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ARTICLE

On the Problems of Art with Originality Contexts, Dilemmas, Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The sketch discusses selected contexts that are decisive for the narrative of the originality of art. These include historical, cultural, and discursive conditions. Hence the diachronic and culturological perspective of the analysis. This results from the confrontation between the past (tradition) and modernity, as well as from the conviction that culture and respected cultural premises determine the specificity of all phenomena and discourses. As a result, three issues are at the center of the text's considerations: the context of a culture with low dynamics of change, the turning point of modernity, and the paradigmatic reorganizations of 20th-century art and the problems (challenges) associated with them. The first element is related to the discourse on the originality of art in a culture oriented toward the past. The second marks the breakthrough of modernity, which, in the name of Enlightenment progress, change, and modernization of the world, redefines the concept of originality, while unleashing the extraordinary capacity of art for transformation and artistic innovation. Within the artistic transgressions of modern art, the background for reflections on the originality of art is set by the multi-paradigmatic nature of art. This is fundamentally linked to radical and comprehensive transformations in the ontological nature of the work of art (the diversity of art: from the object to the process and event of participatory and interactive art). The originality of art is understood in the text as a dynamic and contextual problem, constructed ad hoc and resulting from many variables.

Keywords: Originality; Art; Breakthrough of Modernity; Modernism; Cultural Change; Multi-paradigm

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1. Introduction

As the title of the article (*On the problems of art with originality ...)* indicates, I will be concerned with originality and art, or more precisely originality in art. Of the two concepts, art seems more difficult to define. And this difficulty is due to the evolving nature of art practice, especially since the beginning of modernity. At issue is the scale of transformations and artistic redefinitions. Also challenging is the multiplicity and ontological diversity of art manifestations, as well as the expansive nature of art practice, penetrating different territories and not excluding anything. With this in mind, one can repeat after Theodor Adorno that currently "*[...] everything that concerns art has ceased to be self-evident, both within itself and in its relation to the whole, even its raison d'être*" [1]. The once valid criteria for a work of art have been effectively undermined and challenged. The diversity, as well as the ephemerality of artistic incarnations and manifestations, coupled with proposals exploring territories once unrelated to art, lead to confusion. The erosion of artistic certainties, when almost everything can now be elevated to the status of art and combined with art, triggers uncertainty and doubt. By this I do not mean to say that quibbling about originality does not generate challenges and dilemmas especially when the issue is related to the reality of art. And this, after all, is what I will continue to deal with. Nevertheless, the concept of originality itself is not, it seems, one of the particularly problematic ones. Usually, we have no difficulty (unlike in the case of art) in explaining the meaning of this category and indicating the criteria of originality. The dictionary definitions in this case are also remarkably convergent, not to say almost identical. It is customary to think of originality as that which is authentic, genuine, "*original or first-hand produced*", but also singular, new, fresh, "*different from anything that came before*" [2], independent, innovative and unique, etc. In contrast, how is the originality of a work understood in the domain of art? Clearly similarly. In principle, the criteria and expectations for artistic creation turn out to be identical. In the context of art or literature, originality is defined as "*the property of a creative solution consisting in the fact that it has a peculiar, independent character, which is not reducible to approaches already known or to patterns of such approaches. [...] It constitutes a measure of the individuality of a given work, i.e., its »dissimilarity« to works created before it; it is identical with the deviation of a given work from those modes of depiction which, on the basis of their experience in a particular field of art, its audience might expect. [...] The structure of a work is the resultant of the action of two forces: tradition, which guarantees its recognizability on the side of reception, and originality, thanks to which it is a creative resolution, expanding the existing world of values*" [3].

This way of thinking about the originality of a work of art or a literary work, the meaning and connotations of this category raise the temptation to see originality as one of the fundamental and desirable properties of creativity in the broadest sense. It has always been associated with art and creativity. And it must be admitted that this is a tempting temptation. We can succumb to it if we make the present the measure of all things, convinced that in the past things were as we think of them today, and we are free to transpose our argumentative reasons and established opinions into the past, and to perceive and construct the past in accordance with them. Of course, we cannot and should not do so. The problem is that the presented way of understanding originality has been shaped by modernity and the past "*[...] has no face, but only masks created by the historian*"[4]. So let's take care that they are not caricatured, that they do not offend with biased perspectivism, and, above all, do not downplay the historicity of concepts and the distinctiveness of cultural systems. Especially since these "masks" − as today's narratology, historiography or Hayden White's "tropology" suggests − are exclusively discursive "*symbolic structures and elaborate metaphors*"[5]. Of course, the perspective of actuality cannot be avoided, because the past and history are concretized only from the point of view of the historian and his current cognitive infrastructure. In addition, we have also undermined the autonomy of the world from our experience and language, which determines cognition and everything that can be expressed in it. Hence, "*the social or historical world [...] is the world of human experience and constituted by that experience*"[6]. Thus, if we succumb to the temptation to think of originality as something permanently associated with art, it is not necessarily in a way that corresponds to our current notions. Although the works of art of the

past (until the turn of modernity), stylistically and formally diverse, may be an expression of a concern for creative difference, it was a difference defined in a different way with a stabilizing character. This is because the strength of tradition and the conventionality of iconographic patterns excluded (as research on iconography tells us) the peculiarity and innovativeness of solutions beyond the current and recognized standards. Let us remember, moreover, that the determinateness of everything, not excluding concepts, is ultimately culturally sanctioned. It is culture that "*constitutes the condition for the existence of any being as being somehow determined*"[7]. Besides, concepts, like theories, "*are areas of dispute*"[8]. Like language, they "*have no shape independent of context, and since they always appear in some context, and never in an abstract way, they always take some shape*"[9].

Taking this into account, the purpose of the article is to analyze selected contexts that determine the narratives of art originality. It is about the contexts that model these narratives from the perspective of cultural conditions, historical conditions and ontological transformations of the artwork. As a result, three issues are at the center of the text's considerations: the context of a culture with low dynamics of change, the breakthrough of modernity, and paradigmatic reorganizations of twentieth-century art and related problems. The first element is related to the discourse on the originality of art in the horizon of past-oriented culture, based on what is historical and sanctioned by antiquity, custom, tradition (including iconographic). The second is marked by the breakthrough of modernity, which, in the name of Enlightenment progress, changes and modernization of the world, redefining the understanding of originality, releasing the energy of art for transformation and artistic innovation. The last element of the background of the consideration of the originality of art, and in particular the problems and challenges associated with it, relates to the functioning of various artistic paradigms based on radical transformations in the ontology of the work of art. The discourse on the originality of a work of art, hitherto usually discussed within a formally shaped artistic product, collides here with the challenges generated by the art of ready-made things, the hybrid nature of conceptual art, ephemeral participatory art or the event-driven nature of interactive art. In light of these assumptions, I treat the concept of originality as a dynamic, discursive "*cultural entity of a historical nature*". And such entities, as Joseph Margolis reminds us, "*[...] are modifiable as a result of constant reinterpretations, under conditions of historically changing experiences*"[10] and, of course, contexts. As a result, the diachronic confrontation of actuality with the past, modern culture with pre-modern culture, tradition with innovation proves essential here. However, this diachronic approach does not mean that this case a cross-sectional article, it only defines the profile of the analysis undertaken in the article. An analysis shaped in a culturological perspective, in accordance with the conviction obvious to cultural scholars and proponents of culturalism that it is culture and its respective rationales and premises that determine the determinacy of all phenomena and discourses.

2. Problems

I will now turn to selected problems drawn in the discourse on the originality of art, so that then, in the next part of the text, these considerations will be supplemented and deepened by an analysis of the determining contexts of these discourses. There is no denying that art, at least for some time, also in the name of originality of solutions, has been reorganizing its boundaries and exploring new territories. Indeed, since Romanticism, art has successfully embodied the overarching for artistic practice "*imperative of multiplying differences*"[11] and "*transcending and surpassing itself*"[12]. In the name of originality, artists initiated ventures and undertook activities whose momentum, dynamism, multiplicity and dissimilarity revealed an unprecedented variety of artistic concretizations, tendencies, currents, directions and attitudes. Originality associated with novelty, change, innovation, became one of the chief cries of creativity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To this day, moreover, originality has not lost its appeal despite post-modern revisions and intertextual practices. It was, and still is, a coveted property, supremely barded and expected. As Rosalind Krauss writes, the modern and especially "*avant-garde artist above all claims originality as his right-his birthright, so to speak*"[13]. I stipulate that I mention only certain cultural formations (romanticism, modernity, postmodernism) as the historical space of the discourse on originality. A discourse that, regardless of

the obvious peculiarities or cultural distinctions of these formations, essentially upholds the narrative generated in modernity about the originality of a work of art. Even postmodern intertextuality, fundamentally questioning the originality of cultural texts (art or literature) as primarily intertextual entities, has not overcome the understanding of the originality of the artistic product formed in modernity.

However, this way of thinking about originality has its discursive problems rooted in the narratives of modernity, resulting from the cultural valorization of "change" and the recontextualization of the concept of originality. Since that time, since the modernist breakthrough, the domain of art creation and practice has been primarily concerned with the originality of art in the sense not of the attribution and authenticity of a product, but of the innovation and sourcing of solutions. Authenticity, moreover, seems to be unspecifically exposed in the reality of culture, which consistently diminishes the importance of the real and true at the expense of the experience of reproductions, substitutes or "*operational doubles*"[14], whose pretended authenticity − as hinted at by Jean Baudrillard or Umberto Eco − is certified by layers of simulations and visual reproductions. By this, I do not in any way want to depreciate the originality of the product as an authentic, historical object of authorial origin. Nevertheless, the dominant concept within the narrative of art originality seems to be that liberated by modernism, which refers to innovation and specificity of solutions. Originality in the processes of creation thus means, according to the formula cited in the introduction, the dictates of uniqueness and uniqueness. Thinking about originality in art, we expect original, individual, source solutions. We want reinterpretations that are fundamentally transgressive of existing artistic solutions, the difference of which, however, should mark, as Derek Attridge rightly suggests, "*a particular kind of difference from what has gone before, a difference that changes a given area and makes further practices possible*"[15]. This seems to be brilliantly concretized by Marcel Duchamp's introduction of so-called "ready-made things" into artistic practice. This is not only an innovation that deconstructs everything that has hitherto constituted the unquestionable invariables of an artistic work of art, but also opens up new possibilities in the field of, for example (but not only) conceptual art. The problem is that what Attridge is writing about is more difficult than it might seem.

The problem is also that the criteria of originality have been and continue to be a constant challenge despite the modernizing transformations of modern art and the eruption of artistic novelties of the past century. In addition, the discursive validity of these criteria has limited validity and is the result, like the thinking presented, of art's brief flirtation with modernized originality. In other words, a flirtation with its exclusively modern incarnation. While this was enough for today's meanings and connotations of this category to be considered tame and solidified, the history of the relationship between art and originality was more complex. And it also involves the semantic transformation of the category of originality. So effective that the current understanding of the term contradicts everything it originally meant, and at the same time so groundbreaking that we today connect this original meaning with its binary opposition.

Therefore, contrary to various temptations and current connotations, we must think of originality as something problematic, dynamic, open to semantic reorganization, relative and relational; concretized in reference, in the intertwining of originality with unoriginality, tradition with the present. At the same time, let us also not forget that originality and its conditioning criteria are not constituted by the incidentality of what we create, but by contextual "*adequacy (appropriateness)*, *effectively preventing some meaningless creation from being considered creative*"[16], original, unprecedented. Let's not confuse originality with eccentricity. I would add that the aforementioned criteria are also conventional creations, descriptive tools subject to identical historical and discursive conditions as the phenomena described with their help.

Problems, moreover, are drawn here. Paradoxically, their source also seems to be what was supposed to be an incubator of originality. We are talking about modern and postmodern art, which does not exclude anything, and the production of novelty, which could be regarded as a state, if not desirable, then at least conducive to originality. The problem is that this unlimited overproduction of novelty seems to have no end. Ostensibly conducive to originality, as an expression of the progressive possibilities of art, it does not, however, multiply originality to the degree we might expect in the context of the aforementioned eruption

of art. In the open formula of creativity "*capable of transforming its proximate and distant conditions*"[17], and even exploring − in the words of Jean-Francois Lyotard − "*the unspeakable and the invisible*", originality turns out to be a desirable and problematic property at the same time. And certainly overestimated in the processes of artistic permutations aimed at the novelty of solutions. Similarly, its descriptive significance is probably overestimated. The value of originality is often associated it with artistic proposals, where it is rather discursive over-interpretation. The peculiar fetishization of originality has made it a fashionable phrase, abused without due reflective sensitivity. The multi-media and multi-faceted nature of contemporary art, in which this "*singularity to the limit of incomprehensibility has become an overt right*"[18], does not imply the omnipresence of originality. Rather, the overproduction and redundancy of novelty, and the consequent devaluation of both originality and novelty. Thus, the originality of solutions is not and has never been directly proportional to the scale of artistic innovation. Although one gets the impression that in the field of artistic redefinitions of current art − as Tadeusz Boy-Zeleński ironically put it − "*nothing is so repetitive as eccentricity and originality*".

The problem is also that this propensity of art to transform and innovate does not only threaten to devalue novelty or originality. Indeed, it also reorganizes and, as a result, problematizes − in light of, for example, the ontic changes in contemporary art − the discourse on the originality and properties of the artwork. This involves, among other things, questioning the holistic nature of the product and the objective properties of the artwork. And, further, the idea of the self-referentiality of art and, consequently, the ability of the work / object / event to self-define its own specificity. Awareness of the temporalization of perception and the experience of a work of art suggests, as does situational aesthetics, that we are unable to identify a set of properties that can be considered an invariant and effective characteristic of the art product. In a kind of invariant set of characteristics. And this comes, among other things, from the fact that when discussing the originality and properties of art we concretize them ad hoc in various ways, always adjudicating them from the perspective of the rationale of the prevailing "*interpretive communities*", but also within "*the framework of a subjected to the rules of interpreted discourse, which is itself historically formed and transformed* "[10].

Another problem arises from the difficulty of discussing the originality of art in a situation when art itself problematizes its own specificity, when "*subject to the process of aesthetic transfiguration, it loses its specificity, joining the common process of confusion, contamination, substitution, leading to the loss of the distinctiveness of individual spheres, which become transversal*"[19].

Separate problems and challenges are also associated with the ongoing use of new technologies and AI in creative processes. In the digital age, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between inspiration and creative reinterpretation and the original work. It is also, but not only, about the authenticity of the work and the authorship of the product. The dilemma of authorship is not new, as it has also affected art and artistic practice in the past. I am thinking here primarily of the popular mechanism of shared authorship, or more precisely, the division of authorship into the spheres of invention and realization. This has often problematized authorship in the context of collective action by several entities that are essentially collaborating on the creation of a work of art. However, in the domain of AI use and algorithmic creation, this problem takes on a new dimension and a different specificity. This is especially true in the context of ethical dilemmas and the definition of "human originality". Of course, AI can be seen here as an intermediate tool used by the creator. It is certainly a unique tool with creative potential unmatched by anything that has come before. But it is also a tool that generates new challenges within the discourse on the originality of art and its ethical implications. These are undoubtedly intriguing challenges, because AI is an important point of debate on originality today. I mention this in the context of the problem and challenge, but I do not deal with this issue more broadly, as it goes beyond the scope of this article.

Finally, the problem is also that our (currently imposed) way of thinking about originality cannot be tied to the history of art as such. I mentioned earlier that the current narrative about originality has a history and historical roots. And it is not identical to the history and "long life" of the concept, and even extreme to the meanings once attributed to it. In other words, currently shared beliefs about originality, including making it one of the most important

descriptive categories in the discourses of art and art criticism, are not beyond history. They are merely the result of modern redefinitions. A narrative that has been accepted for some time and strongly conventionalized, which, to paraphrase Katarzyna Rosner, turns out to be not only a currently functioning kind of linguistic concretization, but a discursive "*structure in which our understanding*"[6] of originality runs.

3. Contexts, Conditions, Reinterpretations

In light of these dilemmas, the conclusion seems to be one: the discourse of originality requires the determinateness of the gaze, and thus the contextual anchoring of considerations. To be anchored in a process of "*framing*" that profiles the data and meanings brought by the context in an ad hoc *manner*, linking them to the work of interpretation, in which it is "*history that inevitably and significantly participates*"[8]. And it's not just about the modeling influence of the contexts of the past, but also about our historicity, about what we as interpretive and cultural subjects bring to the process of understanding. Our gaze is not, after all, as I have already written, a gaze from nowhere. We do not look with an unprejudiced eye, but rather with an eye that engages all our cultural competencies and argumentative rationales, which we make the variables of our experience of the world. Thus, we invariably ascribe certain properties, qualities and meanings to works of art only "*[...] by means of appropriate abstractions created within the framework of variable contexts*"[10] and interpretive strategies. In which one resolves, if not everything, then certainly a lot. And changing contexts and interpretive commonalities usually lead to reshuffling and redefinition. Not once radical and revealing − whether we want it or not − different facets of seemingly the same thing.

As I mentioned, the current understanding of originality was shaped by the thought and practice of modernity. Thus, the breakthrough came in the 18th century, both contextually and discursively. Although certain symptoms of cultural and social reorganization were already foreshadowed by Paul Hazard's dated 1690–1715 crisis of European consciousness, the decisive factor here turned out to be the worldview and ideological upheaval of the Enlightenment. In its dynamic structure of ideologies, concepts, tendencies expressed "*respect for otherness*" and novelty, but also the transition from pre-modern to modern culture. After all, "*the early phase of modernity is the time*", writes Marshall Berman, "*before the French and American revolutions, it is [...] the voice of John Jacques Rousseau, who first used the word 'moderniste' in the way the 19th and 20th centuries would do*"[20]. I would only add that I think of modernity − like Andrzej Szahaj[21] − as a cultural-historical formation marking the civilizational advance of the West. As opposed to modernism, which is combined with a set of worldview, reformation and aesthetic beliefs characteristic of this formation. And although the sources of modernity turn out to be diverse and the impulses of modernization scattered the Enlightenment foundation is not in doubt. However, the reinterpretation of originality that coincides with this time is connected not only with the semantic transformation of the concept, but also with the cultural reorganizations that the Enlightenment unleashed and the modernizing ambitions of modernity strengthened. The two, moreover, are proving to be complementary. The vector of culture, until recently oriented towards the past and history, then turned, in the name of Enlightenment progress and modernization of the world, towards the future and change, towards what is new and different. Legitimizing in the domain of artistic culture both discursive reorientations, including the reinterpretation of the concept of originality, and the progressive dynamics of modern art. The discourse of originality has thus reached a breaking point, in which the previous profile of thinking, and to put it in the language of Stanley Fish, the cultural "*structure of norms [...] with its accepted background of practices, goals and aspirations, has given way to a different*"[22] structure of understanding originality.

The article opens with a presentation of the established modern way of thinking about originality. So I will stay with the concept here, deferring the issue of cultural reorganization to a later date. Let us then refer to history and etymology. Let's turn to the Latin "origo". This is because the etymological meaning of "origo" is connected with the pre-modern understanding of originality, but also with the resulting consequences for creative practice. "Origo" indicates a beginning, an origin, signifies genesis, cause, lineage. This orientation to the past emphasized conformity to

the source and archetypal. In the simplest terms, originality was then identified with fidelity to "exemplars" grounded in history, rejecting innovation and any transgression of this principle. The source of solutions was not the author's imagination, but the power of authorities, a recognized and conventionalized prototype, the beginning and cause of subsequent concretizations. Of course, this did not mean rigorous imitation and did not exclude formal transformations. These resulted from many variables, including the sensitivity and competence of the author or the specifics of the medium. Nevertheless, the binding imperative was fidelity to solutions sanctioned by tradition. Persistence in convention and source repetition was considered a kind of sanctioned norm of art and craft. Thus, it is in vain to look, as Ernst Gombrich says, "*for our modern conception of originality in the past [...] since the old patterns perform their function well*"[23]. As a result, one can venture to say that this focus on the past and the associated "*iconographic economy*" makes it possible to think of art as always intertextual, regardless of the postmodern provenance of the term. As a tangle of various matter, inspirations, references, repetitions and compilations. As about a structure of practices and norms in which originality was combined with historical originals, and what was considered original and more original was "*that which was closer to the beginning − the 'origo' − of the original archetypal pattern, and therefore that which had more the character of a copy than of an individual creation*"[24]. This is a very different line of thinking from the current one. This also legitimized in the study of iconography of the past the cognitive and descriptive potential of such categories as iconographic topos, archetypal image, "exemplum", frame image, "iconographic traditionalism" or "iconographic economy". Today, by contrast, we contrast originality with everything it originally stood for. The practices and criteria, as well as the sphere of concepts that once defined it (fidelity to the original, reproductive repetition, copying, adherence to iconographic patterns or compositional schemes) have been recontextualized and now belong to the antonyms of originality. We will probably react with astonishment today to phrases like originality of duplication or originality of uncreative reproduction, seeing them as peculiar linguistic oddities, oxymorons or antilogues.

What we must take as unchangeable, however, is the not inconsiderable importance of originality for artistic practice, both before and in its modern incarnation. Although the profile of this impact (as will be discussed later) has changed with the modern redefinition. Also, originality has always been associated with a beginning, a source, but with the difference that today sourcehood means the need to establish the new. In the past, it was linked to origin and archetypal reference. As a result, the former incarnation of originality is the inverse of our understanding of it, a kind of "a rebours" version − closer to the copy because conditioned by fidelity to the iconic original.

Confronting the past with the modern narrative, the initiating moment of this discursive upheaval appears to be the publication of Edward Young's 1759 essay *Conjectures on Original Composition*. This, one of the most significant "*prefunding discourses of Romanticism*", is also a breakthrough in thinking about originality, the consequences of which involve a revision of previous senses of originality, a redefinition of the source, and *a* "*theoretical paradigm shift in thinking about literature*"[25] and soon about art. The vector of the turnaround was marked by the revision of the criteria for evaluating a work and the exposure of the role and individuality of the author. More precisely, the shift from "*the requirement of imitation and conformity to existing norms towards the power of influence and, above all, towards the author himself, his personality and talent, and towards the individual, original creative predisposition demonstrated by him*"[25]. This is a completely different perspective resulting from a redefinition of the "source" foundation of originality. Young's update linked originality to the need to establish a new/initial, the source of which is no longer tradition and fidelity to the patterns of the past but solely the author, his individuality and creative genius. Young writes about it as follows: "*An original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made: imitations are often a sort of manufacture wrought up by those mechanics, art, and labor, out of preexistent materials not their own*"[26].

Initiated in *Conjectures on Original Composition*, the reinterpretation of originality is a turning point in previous narratives; initiating a discursive reevaluation to match the modern and currently shared way of thinking about originality. What proved decisive here was the association of

originality with the author's individuality and openness to all that is new and innovative. The role of the author in the discourses of art and literature will, moreover, consistently increase, at least in the area of modern culture[27]. "*For the first time, the criteria of originality, novelty and uniqueness also appeared in the evaluation of its production and the work itself*"[25]. This way of thinking was then reinforced by the idea of the inspired artist and "*individual creative freedom*" and finally by *the* avant-garde artist's conviction *that* "*with his own self as the origin of his work, that production will have the same uniqueness as he; the condition of his own singularity will guarantee the originality of what he makes*"[13]. These tendencies were expressed by the artistic modernisms of the 19th and 20th centuries, driven (at least until a certain point) by "*an unshakeable belief in the constant modernization of art*"[28]. From the modern breakthrough, then, one must speak of a practice focused on the potential; transgressive actions and a polyphony of positions that proliferated in the name of the grand project of modernizing both art and the world.

4. Between Stabilization and Modernization

In support of the presented discourses and reorganizations came cultural conditions, determining basically everything mentioned. Of fundamental importance here was the distinctiveness of the cultural interpretive communities from the perspective of which these discourses were constructed. It is the culture and the cognitive infrastructure that shape the determinacy of phenomena, discourses and concepts, conditioning not only the arguments accompanying these narratives, but also the rationale for their existence. Let us, therefore, supplement the picture of the structure in which thinking about originality took place with cultural components, highlighting in particular those tendencies that corresponded most strongly with the issues discussed.

The key issue here seems to be the cultural understanding of change. This issue projects not only the way of understanding originality and artistic practice, but also the confrontation of modernity (as a culture of change and innovation) with the reality of slow duration. From this perspective, the standards of a culture with a low rate of change turn out to be a natural legitimization of this way of thinking about originality, which is related to the etymological meaning of "origo". More broadly, it is about the past-oriented profile of traditional culture. The culture of pre-industrial communities, which pitted stabilization mechanisms against change that demolished the cultural "status quo". In the past, change threatened to disintegrate the world, spawning fear and uncertainty of the unknown and foreign. In the reality of the slow lingering, change was something undesirable, dangerous, even satanic, as in the Middle Ages, in which "*the Church eagerly exterminates novitates and every innovation is a sin*"[29]. Pre-industrial communities thus turned to what was stabilized by custom and history, making the horizon of reference − identical to the narrative of originality − the past and tradition. It was in relation to them that the standards of everyday life were shaped. The past and tradition provided an antidote to uncertainty. It could not be otherwise, since until the modern breakthrough "*European culture valued stability and dignified slowness higher, which, by all means, was often threatened by wars, epidemics and natural disasters. The changes brought about by these factors, however, were seen in terms of fortuitous events and were not regarded as a value, taking care rather − as far as possible − to quickly restore the previous state*"[30]. Thus, within traditional cultures, changes did occur, but they were expressions of situational transformations not cultural trends. Nor were they revolutionary in nature, rather an unhurried evolution usually grasped in a multi-generational perspective.

The breakthrough came in the 18th century with the formation of the modern formation and the cultural reinterpretation of change. This one brought a complete metamorphosis. Formerly shared threats and fears were abandoned and negative connotations were replaced by a kind of "*intoxication with change*"[30]. The past-oriented profile of traditional culture was supplanted by the Enlightenment idea of progress and the modernizing ambitions of modernity. Change has become a symbol of both. The concept of the Marquis de Condorcet, certainly the greatest thinkerthough not the only singer of change and progress at the time, unleashed the momentum of cultural progressions and transformations, leading to modernity's fundamental conviction of change as a principle of history. Since then, writes Chris Jenks, "*conventional post-Enlightenment rhetoric seemed to assert that what is could not be better, that we must anticipate and accelerate the arrival of the next stage of our*

cultural evolution, that what is now being realized was the great desire of the past"[31].

Reinterpreted, stripped of its negative past, the idea of change has grown into one of the dominant tendencies of modernity. It has undergone, like originality, a total transformation. Naturally fitting in with the reformist program that was barded at every turn, and the progressive profile of the formation. Which contested antiquity, and if it turned to the past, it was usually only "*so that it itself could conceive of itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new*"[32]. What's more, the ennoblement of change has proved so grounded and intriguing at the same time that it is one of the cultural hallmarks of our reality and current art as well. Whether we think of the present as late modernity, modernity in a phase "*that has lost touch with the roots of its own modernity*"[20], or postmodernity and postmodernity. Writing about the reinterpretation of change as a symbol of progress and modernization, it is still necessary to mention Max Weber's idea of "*disenchantment of the world*". Its fundamental consequence, expressing the progressiveness of the formation, was the atomization of the cultural structure. Associated with modernization through rationalization. The integrity of the system of traditional cultures was then shattered, completely altered. The place of the system was taken by sovereign cultural spheres, subjected to rationalization. Including art, which, in the domain of the modernizing tendencies of the era, not only transformed itself with unprecedented dynamism, but also became a tool for modernizing the world. In short, the modern breakthrough built on the foundation of change and progress unleashed art's inexorable capacity for transformation and artistic redefinition. "*Antitraditionalist energy*" of these reorganizations went hand in hand with a semantic reorientation of the notion of originality. Both legitimized modernity with its modernizing efforts and narrative of change, with its fascination with novelty and desire for innovation.

5. Multiple Perspectives: Dilemmas and Problems Continue

The differences presented regarding the cultural understanding of originality and the mechanism of change resonate significantly within artistic practice. On the one hand oriented towards the past and iconographic originals, on the other programmatically transgressive and modernizing. Analyzing the art of the past, we will notice that, although changes occurred, never with the intensity that characterized the last two centuries. This is because, according to cultural standards, the principle of slow duration prevailed at the time. So much so that "*there was a striking continuity for thousands of years, which, although recognized by any art history, was rarely subjected to careful theoretical analysis*"[15]. The past, therefore, has not produced anything comparable to the momentum of modern art, with its density of innovations, transformations, alternative proposals and explorations. Despite the fact that within traditionalist-oriented creativity there were various attitudes towards history and tradition. Activities were not only stabilizing, but also reinterpretative. However, stabilizing activity, inherent in cultures with low dynamics of change, prevailed. And it was not a matter of "*a deficiency of inventory capacity, but rather [...] an act of reverence towards the images*"[33] of the past. It is a creation that gives expression to traditional originality and a kind of "*iconographic economy*". Conventional, eclectic creativity, full of concretizations rooted in the past. In which there was no place, let alone permission for spontaneity and arbitrariness. Adherence to elaborated solutions and "*iconographic traditionalism*" can be seen especially in the area of religious art, strongly conventionalized and often rigorously adhering to recognized concretizations. As I think about it, icon art seems to be the best expression of this. In this case, the principle of similarity prevailed so much that, as St. Theodore the Studite writes, "*even if we do not manage to see in an icon an image that completely conforms to the original, to which imperfect execution may be to blame, [...] we worship the icon not insofar as it differs from the original, but insofar as it resembles it. [...] In other words*", adds Leonid Uspienski, "*the essence of the matter is not what is lacking in the icon's resemblance to its prototype, but what it, despite everything, retains in common with it*"[34]. This iconographic traditionalism also prevailed in the circle of Latin art. This can be illustrated by the example of the motif of Christ carrying the cross in the redactions of Martin Shongauer (**Figure 1**), Albrecht Dűrer, Hieronymus Bosch (**Figure 2**) or Peter Bruegel the Elder (**Figure 3**). The repetition of solutions here is evident.

Figure 1. Martin Schongauer *Christ Carrying the Cross.*
Source: Public domain available from: https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.50889.html.

Figure 2. Jerome Bosch *Christ Carrying the Cross.*
Source: Public domain available from: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hieronim_Bosch#/media/Plik:Hieronymus_Bosch_-_Christ_Carrying_the_Cross_-_WGA2498.jpg.

Figure 3. Pieter Bruegel the Elder *Procession to Calvary* (excerpt).
Source: Public domain available from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=148430.

However, the mechanisms of adapting iconographic "exemplars" were the norm for creativity in the broadest sense, including within the framework of stylistic and artistic revivals. We can consider the classicist tendencies as a model in this case, being an expression of the idea of returning to antiquity, as a source and symbol of past perfection and stylistic consolidation[35].

The retreat from these stabilizing tendencies in art came with the modern turn. The reinterpretation of originality coupled with the cult of change and novelty remodeled the profile of artistic practice. Orientation toward the past was replaced by activities with transgressive aspirations. Driven by the modernizing ambitions of modernity. To make everything new and in a new way. The expansiveness and radicalism of formal experiments gained updated goals: change, innovation and originality liberated from old connotations. Artistic modernisms[36] began to multiply one after another. The scale of the proposals was astounding, and the regularity with which it took place made one dizzy. The creativity of slow duration was overshadowed by an eruption of clashing currents, ideas, artistic displacements, and, in the long run, activities entering territories hitherto unrelated to art. In this situation, one can even speak of "*an overheated pace of succession of types of art, one of which is trying to outdo the other*"[37]. This unleashed (and unabated) energy of artistic redefinitions remains in close relation to the new concept of originality. The increment of innovation seems to naturally favor originality. Although this "modernist innovation", as Ryszard Nycz emphasizes, "*is often [...] the effect of the amnesia of cultural memory or the result of the rhetoric of artistic persuasion imposing the impression of creating something absolutely 'new' as a result of suppressing or obliterating the traces of [...] already invented*"[38]. However, this practice not only confirmed the modernizing tendencies of art and the era, but also generated dilemmas and challenges for the discourse on originality. Which had to face not only the increment of innovations, the optionality of authorial strategies and the dispersion of criteria, but also actions that undermined everything that until recently still constituted art and the nature of the work.

Ontic and paradigmatic reorganizations of art seem to be a particular expression of these layered dilemmas. For we usually make the field of consideration of originality the most tame model of art (traditional artistic paradigm). We customarily associate the uniqueness and singularity of solutions with the formal and expressive shape and physical structure of the object. In fact, until the time of the first avant-garde, art was confined within the traditional artistic paradigm. It is art based on the ontology of the object and always, though in different ways, formally structured. Structuring, as a consequence of the author's creative intervention, determined the corresponding formal properties. As a result, the perceptually graspable properties fixed in the material seemed to determine not only the generic distinctiveness and qualitative specificity of the creation, but also its membership in the class of artistic objects. Originality was thus considered in the context of formal solutions defining the physical parameters of the project. This way of thinking gained discursive support in the narratives of those currents that "*looked for constitutive features in the properties of the object itself (formalism, structuralism, phenomenology) and those that pointed mainly to the role of creators and recipients (e.g., emotionalism, expressionist and psychoanalytic concepts)*"[39]. However, the procedure seems more complex. Going beyond the seemingly satisfying generality of this relationship, we must not forget that the properties of a work of art, although embodied in the material, are always properties seen by someone in a certain way. They are therefore neither objective nor identical for everyone. They are formed in perception isomorphic with interpretation. And this means that their once unquestionable dependence on the exclusively formal structuring of the object must be questioned. Similarly, we must think with detachment, contrary to established notions and common sense reasons, about their decisive role in the question of the originality of a work of art. This is mainly because within formally structured art, including contemporary art, it is not so much the properties embodied in the matter that will prevail, as their immediate interpretative concretizations. For with them, in fact, we are always dealing. Besides, the originality of art, for obvious reasons, cannot be combined only with formal solutions. This would entail a cursory narrowing of the right to originality exclusively to the art of the traditional artistic paradigm, and the properties of the work itself to physical characteristics only. This is contradicted by all artistic redefinitions that lack formal shaping and undermine recent aesthetic principals. Under-

takings and proposals that mark a shift from a perceptually graspable "conjunction of qualities" to intentionally and conceptually oriented qualifications. This requires optional descriptive strategies and recognition of the intentional, historical and cultural properties of the work in addition to the physical.

To say in this case that the negation of the need for formal structuring has changed the basis of qualification is not enough. Redefining art, the practice challenged not only the fundamental aesthetic invariants and established obviousness[40], but also the understanding of art as exclusively the domain of craftsmanship. This is a paradigmatic shift that simultaneously undermined thinking about art products as autonomous and self-determining entities with their own uniqueness. Everything that seemed to support generic and aesthetic qualifications, including those about the originality of the endeavor, was challenged here. The consequence was a turn from the perceptual to the conceptual experience of art and an ontic reorganization related to the splitting of the traditional unity of the work. Devoid of formal elaboration, the object requires conceptualization, the power of "cognitive operations". As such, it has nothing that conditions artisticity. As a result, a work of conceptual art is already a hybrid creation composed of "*two separate objects, closely related to each other*", although "*with different ontic characteristics*"[41]. The former is an artifact, the latter *a* "*conceptual art project*". With the artifact "*[...] providing only the context for the recipient's mental activities leading to the establishment of the project*". Which means that, as in the case of Dadaist "finished things", it is the conceptual idea that turns out to be decisive for any qualifications (uniqueness or originality). Although both of these elements, Ryszard Kluszczynski emphasizes, "*despite their different ways of existence, status and roles played, [...] together determine the scope of a work of conceptual art*"[41].

The situation seems even more complicated when we recall the projects that programmatically dematerialize art. Questioning the traditional object ontology of the work and the constancy and immutability of physical parameters. This area includes ventures that are both ephemeral, changeable, relatively indeterminate, as well as performative practices and actionist art of action. We are also talking about participatory and, finally, interactive art, practices that complement the dismantling of object-based art, in which the ontology of the object has been replaced by an "*ontology of movement*", of process, of event (for example **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Marina Abramovic's performance *The Artist is Present.*
Source: Shelby Lessig, own work, CC BY-SA 3.0. Available from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12134088.

In the context of these reorganizations, we are no longer dealing with something that is complete and at the same time prior to the activity of the viewer. On the contrary, it is the viewer (or more precisely, the participant, the interactor) within the framework of the new hybrid structure and the "*idea of distributed authorship*" that establishes, through his participation and involvement, the eventual status of participatory / interactive art[42]. This is art established ad hoc, situational, which in place of the presence of an artistic product introduced the presence of a

tool (interface) and the singularity and uniqueness of experience, the causal activity of the interactor (**Figure 5**). As a result, within the creative processes of participatory or interactive art, the ontology of the artwork and the network of relations between the author − the artwork − the viewer were redefined.

Figure 5. Jeffrey Shaw, *Golden Calf.*
Source: AdaWork201, Archive of Digital Art. Available from: https://digitalartarchive.at/database/work/201 (cited 20 June 2025).

In the situation of these transformations, the background of consideration of originality ceased to be the reality of the object. Its place was taken by the eventual nature of art, with all its complex infrastructure and temporality. This is not just about the possibilities or innovativeness of interfaces, but mainly about the individuality of actions and interactions. Indeed, the singularity, uniqueness, originality of causal activity is that special kind of bond that is formed and defined in the ad hoc relationship between artist and participant, or possibly interface and interactor. Specific due to the artistic nature of participatory and interactive art, but especially importantly, peculiar, individual and unique to both the artistic event and the experience of the interactor. Who, in the ad hoc, "*strategies of pragmatization and engagement*" concretizes this artistic event, bringing into it his cultural competence and understanding of the world.

6. Conclusions

I mentioned at the beginning of the article that the concept of originality itself is not particularly problematic today. The meaning of the concept is, of course, always an interpretation shaped − most generally speaking − in the horizon of history and the cultural infrastructure of understanding. This can be clearly seen in the domain of discourse on originality. The matter becomes more complicated, however, when we associate the issue of originality with the domain of art and artistic practice. In this case, we are not talking about the practice that linked the originality of the work with fidelity to the originals, but about those tendencies that, after the turn of modernity, bet on "*anti-traditionalist energy*", preferring transgressiveness and innovative solutions. However, the situation becomes even more complicated when originality is considered in the domain of, discussed earlier, paradigmatic transformations of art.

From this perspective, the discourse on originality today seems as complex as ever. And while there are more dilemmas in it, uncertainty and ad hocness are mixed with certainty. The predominance of the former, however, is crushing. Not only because of the aforementioned multi-media and multi-form nature of art, but above all because of its inexorable propensity for conversion and "*rapid transformations [...] beyond any established boundaries*"[10]. In a situation of progressive artistic redefinitions, confusions and contaminations, questioning the previous foundations and embodiments of artisticity, recent points of support have fallen out of circulation and lost their operational effectiveness. The liberated transgressive profile of artistic practice has revealed art's incredible ability to explore the potential. But it has also caused art today to

balance between definiteness and indeterminacy, presence and absence, constancy and temporality, concreteness and dematerialization. It is difficult in this thicket of innovations to discuss the originality of art, especially within ventures that question the holistic nature of the artwork and balance on the edge of identification. This, in turn, requires not only reflexive flexibility, but above all a diversification of descriptive practices, critically reorganizing their own premises and procedures within art-generated challenges and recontextualizations.

Significant reorientations and vector changes are necessary here. We can no longer, for obvious reasons, close ourselves within the circle of qualitative innovations or conjunctures of features associated with formally structured art. The innovative productivity of current art is concretized in the intentional and conceptual dimensions, in new openings and new territories of art, but above all in the orientation towards the potential. And this happens in the context of not only the constant shifting of the field of artistic and aesthetic experience, but also the creative practice itself, the presence and absence of the artwork. After all, the practices of participatory and, in particular, interactive art tell us that the discourse on the originality of art should not be referred only to what is, what is found by the viewer, the participant, the interactor, but also to what will be. What is related to the establishment of art in action and is the result of the engaged activity of the participant and the interactor.

New problems and challenges are also generated and multiplied, as I mentioned earlier, by the use of new technologies and AI in creative processes. Today, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish creative reinterpretations from original works. AI problematizes authorship and authenticity in various ways. Added to this are ethical dilemmas and the problem of defining "human originality". This intriguing issue, although it goes beyond the scope of this article, is today an important point of discourse on the originality of art, but also an area that seriously complicates this discourse.

What, on the other hand, should be considered immutable in the discourse on the originality of art? We are always talking, and here I move to the side of certainty, about exclusively contextual, conventional and historical narratives. Hence the ad hoc, relational and relational dimension of originality, shaped in reference and interpretive concretizations. Concretizations whose credibility has ceased to be a "*two-part relationship between judgment and state of affairs*" changing, as Ludwig Fleck suggests, into a "*three-part* relationship *between judgment, 'state of affairs' and the current state of knowledge and thought culture*"[43]. This is because the argumentative rationales we reach for and refer to are not our property, but the property of the cultural collective and interpretive communities from whose perspective we understand the world, ourselves and others. In other words, originality must be thought of as something inevitably dynamic, which, under certain circumstances and for reasons shared, we have been or will be inclined to recognize as original. In turn, from this perspective, it seems that in the past originality was a commitment that was essentially simple in its realization, because it was determined by convention and reverence for the images and patterns of tradition. Originality after the modern turn, and especially today, has become an overt challenge. A mirage founded on the progressive energy of art, which, paradoxically, being an expression of almost unlimited creative possibilities at the same time problematizes what it was supposed to be the fulfillment of.

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