed. by Angela Dressen, Susanne Gramatzki and Berenike Knoblich, in: *kunsttexte.de*, no. 1, 2018 (9 pages), www.kunsttexte.de.