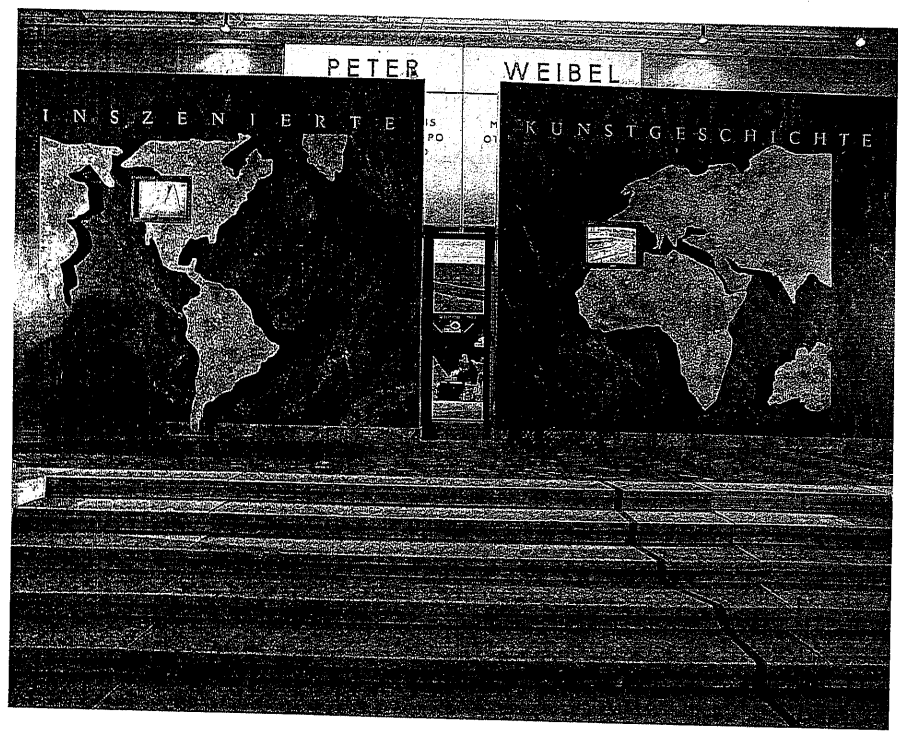


Maler W.
 Bild *Tableau, Picture Tableau*, 1988
 MAK, Wien, Vienna

Peter Weibel, *Kyklade* (Detail), 1988
 2 Monitore, Holzwände, 3 Phytionschlangen,
 1 Außenkamera (Liveübertragung),
 1 Innenkamera (Liveübertragung),
 Preßspanplatten, Acrylfarbe, Plexiglas, Leinwand
 2 monitores, wooden walls, 3 pythons,
 1 live camera (out-door), 1 live camera (in-door),
 plywood, acrylic color, plexi-glass, canvas
 Courtesy: Galerie Tanja Grunert, Köln, Cologne



Original (= S. Eiblmayer, R. Fleck (Hrsg.), Salzburg Konkrete, Ostfildern 1995)

DIGITAL DOUBLES: FROM THE COPY TO THE CLONE
SECOND DRAFT (1995)

Peter Weibel

7.187-271

I OBJECT AND ORIGINAL

Up to now the problem of the original has been addressed within the realm of the object. There is, for instance, the question whether an artwork is an original. This amounts to asking whether an individual artwork is made by an individual? Is it a fake, i.e., is the artist's name, the signature real, has the work really been made by that person and is the work not a copy but an original. It is often the case that an artist puts the wrong date on his or her work and thus creates a fake, even if it is relatively innocuous. The original is a work that only exists once, a unique work, a work unique in its own way, made by an individual.

An original is constituted of numerous elements, of which two are essential: 1) the authenticity of the signature and 2) the uniqueness of the work. The signature can be faked and the uniqueness of the work threatened by a number of stylistic, technical and auctorial reproductions. Original thus is a workmanlike (mechanical) definition, based on handcraft and preindustrial production methods. Indeed today's post-industrial, information-oriented society offers a plethora of techniques for reproducing every "work". A "work" not by an individual, but by many, can be made, as, for instance, in film. In the age of the technical producibility of artworks the question as to the original and the author is no longer so easy to answer as before.

Within the realm of the object it was possible, in the preindustrial age, to define the notion of the original as a technical notion related to handcraft. Its ontological status was secure: it exists only once, is produced only once by one single creator working with his or her hands. As long as the issue of the author was excluded or only very minimally appreciated as already in the preindustrial age, as for instance, the problem of collective production in painting workshops, a number of other concepts were deployed around the object notion of the original up to the 19th century: the basic notions of an aesthetic and at least the basic definitions of such, e.g., original, uniqueness, ingenuity, particularity, authenticity, original genius. This aesthetic ideology, which centered on a notion of the art based on handcraft and the object, was dominant until the 19th century when it became subverted by the advent of machinery. One machine was the camera

which was able to create images in a relatively independent way, without the hand of the artist intervening. All it took needed was an intellectual originator, and it was possible to have an endless number of copies of one image. The crisis of the original was thus first and foremost a crisis of the original as understood on the basis of the object as handicraft. It was related to the transformation of the idea of the creator from a craftsman to an intellectual originator. A photograph can be aesthetically unique given the angle or the methods used by the author. However, it cannot be such in a technical sense, no longer on the level of hardware, only on the level of software. Thus, the original no longer was hardware, the photograph, the image. Rather, it was only the software, the program. On the hardware level, there was a multiplication of authors in the 20th century. Many craftsmen and technical co-authors, but also many machines are needed to produce a film. This film exists in a thousand copies which can be shown around the globe at the same time. So, it is in a technical sense no original, too. It is the collective product of an enormous team. It is a collective industrial production like the manufacturing of automobiles on a conveyor belt. If there are authors, from the script to the mise en scène, then the origin is no longer located within the realm of the object, but within that of the program. The uniqueness of the work and the authenticity of the signature, two axioms of pre-industrial production can no longer be asserted on a handicraft, technical, ontological level, but only on the level of the sign. The creator of the original has become a semiotic constructor, the initiator and the director of a specific semiotic process the realization of which is left to a team of different authors. The relation between creator and original which was so clear in the age of craftsmanship has become increasingly intricate in the industrial and post-industrial age with the potential of machines to produce and multiply works. A technically differentiated mode of production, as, for instance, in film, has made the historical problem of the original obsolete. A new definition of the creator is necessary. The creator is no longer just the director, the classical creator, but also the camera man, the script writer and the producer. They all are creators in an intellectual, technical and productive sense, involved in the realization of a semiotic structure. The creator dissolves in multiple creators on the level of handicraft and on a conceptual level. That is why in the 20th century a new notion of the original and of authorship had to be elaborated. Michail Bachtin's principle of the polyphonous dialogue and the pseudonyms used by Boyer and Pessoa and R. Barthes' and M. Foucault's theoretical writings are all attacks on the signature, on the autonomy of the author as the precondition for the original. For if the notion of the author falls, so does to the notion of the original. The question as to the original as an object can thus not be separated from the question as to the original as author, the original as subject, the authenticity of authorship.

Parallel to the history of the original in the pre-industrial period a contrary mode of production was always being developed. The artists themselves eliminated the origin and created stylistic or technical variations. In the course of centuries it was even a necessary element of style that also other artists created stylistic or technical variations and even copies. However, variations of an original work by the creator of that original work as well as imitations or variations by other artists are still seen as originals, whereas technical variations or reproductions are not considered as such (as, for instance, etchings). Even stylistic variations, in other countries, at other times, are still seen as originals. Copies, provided they are mental ones, still represent originals, even if the artist is thought to be a plagiarist or falsifier. That is to say, we have originals in an unlimited sense, originals made by copiers. A copy, the opposite of original, is actually a technical notion associated with handicraft. We see that there was always a twilight zone, a nuanced hierarchy between original and copy. Modern technology only conveyed the bad message and aggravated the conflict or brought on the explosion of tacit ideological preconditions, fictions and illusions.

The question as to original has thus left the technical and criminological level and shifted quickly to the higher more dramatic reaches of ideology and metaphysics. The question was directed, for instance, towards the essence of the author. How many people can collaborate in an artwork while it is still considered to be the work of the author? Art history has given us new answers, from Rembrandt to Rubens. The history of theater and film has also furnished new answers from Brecht to Fassbinder. Be it a team, a workshop, a factory – we are always dealing with new forms of authorship. The question as to the essence of the author can be separated from the question as to the essence of the work, if there are numerous variations, repetitions of a work, as, for instance, in de Chirico and Dalí.

Such questions became particularly pressing, once artworks appeared – from photography to lithography – which not only enabled and encouraged variations and reproductions but also were not familiar with the original. The appearance of a work, the aesthetic realization of a work, first took place in the reproduction. This could be arbitrarily limited by a limited edition or by producing one copy hand-signed by the artist. This, however, did not change the fact that the essence of photography consisted in reproduction and variable enlargement. One referred to the “original negative” which, if not the work itself, was the origin of the work, the positive copy being the work. The image as a positive copy of a negative implies a radical inversion of the preindustrial notion of the original. For the legitimate aesthetic manifestation and mode of existence of the photograph is the copy, not the original. The appearance of the work, the aesthetic realization of the work, only takes place in reproduction.

We see that a number of complex concepts are subsumed under the notion of the original such as author, autonomy, innovation, authenticity, uniqueness, individuality, origin, etc. Since the emergence of printing techniques, such as reproduction methods, and in particular, since the invention of photography about 150 years ago, there has been a crisis of the original which is equated today with a crisis of modernism. Postmodernism is seen as an attempt to go beyond the question of the original and thus of the related notions, in particular, in the appropriation art of the eighties derived from allegory and collage techniques. There has been a shift in the artwork from modernism to postmodernism, a change that can be described as an aesthetic of absence, namely the absence of art's historical manifestations. The original marks one of these essential absences.

II IDENTITY AND SUBJECT

I do not wish to discuss the problem of the original from the object perspective, e.g., from Duchamp's readymades, the multiples and silkscreens of the sixties to the cut-up and appropriation art of the eighties. I would prefer to claim that the real, topical problem of the original lies in the realm of the subject. To be more precise, I will present some arguments to support my view that the problem of the original has shifted from the realm of the object, where it was located at the beginning of the twentieth century, to the realm of the subject.

Already the first question (is the original the work of an individual?) showed that it is not so easy to separate the subject as the creator of the work from the object. I would like to stress this aspect in my claim and to show that the problem of the original of the object and the concomitant crisis of categories and notions such as autonomy, appropriation, absence, have had an effect on the subject, the author, for a long time.

What was once referred to as the crisis of the original in the artwork is now taking place in the subject of the artist. Only overly ambitious academics are interested in the crisis of the original within the realm of the object, the crisis of aura. The question as to the original is the question as to the author and the search for the author. Paraphrasing a famous title, we can say that the development goes from the artwork in the age of its technical reproduction to the artist in the age of his digital or genetic reproduction. The mechanical image apparatus, photography, represented a challenge to the classical artwork, which was transformed by it. We are still processing the consequences of this transformation today, 150 years later. The next hundred years will be under the sway of the digital computer, an intelligent machine which will represent a challenge and transformation to artists. The subject of the artist in its historical manifestation seems to be the next step in the era of absence.

There are plenty of indications of this. I would like to mention just a few. With regard to Duchamp, it has not been pointed out enough that with the invention of the readymade he not only ushered in the crisis of the original on the object level, since he did not make, create or manufacture any more artwork. Rather, he declared already existing things, things already available in a thousand different editions and produced by other industrial machines artworks by means of contextual paraphrases and operations. That is to say, he did not proceed objectively but nominatively. He already anticipated the crisis of the original on the level of the subject. He did not just not create any original artworks in the historical sense, he also did not sign them himself, which implies almost a total absence of the historical categories of the artwork. The "artwork" itself was first of all not single or unique, second, not created by an individual but a product of industrial manufacture, third, falsely signed. Even the signature, the subject, not just the object was absent or falsely present. In this connection I would like to point to the important role played by the various noms de plumes, artist's names. From R. Matt to Rose Selavy, Duchamp created a multiple identity of the artistic subject corresponding to the multiple nature of his work. It should also be noted that the pressure of the market has also caught up with Duchamp, who dealt with his industrial mass commodity, his readymades as original negatives and dated later versions as copies, again asserting the original status of the readymade, to which he could make a historical claim. In Duchamp one can already see that the issues as to innovation, authenticity, aura are actually issues as to the subject and what the original means within the realm of the object and identity within the realm of the subject.

When, in 1922, Stieglitz asked "Can a photograph have the significance of art?" (*Manuscripts*, N.Y., no. 4, 1922, p.2), Duchamp replied: "I wish it would make people despise painting until something else makes photography unbearable." (*Manuscripts*, N.Y., no. 4, 1922, p.2) The rejection of photography in its historical form could not be more blatant. Duchamp had doubts about everything, not just about the original, but also about himself. "I have doubts about myself, doubts about everything. Above all, never believe in the truth. In the end you also have doubts about being." "What happened to Art?", interview by W. Seitz, *Vogue* no. 4, N.Y., 2, 15, 1963, p.113). He wanted to be a "non-artist". "An anti-artist is an artist like any other. Non-artist would be much better. If I could change the word in this sense it would be much better than anti-artist. Non-artist means no artist at all. This would be my idea." (Richard Hamilton, Marcel Duchamps speaks, 1959, 3rd program, BBC in the series "Art, Anti-Art"). This categorical rejection of art led him to also reject the two crucial axioms of art: signature and original, and to destroy

them with his readymades, i.e., with anonymous or pseudo-objects signed with pseudonyms.

The readymade is not hand-made by an artist but by means of a machine. It is thus not unique but an industrial mass good. This means that the status of the object as an original is destroyed. Yet Duchamp is even more radical in that, he not only breaks with the original but also with the the artist. He did not sign the original with Duchamp. Also the status of subject's identity, the author's identity, is threatened or even changed with the modification of the object's status. He signed with "R. Mutt 1917" and anonymously submitted the upright pissoir to the exhibition of the "Independents" in New York in 1917. In the journal edited by him "The Blind Man" (April 10, 1917, no. 1), Duchamp protested against the jury's description: Mr. Mutt's basin "is an object one can see everyday in plumbers' shopwindows. Whether Mr. Mutt made the basin with his own hands or not is irrelevant. He has selected it... he has created a new idea for this object." The artist's proof of identity did not consist in producing the work but in selecting it, not in creating it but in coding a new meaning. The classical art object and the classical identity of the artist collapse in this historical moment, since they are inseparable categories.

Duchamp exhibited faked objects with faked papers, under certificates signed with a fake name. R. Mutt evidently not being identical with M. Duchamp, exhibits a pissoir, which is evidently not identical with an artwork. That conceptual recycling lets the basin become an artwork and R. Mutt Duchamp is a different issue. What is important here is the fact that the non-identity of the object, its lacking original status corresponded to the non-identity of the subject, the creator from the very beginning. Duchamp's play with pseudonyms should be taken just as seriously as his play with pseudo-works (pseudo objects, pseudo names).

III PSEUDO-WORKS AND PSEUDONYMS

The emergence of pseudo-works, of artworks without the original status automatically took place in connection with the emergence of pseudonyms. The artificiality of the object is not to be separated from the artificiality of the subject. At about the same time, a poet recognized the same problematic and in reaction, initiated a game with heteronyms.

Around 1914, the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa invented three other poets in his mind to avoid having to place his own poetic possibilities under the tyranny of historical thinking in terms of identity: Ricardo Reis, Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos. These three poets with their different fictive biographies and art practices were all born of one mind, which, however, saw itself as a stage for

others: "I created other personalities in me. I am constantly creating persons. I am the living stage, on which various actors appear to perform various pieces." Of course, Pessoa also published under his own name. Yet his "drama in persons", his multiple disintegration into various heteronyms, authors, styles breaks out of the prison of the original and of identity. Six persons no longer seek the author. Rather, the author becomes dissolved in four poets. The dissolution of the object corresponds, in Pessoa, for the first time, to a clearly intended dissolution of identity. Substitution, projection, assimilation, multiplication are operations taking place not on the object level but on that of the subject. The title of a story by Giovanni Papini, "Der Spiegel auf der Flucht, Spiegelfluchten" gives a rough idea of what is at stake: Someone is fleeing the tyranny of identity, breaking the yoke of identity so as to experience other events in space and time, other spaces and times, to raise one's experience and desire above the social barriers of egoconstruction. "I no longer want to be he who I am", Papini writes in another story. The difference between being and non-being, reality and fiction is attenuated. The famous Romantic deciphering takes place so as to transcend the real limitation of existence, finiteness, to overcome death, to attain immateriality. Just as the postmodern work in contemporary art is a "copy without original", the artist becomes a "delusion of himself" (Pessoa). Isn't this expression of Pessoa's a perfect description of some postmodern works as well as of the postmodern subject itself?

Couldn't modernity also demand: "Remain yourself, try to prevail against conventions and restraints" in view of postmodernity's imperative: "Construct yourself". "I" becomes an artificial construction.

IV COPIES WITHOUT ORIGINAL, SUBJECTS WITHOUT IDENTITY

Jorge Luis Borges can be found in the same setting. He, too, published under heteronyms and rejected, in particular in the story "Borges and I" the tyranny of identity. "Everything always happens to the other, to Borges. I live, I live from one day to the next, so that Borges can spin his literature. I have to stick to Borges, not to myself (provided that I am someone at all). But I do not recognize myself again in his books as much as in many others. Many years ago, I wanted to to break our relationship... I began to play with time and infinity. In this sense my life is a curse. I do not even know who of us two is writing this page." Rimbaud had already said: "I am an Other." Papini described the I in flight. The play with names as a way to escape the prison of space and time, to attain infinity, to break out of the misery and restrictions of social identity was then stressed by Duchamp. Thus I would like to point to one of Duchamp's works with the telling title "Wanted", promising a 2000 dollar reward for the "arrest of George W. Welch,

alias Bull, alias Pickens... Operated Bucket Shop in New York under name Hookey, Lyon and Cinquer... no, also under the name Rrose Sélavy". Apart from the small allusion to R. Mutt (by way of the bucket, for "the only artworks which America has produced are its sanitary facilities and its bridges", Duchamp wrote in 1917 in "The Blind Man".) Here the play with heteronyms, the masquerade of social identity, the fleeing I, the construction of artistic subjects, the multiple reflections of the subject without a rigid identity clearly emerge. "My position consists of not having a position. But we can't even speak about it. The moment one speaks about it, one ruins the whole game." (A. Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, N.Y., London 1969, p.194). When, in 1920, a society was founded, together with Man Ray and Katherine Dreier, which exhibits and collects art, it was not without reason that it was named "anonymous". In 20 years, the Société Anonyme organized more than 50 exhibitions of modern art. In 1941, its collection was taken over by Yale University. In an art system which, like racing and tennis, is so rooted in the name of stars and in which everything bears the names of sponsors or promoters and the individual is endlessly glorified, it amounts to a critique of this system and explicitly references the capitalist structure of art (promotion), when the institution is not named after Dreier, the woman who founded it, but rather is simply referred to as "anonymous society". Anonymous society or shareholders are part of the economic structure of capital. Duchamp's art is thus strongly determined by signatures consisting of pseudonyms, heteronyms,onyms. In this domain between pseudo-objects and pseudo-subjects, between subject and apparatus, between "unicate" and "multiply", between singular and collective, between individual and anonymity, the postmodern dialectic of fictionalization is deployed. The postmodern play with multiple identities, the positional subject which varies and constructs its position correlates with the crisis of the modern object in the transition from the hand-made to the factory-produced object in the age of the machine-based industrial revolution.

V FICTIVE IDENTITIES – FICTIVE SUBJECTS

Postmodern literature, in particular postmodern science fiction, has dealt intensely, and almost obsessively, with the modern patterns of the original and of the subject as a collective fiction. The multiple rifts of the subject, not just through stylistic collisions, but also through narrative constructions, are a prevailing motif.

Thomas Pynchon, William Burroughs, Raymond Federmann, the Oulipo group in France (Queneau, Perec), John Hawkes, William Gass, Kathy Acker, J. G. Ballard, R. Sheckley, Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, among others, have elaborated

the cited motifs. As the title of a recently published anthology so significantly states (*False Documents. Postmodern Texts from the USA*), reality is bombarded with false texts, i.e., copies without an original. It is also a reality which is no longer what it was once assumed to be, namely real, original, but rather one that only serves as studio decoration. *Storming the Reality Studio* is the title of an anthology of cyberpunk and postmodern science fiction texts which is based on a statement made by William Burroughs.

Brian McHale tried to analyze the postmodern character of the experimental literature of the 20th century (*Postmodern Fiction*, New York, London 1987). Scott Bukatman does something similar for science fiction literature in his authoritative book (*Terminal Identity. The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*. Durham 1993). By analyzing popular science fiction films and books, Bukatman succeeds in redefining the nature of human identity in the information age where man and machine coexist and influence each other. This new "virtual subject" comes to bear especially in series of Cyberpunk novels (James Tiptree jr., Bruce Sterling, William Gibson) and films: *The Max Headroom Story* (Rocky Morton and Annabelle Jankel, 1985), *Akira* (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988), *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982, based on the story *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by Ph.K. Dick), *Scanners* (1980), *Videodrome* (1982), *Dead Ringers* (1988) – all three by David Cronenberg; *Aliens* (1986), *Terminator I and II* (1984, 1991) – all three by James Cameron; *Robocop* (1987) and *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990, based on the story *We Can Remember it for You Wholesale* by Ph. K. Dick). *The Lawnmower Man* (Brett Leonard, 1992), *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (Shinya Tsukamoto, 1989), *Looker* (1981) and *Westworld* (1973), both by Michael Crichton.

Not only Philip K. Dick's works but most notably also Robert Sheckley's writings deal with the status of the postmodern plural subject in the age of its digital reproducibility. In the novel *The Alchemical Marriage of Alistair Crompton* (1978) the personality of a scientist is distributed to three bodies. Even the flesh is terminal. There no longer is a unity of subject, person and body, only a split relationship. "The split I" was thus the original short story, written in 1960, which inspired the novel. In the story "Keep your Shape" (in his anthology *Untouched by Human Hands*, 1967), there is a "freedom of form". Each living being can assume every form. The I can manifest itself in all physical forms. But this I cannot assert itself because it ultimately adheres to the form or position it finds most comfortable.

The Austrian novelist Robert Musil analyzed the disconcertedness of the postindustrial individual with regard to historical models of identity in his book with the telling title, *The Man without Qualities*. "He suspects: this order is not as rigid as

it presents itself; no thing, no I, no form, no principle is unfailing ...” (R. Musil). In 1982, Joseph Kosuth made a piece for the German town of Esslingen which is based on this quote. In the sixties and seventies, a number of female artists such as Valie Export, Cindy Sherman, Jürgen Klauke, Braco Dimitrijevic, etc., worked with the notion of identity and deconstructed it as a play of roles. The works by Sherrie Levine and Elaine Sturtevant disrupt the status of the original on the object level. The pieces by the Yugoslavian artist who has done exhibitions under various names such as Kasimir Malevich, Mondrian, etc., in which he reconstructs well-known photographs of exhibitions as real exhibitions, more radically subvert the myth of the original, on which modernism is founded by moving the problem of the original to the subject level.

The literature theoretician and ideology critic Michail Bachtin (1895–1973) published under various pseudonyms, usually under names of his friends. In various writings, he sketched a first postmodern account of the disappearance of the subject on which multiple identity could be based. In 1929, in his book *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetry*, he praised Dostoyevsky as polyphonous author. The subject is formed by lending voices to Others. The polyphonous dimension of the discourses of the I and of the Other result in the subject's relativity. The autonomy of the author, the originality of the text is devalued and becomes a unit in a long chain of reactions and transformations. “Each understanding is a way of relating the given text with other texts and reinterpreting it in a new context” (*Methodology of Literary Studies*, 1940). Each text becomes a context of another text. Each text is thus the product of the constant reforming of other existing texts, is only node within a dynamic network of texts. In this sense the speaker is not only the creator of his utterances. Rather those utterances are the result of a polyphonous dialogical act, the product of interaction between speaker and social situation, in which the utterance is made. The relativization of author and text, i.e., of creator and original, did not have a historical effect, given the fact that Bachtin's works were not critically studied until in the late seventies. The problem of the original has thus still been dealt with in the eighties on the level of the object (Koons, Steinbach, McCollum).

Here we can detect a sort of parallel processing of the problem of the loss of the original, i.e., a shift from appropriation to mise en scène, to an aesthetic of seduction. The position of the subject as consumer is manifested in the emphasis of the consumer good. The postmodern subject idealizes and identifies itself with the consumer good, with the postmodern thing par excellence whose ambivalence is, however, sacrificed. What results are narcissistic objects, almost autistic ones in correlation to the autistic Ego-syndrome of the postmodern subject. The “extortion of identity” (J. Baudrillard) is yielded to, and the greatest similarity with

oneself is sought. A loop results in which we enjoy what we are forced to and we enjoy that we are forced to be ourselves. No more complaint that reality is simulated and the I is fictive. Instead, fiction and simulation are enjoyed and perfected. Art here assumes the methods of cloning. See McCollum's “perfect vehicles” or the sculptures by K. Fritsch.

Art altogether serves these artists to artistically express the significant functions of consumer culture in terms of a sort of shaping (cf. *Freedom of Shape*), object shaping instead of body shaping, object building instead of body building. The over-dimensionality of stimuli, muscles and prostheses transforms, in both instances, the body and the artworks into a sort of display case, into hybrid objects.

My own work refers to the issue of the original and the “extortion of identity”. In 1967, I published *Anonymous Self-portrait* and in 1973 I pursued the dissolution of identity by means of video. In 1988 I staged a mise en scène of the subject. My fictionalized actions, art spaces and artists of the sixties and seventies culminated, in 1988, in an exhibition with the title *Staged Art History* at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna. Heteronymous, anonymous, polyphonous works which clearly displayed their contradictions were ascribed to six fictive artists. In the catalogue six fictive authors wrote about them. The crisis of identity was exemplified by the artists and the crisis of the original by the works. But the decisive thing was that the discourse of art, its axioms, its ideology, its practices were called into question through fictionalization. This institutional critique of the discourse of art which began in 1971 with my “Context Theory of Art” was continued in 1992 with an interactive computer installation I did. This installation was titled “On the Legitimation of the Hypothetical Nature of Art and of Non-Identity in the Object World”. The principle of non-identity was universalized and the ontological status of the world was corrected and brought into perspective through the design of four virtual worlds, which were context-governed and observer-dependent. Rigid identity became hypothetical, being became fiction. The origin of the original, the ontological principle, was violated and disrupted by the observer and the viable response of the dynamic image through the immaterial, virtual storage of information, the variability of the image content.

Several principles related to the absence of the original on the subject level can be recognized by that art and that literature of appropriation and cutup. No central control mechanism. No ethnic, gender-specific, religious hegemonies, monopolies, privileges, no central zone of truth. Instead: local autonomous agents, hundreds of discourse forms, genres, strategies of impact, styles, social strata, aesthetics (mass cultural, hermetic). De-hierarchization of aesthetic is the first

8 result of the renunciation of the original. This is followed by the endless deployment of the heterogeneity of particular discourses.

VI HYBRID OBJECTS – CLONED SUBJECTS

“Cloning” is derived from the Greek word “klon” (branch, ramify) and is used to refer to asexual, i.e., vegetative reproduction. Cloned molecules, cells, plants, animals are genetically identical copies produced without sexual processes, that is to say, “artificially” in a metaphorical sense. Genetically identical organisms which evolved without sexual reproduction, i.e., not naturally, but rather asexually, i.e., artificially, thus create new forms in which the difference between original and copy is almost endlessly repressed. Objects and subjects with almost identical physical appearance or particularly similar response are thus referred to as “cloned”. Since scientific practices, insights and world images cannot be imagined without a social context and must be seen in correlation to social systems from which they are produced, cloning, as the most advanced form of artificiality also allows one to deduct a statement on the state of artificiality of objects and subjects in social systems and thus also in art. If molecules have their double (*La Molécule et son Double*, Jean Jacques 1992), then not only does the theater have its double (Artaud). Soon also bodies, persons, objects will have their genetic or digital double. “L’homme et son Double” is the motto of the future. Virtual actor (vactor = is the computer-generated model of this new digital double of man).

A clone is a cell, a plant, an animal, in the future perhaps a person, and the result of artificial reproduction which is identical with the original. Society in general tends towards a cloned state. It aims at constant artificial reproduction of subjects and objects identical with the original. Cloned objects, artificial subjects. The heteronyms of artists and poets marked the beginning of this search for heterogeneity, the reduction of restraints, of hierarchies, detotalization. In place of boundaries the micrology of discourse, in place of the hegemonies of the original and of a particular subject in the name of the general the loss of the original and of hegemonies.

After the subject has been the target of advertisement and the mass media – in all of its different social functions or identities, i.e., as family father, husband, leisure time consumer, office employee, etc. – and society has created an appropriate product for each of his social identities, the individual is looking for other forms of self-realization so as to ultimately give up the historical subject status as it has the status of the original. Once the subject is revealed to be a readymade, as something conditioned, it becomes a wasteland to be abandoned.

The consumer as a subject reduces the individual. In late-capitalist society, it is

199 confronted by a great frequency or spectrum of subject positions. In view of the subject positions offered by society, the individual becomes transformed into a positional subject. It passes through various positions in the course of years. At one moment it is addressed by advertisement geared to young people, then in another moment it is the target of automobile advertisements, etc. The individual experiences itself as a series of subject positions and offers provided by society which it can select or reject. In the course of his or her life, the individual passes through various subject positions and forms of realization. The practice of self-realization in today’s late capitalism was critically anticipated by the cited artists and poets in the play of heteronyms. The positional subject passes through a number of subject positions offered to it by society in the course of its life. After the original has lost identity, the heterogeneity of the subject is projected into the social void. Individual, person, subject, identity no longer necessarily create a unity but rather a coalition and cohabitation that drifts apart. The cohabitation of a common body by various subjects, identities, persons transforms the I into an artificial figure.

The plural identity of the postmodern subject is thus the response on the level of the subject to the loss of the original in the object realm. In place of the absolute subject and the universal identity there are only plural positions of the subject and a particular, relational identity.

VII THE I AS A CARAVAN

Thinking in terms of the original is based on the logic of incarnation and is perhaps even the last bulwark in the logic of Christian incarnation. The logic of incarnation, which produced the original and identity as notions of force yielded to the logic of interaction. The recognition and the constitution of difference as a difference generates the work and the subject. “Copy without an original”. Clone implies that the copy becomes an original by virtue of its differences from the other. Body, medium, code are all contingent.

Postmodern science fiction has coined the term “terminal identity” for this virtual subject without a universal body and code, but with a variable and contingent body, identity, code, position, difference (ethnic difference, gender difference, social difference, etc.). Forced and contingent social identity, sexual identity, ethnic identity is legitimated through recourse to origin, nature, ontology. The play of science fiction and the play of art with fictive identities serves to reveal so-called natural identities as socially constructed identities which, since they are artificial, are variable. This is what accounts for their “virtual” character. The rebellion against the original and identity in 20th century literature and art, in the century of the multiples and the pseudonyms, is the attempt to break out of the

prison of society, the restraints imposed by states, out of the ontology dictated by the social. The body, too, is no longer a being or an original, but a variable, something that can be regulated by society.

Just as the work lost its original in the age of its technical reproduction, the subject loses its identity. The name for the subject in the age of its artificial or technical reproduction in the digital age is "terminal identity". This is a subject with a double coding in a typically postmodern sense: on the one hand, the end of the subject, the periphery, and on the other, the new subject position constructed not on the drawing board of nature but on that of the techno-transformation in all its manifestations (from facial operations to genetic engineering), even on the computer screen. The virtual actor, the vactor, is the consummate representative of the digital cloning of the virtual subject.

"The entire planet is being developed into terminal identity and complete surrender", W. Burroughs wrote in 1964 in his *Nova Express*. From *Max Headroom to Robocop, Terminator I + II or Total Recall and Blade Runner*, science fiction films show this sort of virtual subject whose terminal identity is an expression of the present state of the subject in postmodern society. The replicate (copy) hunted by replicants (artificially cloned subjects), who believe they are natural human beings (originals) – as can be seen in *Blade Runner* – is an adequate expression of the state of crisis of the original (in the object world) and of identity (in the subject world) in late-capitalist techno-society. Art reacts to this with a number of maneuvers:

In the object realm, it breaks with the original.

In the subject realm, it breaks with the extortion of identity.

The subject is liberated from the body.

Identity is liberated from the body.

Consciousness is liberated from identity.

Reality is dissolved.

The models of virtual realities and of postontological subjects are attacks on reality under the auspices of the renunciation of the original and identity. Virtual postontological subjects want to evade extortion through the real. The extortion of identity amounts to nothing but the extortion of reality, the extortion through the real. This helps us to understand Borges' statement: "Unfortunately the world is real. Unfortunately I am Borges." The aim of the virtual subject is thus: anything, anytime, anywhere.

VIII FROM THE COPY TO THE CLONE

The mind is a kind of theater . . . There is properly
no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity in different,
only a perpetual flux and movement, a constant variation,
in which several perceptions successively make their appearance;
pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite
variety of postures and situations

David Hume, 1776

Original, originality, and identity are familiar modernistic myths¹. From the outset, modernism cancelled or reflected critically upon the axioms underlying it. However great the triumph of signature, subject and original in classical modernism may have been on the one hand, all the more was this period unsettled by the uncertainty and ambivalence of the ontological status of these concepts. The questions as to identity and original have not only marked modernism from the very beginning, but have also been its tormentor. In this respect, post-modernism differs from modernism only in that while the problems and subjects have remained the same, i.e. sexual and national identity etc., the approach has changed. That which ails modernism, is enjoyed by post-modernism. Wherever modernism felt imperilled, by the disappearance of the ego, the disintegration of matter, mass, and popular culture, post-modernism today hails: Enjoy². In "The Geography of America" (1936) Gertrud Stein described the dramatis personae of the modern universe: "Identity, human nature, human mind, universe, history, audience and growth" (p. 96). We know the post-modern answer to this: the end of history, the bounds of growth, the emancipation of the audience, the expanding universe, the mechanical and digital substitution of the mind (artificial intelligence), the simulation and synthesis of nature, the cancellation of the fixation upon identity. But within its progressive interpretation, post-modernism is merely a radicalisation of modernism. Hence, the post-modern solutions are mapped out even in the problem approach of modernism. "Identity is not like a pleasure", Gertrud Stein writes. "Identity has nothing to do with one and one... There are so many things that are not the same thing identity human nature superstition audience and the human mind... Identity and audience. No-one is identical but everyone can possess identity... Something else that exists is the universe. Identity has nothing to do with the universe. It can have identical if it could but identity does not determine does not determine identity... So everything or nothing can grow but as in the end nothing can grow there is no identity." These lines could well have been taken from a post-modern cyberpunk novella. Around 1914, the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa gave birth to three more

poets in his mind: Richardo Reis, Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos. With the aid of these three poets and their fictitious biographies he was able to expand his poetic possibilities. He felt himself to be a stage for others: "I created different personalities in myself. I am constantly creating persons. I am the living stage upon which different actors appear, performing different plays." The contemporary avant-garde artist Mike Kelley from California also dismisses the one-dimensional individual, substituting it with a multi-dimensional one: "The heroic individual is replaced by a kind of multi-individual". Jorge Louis Borges expressed this suffering most efficiently by the fixation upon identity, by socially blackmailed identity: "Unfortunately I am Borges." Specific suffering from national identity, this universal source of violence, was familiar to the modernists. Duchamp is quoted from 1919 as saying: "Do you have a nationality. I'm afraid so." So there is a multitude of testimonies for the fact that the myths of modernism were felt to be ambivalent even by the most advanced modernists, both the concept of ego, defined by the Viennese natural scientist and philosopher Ernst Mach as early as 1900 as being "beyond salvation", and the notion of the original. Of course, this subversion of modernist myths and matrices did become intensified with the advance of educational technology. With photography and film, with the collage and screen printing, manifold techniques of duplication were employed on an immense scale, techniques that, as the term duplication says, destroy the one, the unique specimen, the original, precisely because they duplicate it. So what we can say is that modernism did suffer from the fixation upon the original and the fixation upon identity, generating post-modernism within itself as a release from this fixation, enjoying simulation, fake, facsimile, substitution, copy, multiple identity, and reproduction. Montage, collage, cut-up, assemblage, appropriation, multiples, installation, and ready-mades are artistic techniques of such cancellations of the original and of identity. However, post-modernism has today detached itself from the dictates of modernism, radicalising its flight in the process. What is involved is no longer the loss of aura, author and authenticity of the work of art in the age of technological reproducibility. The enhancement of reproducibility with the aid of genetic engineering and digital technologies is not simply a continuation, a technologically refined and more potent continuation, but indeed a discontinuation of conventional art production. Because from the outset there is no longer an aura, an author, authenticity, there is no longer an original or identity. The discourse on the copy does in fact presuppose another original, of which the copy is but a poor imitation: With the appearance of the facsimile an era is even now commencing in which the servant (the copy) seeks to deny the master (the original) and his origin. The mechanical facsimile, cinema, does not merely imitate life, but also enacts it, spins yarns about

it, invents it (cf. Georges Méliès). What is created is artificial two-dimensional life, an artificial realm of light and shade. In the mechanical reproduction culture of the image, as is made a central subject in art itself, we can perceive the future rules of the game in a fundamentally changed society.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" W. Benjamin described the beginnings of this societal remodelling. In "The Antiquatedness of Man" Günther Anders provides an apocalyptic analysis of the consequences of this remodelling, particularly in the chapter "The World as a Phantom and Matrix". Jean Baudrillard radicalised the concept of reproduction in his theory of simulacra (imitation, reproduction and simulation), his chief interest being aimed at the third simulacrum, simulation. In the case of simulation (a simulacrum of the third order) "there is no more imitation of the original as is the case in the first order, but equally no pure series as with the second order: there are models which produce all forms by means of a slight modulation of differences"³. Baudrillard's concept of simulation is that much more radical than Benjamin's concept of reproduction as it opposes the real, the reference, the origin. "The real definition of the real is: something from which an equivalent reproduction may be created"⁴. Thus, in the media-dominated reality of America, for instance, Baudrillard's theories were well received in the eighties, especially by New York artists such as Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Haim Steinbach, Jeff Koons, Sherrie Levine, and Peter Halley. With their techniques of appropriation of the mass media and the art world, they proved to be "simulationists", but to Baudrillard's mind with an insufficient degree of consistency because they did delete the real, but not, however, the referential. Baudrillard sees simulation as reproduction without reference, as the complete emancipation of the servant from his master, as the final equality of signs to objects, and as the post-ontological triumph of the signifiants. "By means of its unlimited reproduction, the system puts an end to the myth of its origin and, thus, at the same time to all referential values it has itself produced in the course of its process of development. By putting an end to the myth of its origin, it also puts an end to its inner contradictions (there is neither anything real, nor a system of reference with which it could be confronted) – and it also puts an end to the myth of its end: the revolution itself"⁵. The servant, the copy, is free. It cannot be confronted with a master, an original. "We live in a culture of reproduction: imitation, reproduction and emulation are becoming the 'trademarks' of our society. There is copying in the media, in fashion, science, and art. And as of recently man even copies himself", Hans-Jürgen Seemann writes in "Copy. On the Way to the Repro-Culture" (Beltz, 1992). Our theory then is that we are actually on the way from this culture, and that the phenomena described by him or Baudrillard or others are best termed clone culture, for the very reason that

04 clones are identical copies. The clone is indistinguishable from the original, identical with it. Thus, the difference between copy and original disappears. Thus, the clone is superior to the copy. Seemann himself writes in 1992: "The clone culture is the final product of the expansionist copy society with no taboos. Digital media technology, genetic engineering, biocybernetics, neurosurgery, and nanotechnology are some of the (as yet evident) 'midwives' and leading technologies of the approaching clone culture"⁶. So, the copy society and the simulation society are in a state of profound change which is marked by the advancement of the copy to the clone. Thus, in 1985 I supplied a model for an "aesthetics of the cloned society": "Future societal manifestations can be seen in aesthetic manifestations. New pictorial representation, the mathematically simulated image of reality is not only an illusory world, a reflection of the imaginary with itself, but also references the future structure of a cloned world. The cloned images of the digital works are images of the cloned electronic world of the future. If in the language of the electronic media the real is displaced by the imaginary, this occurs because the real is indeed being increasingly undermined by the imaginary in our civilisation. The changes in the concepts of time and space, of location and presence, of the imaginary and the real, of artificiality and humanity, as effected in the digital aesthetics of the electronic media, have consequent effect on society as a whole: access to the world becomes more personal, participation in the world will no longer be passive and merely representative, but rather interactive. The 'responsive environment' in which computers are conscious of our needs and react to them accordingly, and the interactive computer environments are geared to the realisation of individuation in which its aporia of in the end actually being a dictatorship of individuals is not suppressed by the omnipotence of the state, as is the case with previous democracy, i.e. where all work for one, the state, which in turn performs a kind of backshift distribution with the aid of the apparatus of state, but in which the citizen depends upon state power, but rather where no individual is superior to the other and there are equal rights of interactive individuality"⁷. No individual is master (original) over another (copy), but rather all are equal clones (cf. G. Stein: "No-one is identical but everyone can possess identity.") This interactive individuality and its contingency upon the context, the collective, and the milieu, above all implies a cheapening of the fictitious autonomy of the Cartesian subject. The end of the Cartesian subject that said: cogito, ergo sum, was unequivocally formulated by Lacan in the famous phrase: "Where I think, I am not. Where I am, I do not think." Lacan disjoined being and language, ontology and identity, being and subject for all times. The cogito, the "I think", is no longer seen as being the foundation of the world. The experience of thinking does not found being,

ontology. Lacan poses the question: who thinks? and answers in the words of Freud: it thinks. From this the post-modern subject evolves as a post-ontological subject, as a constructed, fictitious, artificial subject. A subject constantly questioning itself, condemning itself to doubt and disappearance, precisely by asking whether the post-modern subject has no constant identity. Lacan renders the structural deficiency of identity absolute. Unity and constancy of identity become evident as an ideological effect, as a social construction; which becomes hazardous as soon as it forgets that it is but a mere figment of the imagination. Within the scope of this horizon, art becomes a machine for working off a metaphysical deficiency, the deficiency of being and identity. This applies not only to the subjects, but also to the objects. The decisive contemporary art is testament to the ontological ambivalence and diffusion of the objects themselves. And this deficiency of being and identity is also particularly a characteristic feature of the very latest works of art. Up until then, these works of art attempted to break free of this ambivalence, the foul odour of the forgery, the fake, the double, the copy by means of strategies of auratisation, insisting on their uniqueness, originality and authenticity. And for a short term, quite some number of works actually succeeded in doing so, equipped with the charm of naivety and the emotiveness of the lie. But in reality it is not only the subjects that have their doubles and clones, but also the objects have their alter ego. "An object is an object; but above all, an object is never alone." Haim Steinbach rightly says, "thus an object is a 'made-ready-to-relate' rather than a 'ready-made'". The objects do not appear on their own, but rather doubly, as every object is a commodity and, as such, possesses at least double identity, i.e. being utility value and exchange value. Objects work in the manner of a language. The Janus face of the sign, being both signifiant and signifié, is repeated in the Janus face of the commodity, being utility value and exchange value. Although we see objects, we do not see any objects. What we see, it would seem, are industrial copies. This double existence is reference to the fact that we see doubles. But equally we do not see any copies. For there is no matrix, no original, a Baudrillardian model at best. What we see are identical copies, i.e. clones, objects as clones. In the vein of Duchamp and Kosuth, Steinbach radicalised the non-identity of objects by introducing us to the clones of the world of commodities. What Steinbach achieves on behalf of the clone culture of the world of commodities, is in turn done by Sherrie Levine for art history, seeing art history as she does as a depository of ready-mades, from whence she obtains her copies (*After Walker Evans*, 1981, *After Kasimir Malevich*, 1984, and *Fountain*, *After Marcel Duchamp*, 1991). Levine made photographs on the basis of famous photographs, objects on the basis of famous objects and sculptures on the basis of sculptures (*Newborn*, *After Brancusi*, 1993). Levine takes a Brancusi sculpture,

6 Brancusi being a typical protagonist of the modern myth of the original. The sculpture *The New-born* exists in marble from 1915. Some short time later he created two bronze variations on it. In 1920 he made *The New-born II* from marble, and later two others from high-grade steel (1925) and bronze (1927). But to Brancusi these were all original sculptures and not copies. Levine takes an opposite approach. Instead of the historical naivety and illusion of the original she produces derivative copies which safeguard their originality. In a post-modern vein, she rejects the fiction of the original, opting instead for the ambivalence of the identity of the object, indeed even of the work of art as an exponent of the original because, as an object, the work of art is superior to the common object precisely due to its originality. Levine makes reference here to J. L. Borges, too, and his narrative *Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote* (1939), in which the author, Pierre Menard, rewrites two chapters of *Don Quixote* by Cervantes word for word. Levine enters the realm of repetition and replication, to which the copy or clone is no alien, as are also the works of Sturtevant since 1965. But in the cultural sphere of the East, too, there are such advanced operations of the clone culture on the non-identity of objects, signs and subjects, e.g. as with the Slovene group IRWIN and with Braco Dimitrijevic (*Self Portraits after Rembrandt and Miguel Perez*, 1968–78, “Afterwards, I saw that if I could do it after Rembrandt, that I could do it after anyone”, cf. also B. Dimitrijevic’s “post-historic triptych”). The cultural practice of these artists has been directed towards investigating the connections existing between mechanical reproduction, mass media, and mass production with the aid of strategies of reprocessing, transfer, reworking, and re-appropriation, thus not only granting a new view of the replication and evolution of *Art in the Age of Mass Media*, John A. Walker, Pluto Press, London 1983), but also of the changing conditions and goals of our social construction of identity and our relations to the world of objects in the age of mass society. In order to better comprehend these fundamental transformations of our culture and society, in which copies with no original, subjects devoid of identity, fictitious identities, hybrid objects, copies and clones play a crucial role, it may be useful to take recourse to the scientific discipline from whence the 19th century concept of reproduction originally hails, biology.

The evolution of art is full of ramifications, a complex system of paths, wrong tracks, border paths, main roads, and side alleys branching out in all directions, abutting, intertwining, becoming compressed, knotted, overlapping, crossing, and even balking each other, ending in nothingness or in cul-de-sacs. A great number of individuals, groups, institutions, social systems, personal interests and magazines, disciplines, ideas, ideologies, economic, political, religious and cultural prerequisites or conditions, machines, technological upheavals, theories

and capitals, mundane forms, commodities, different spatial and temporal experiences, codes, histories, fates, and incidental encounters all go to form a tottering building or structure that is the multiform face of art. At a lecture in Vienna 1988, Paul Feyerabend found the rather inept formulation “art as a natural product”⁸ for this evolutionary model of art, this image of the ramified development of art whose rational reconstruction does in fact contribute a posteriori to real construction, with that which shows the way actually becoming part of way itself. Of course he does not deny the necessary presence of individuals, groups and cultures as special conditions that lead to the production of art. Works of art are created through actions carried out by artists and entire cultures as special conditions of nature. Thus, that which nature itself produces is equally contingent upon these actions. This is the transitory gift of autonomy of the individual or of a culture. But what he is rather pointing to is the fact that general laws take effect through the creative individual. What he is interested in is a “thorough devaluation of individual creativity” and the “close proximity of all human activities” (P. F.). An artist is generated and utilised so that culture may propagate itself through him. A similar line of thought is also the basis of the book *The Selfish Gene* (1976) by Richard Dawkins. In this book – along the line of Samuel Butler, who said that a chicken is the way in which an egg makes another egg – the evolutionary biologist suggested that we humans only have the function of selfish genes producing further selfish genes. We are, as it were, just the transition or carrier material for egoistic genes in their addiction to self-replication. He widened this idea to embrace culture as well, inventing the “meme”, ideas, cultural codes by means of which culture replicates and reproduces itself. Thus, replication dominates the world, be it gene or meme. In his new book *River out of Eden* (1995) he describes DNA as being a flow of digital information through time, flowing through a large number of bodies and organisms well-suited for the reproduction of DNA. This flow thus consists of instructions as to how bodies are to be built, and not of actual bodies. The genetic code is pure digital information which is encoded, recoded, and decoded and which can be copied by billions of organisms over the course of millions of years, with the occasional error occurring so as to make for variation. This gives rise to the decisive argument in favour of the difference between the copy and the clone. Mechanical reproduction is subject to rapid degradation. Copies only receive their information up to a limited number of generations. Clones, on the other hand, possess a perfect copying mechanism, as there is no difference between the copy and the original. They can copy themselves practically without end. They guarantee an endless duration of reproduction and evolution.

Is culture also but an endless flow of data that are encoded, decoded, replicated

and copied endlessly with the aid of a large number of individuals? The obsession with which people of our epoch enjoy cloning cultural artefacts, especially in popular culture (cf. Madonna, Jackson, etc.) reveals just how immense the pleasure derived from this idea of the endless self-maintenance and self-replication of the system is.

But the real problem of identity and the clone theory stems from immunology. At an early date, transfusions and transplantations showed that the question of "self" and "not-self" was particularly significant due to the rejection of foreign tissue and foreign organs. Medawar based "the uniqueness of the individual" upon this experience. A disease such as AIDS, being as it is an acquired immune deficiency syndrome, teaches us that we possess a bodily identity which may break down in the event of failure of the immune system which is apparently chiefly responsible for bodily identity. Our bodily identity is actually a molecular identity. The role of the immune system is to protect the "self" against outside infections. An "antigen" comes from outside. Now it is the immune system's job to produce antitoxins and monitor cells to combat the intruder, so-called antibodies whose function it is to do away with the antigen, the pathogen. An antibody "recognises" an antigen somehow before neutralising it in the process of a chemical reaction. But there also exist "auto-immune diseases" where this process does not take place and destructive immune reactions attack the body's own tissue structures. Distinguishing between "self" and "not-self" is thus quintessential to immunology. Accordingly, the classic of contemporary immunology is entitled *Self and Not-Self* (1969) by Sir Macfarlane Burnet, in which the author presents his 1959 theory of "clonal selection theory of immunity", according to which the production of antibodies is transferred to cell clones. In 1955, N. K. Jerne applied Darwin's natural selection theory of antibody formation for the first time with the aim of explaining how an antibody "recognises" an antigen. The assumption is that there exists an "inner repertoire" of antibodies (approximately 10 to the power of 20), which can be geared to the antigens. Burnet's idea was to postulate this specific mechanism of "recognition" or selection (the bond of antibodies and antigens) as a lymphocytic exchange. Thus, selection pressure came from the antigen. Only some special subclasses of lymphocytic families – or clones – were able to link up with the respective antigen. The contact between antigen and clone led to cellular proliferation of the clones which in turn effected an increased production of antibodies and consequently the neutralisation of the outside antigen. The clone selection theory explained how the immune system was able to distinguish between "I" and "not-I" from within a boundless multitude of unknown stimuli. In 1990, Francisco J. Varela and Antonio Coutinho suggested a network model for the immune system⁹, as did the

aforementioned Jerne in 1974, a model in which the antigen is no longer the "determinant", but rather a small perturbation in the existence of a network. In the stead of selection there is a "dance". The "dance" of the immune system with the body makes it possible to have a constantly changing, plastic identity and, thus, to constitute molecular identity as system identity. In this model of the immune network, the immune system cannot distinguish between "self" and "not-self", but rather the distinction is that between "self" and "not-perception". What then can we learn from this in terms of the theory of culture, with all due caution, if we follow the model of natural science as a leading science of the modern age? On the one hand, the increased appearance of copies, clones etc. in contemporary cultural production, both in the avant-garde and in popular culture, may hint at an intensified determinance of foreign bodies and at intensified Darwinism in the cultural sphere. Successful patterns of cultural production are replicated by means of clonal selection. In a similar vein to Dawkin's argument, one might say that genetically successful art productions seek individuals and milieus/markets in which they can successfully replicate themselves and thus survive. As organisms have inherited their genes only from successful predecessors (unsuccessful species are species that do not survive and which can thus not pass on any genes), they tend to become successful predecessors themselves, in possession of successful, i.e. viable genes capable of reproduction. So, successful art and cultural patterns win through, reproducing themselves with the aid of self-reproducing, self-confirming clonal selection. Over the course of millions of years, only around 1% of all species has survived according to the principle of the "survival of the fittest". The same percentage also holds true for art production. So, clones in art indicate selection pressure, the intention of culture to support only the successful patterns of production and to discard those less successful. A homogenisation of culture and a rejection of the heterogeneous, the alien is striven for. Tried-and-tested patterns of cultural production are incessantly repeated, reproduced, replicated, subjected to ever increasing selection. This is the task of festivals and institutions. The cultural recombinations (of post-modernism) provide the necessary mix and remix, e.g. where classics are updated by theatre productions marked by the strong influence of stage directions. Galleries and other institutions of public life open their doors for these new data, "the antigens", the viruses of the system. The network of sculptures constructed by Brancusi in his constant replicas complies with the pattern of successful clonal reproduction. Sherrie Levine's series "After..." also follows the successful patterns of cultural production (Schiele, Duchamp, Evans etc.). They confirm the successful selection work of culture and sustain it. The clonal mechanisms of behaviour and production, distribution and reception are heading

for a culture as a survival of the fittest machine, for eternal self-confirmation. Culture (and with it society) is degrading itself to become a machine of survival. The clone theory of art explains how the dominant cultural system can select from an immense wealth of new artistic productions those which confirm, replicate and thus sustain it, guaranteeing the survival of its identity. Is a society enfeebled that breeds or selects cultural clones in order to distinguish between its own culture and foreign culture?

A different interpretation would be that the increase and reproduction of clonal art production in culture falls under the tendency towards self-observation in modern art, and that the relevant works of art (from A. McCollum's cloned industrial object world, to the cloned historical identity of the artist as with P. Weibel) would represent an analysis and a warning of cultural Darwinism and the loss of the variety of human production as an indication of the infinite constructibility of the world, of a pluriversal identity beyond the confines of nature, where the words of G. Stein hold true: "No-one is identical but everyone can possess identity". This interpretation would be supported by Varela's model of the immune network and his differentiation "self/not-perception".

The clonal state of nature is a symptom of a decisive transformation of culture in the age of the masses and multiculturalism, with the questions of identity and origin being posed anew. Here, the shield (protection of historical borders, categories, definitions) becomes a sieve.

Translation by Camilla Nielsen (Chap. I–VII), Richard Watts (Chap. VIII)

- ¹ Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde"; in: R. E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 1986
- ² Slavoj Žižek comprehended this post-modern change of the signs of modernism like no other author, thus the titles of his works often use the imperative form: *Enjoy*.
- ³ Jean Baudrillard, *Der symbolische Tausch und der Tod*, Matthes & Seitz, Munich 1982, p. 88–89.
- ⁴ Op. cit., p. 116.
- ⁵ Op. cit., p. 94.
- ⁶ Hans-Jürgen Seemann, *Copy – Auf dem Weg in die Re-pro-Kultur*. Beltz, Quadriga, 1992, p. 235.
- ⁷ Peter Weibel, "Ästhetik der geklonten Gesellschaft". In: *Output – Österreich*. Special issue Vienna, 1985, p. 10ff. Reprinted (abridged) in: *Ars Electronica* 1986, Linz, p. 314.
- ⁸ Paul Feyerabend, "Kunst als Naturprodukt". In: G. Schöllhammer, Chr. Kravagna, *Denken am Rande des Subjekts*. Verlag Ritter, Klagenfurt 1993.
- ⁹ N. Jerne, "Towards a Network of the Immune System". In: *Annuel Immunologique Institut Pasteur*, 125 C, p. 373–389, 1974. Francisco J. Varela, "Der Körper denkt. Das Immunsystem und der Prozeß der Körperindividualisierung". In: H. V. Gumbrecht, K. L. Pfeiffer (eds.), *Paradoxien, Dissonanzen, Zusammenbrüche*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1991.