

Word Work:

Authentic: of undisputed origin; unique. Something authentic is the 'real deal'. See Original, Unique.

Original: Present or existing from the beginning; first or earliest; created directly and personally by a particular artist; not a Copy or Imitation. See Authentic.

Copy: A thing made to be similar or identical to another. In this context, a copy is an inexact Replication of an Original.

Replication: A replication is something that has been replicated. In this context, a replication is an identical Copy.

Copyright: The exclusive legal right, given to an originator or an assignee to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, or musical material, and to authorize others to do the same. Serves as a form of Intellectual Property rights. Protects the Fetishization of an idea.

Imitation: A thing intended to simulate or Copy something else. In this context, an Imitation is a Copy of the Fetish, but not necessarily the object itself.

Intellectual Property: A work or invention that is the result of creativity, such as a manuscript or a design, to which one has rights and for which one may apply for a patent, copyright, trademark, etc. Think the property over a Fetish.

Piracy: The unauthorized use or reproduction of another's work. Shows a hijacking of the fetish, and disregard for Copyright, Intellectual Property.

Unique: being the only one of its kind; unlike anything else. Allows something to be Authentic, and have no Copies.

Identity: The fact of being who or what a person or thing is. Things can have multiple identities depending on what perspective they are viewed from. An identity is often unique.

Fetishization: The attribution of inherent Value or powers to an object. A fetish gives arbitrary value to something which is not inherently valuable, namely everything. Is often part of an Identity.

Value: The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something. Often arises due to Fetishization of Authenticity or Uniqueness.

The Ship of Theseus

In the late 1st century, the Roman historian Plutarch described the idea of Theseus's ship, a ship, which through many battles and voyages had become damaged, and had its parts replaced. At some point, the ship had had all its components replaced, leaving a question of if, after all the replacement, it was the same ship. This theme guides the discussion of copying, piracy, authenticity, and imitation outlined here. First, the core question of this concept will be discussed; whether something is truly authentic or original to begin with. Secondly the exactness of a replication will be examined, to determine to what degree a copy is actually a copy, as well as, if one could make a perfect copy, would it be an original. Finally, the topic of intellectual property will be analyzed, in order to determine what rights an inventor does and should have over an idea and the implications of previous sections on these assumptions of rights. In observing these conundrums, ideally a greater understanding of the nature of copies, originals, and right will be achieved.

Starting off, what makes something authentic? What gives something an identity? Very few objects in nature are persistent in an untouched, unchanged form. Humans for example replace all the cells in their lungs every six months. Depending on the source, some reports state the entire body is replaced in either seven or ten years. At that point, the question arises, are you authentic? What identifies you? The answer is fetishization. You exist as a complex idea, an identity, per say. It does not matter that the physical components you make up are replaced and recycled, the image, the concept, the fetishization of you is intact. To different people, this fetishization appears different. To your mom, you may appear as a loving son or daughter; to your kids, possibly a stern or perhaps indulgent parental figure. Your own image of yourself is far different from that of anyone else's, yet each manifestation of the fetish of you is a separate, yet unified identity. They are all you and you are all of them. So, in this sense, nothing is truly authentic, yet everything is. Authenticity comes from a fetishization, not any reliance on physical components, and thus remains a purely subjective concept.ⁱ

The issues revolving around copying, counterfeiting, and general replication lead to an interesting deeper question, what constitutes a copy? Technically, a copy would be an exact replication, down to the atomic structure, of an object. In that case, due to the general uniformity of atoms and elementary particles, the copy would exactly replicate the original. In fact, it would be the original in a sense, as, if there is no difference between one thing and another, are they not the same thing? Thus, in order to better understand the concept being discussed, a copy cannot be an exact replication, and instead, must be an imitation. Johns explains an early conundrum of the question of copying, in relation to a great machine, the microcosm, "The question became not the nature of original authorship, but the nature of copying. A machine this complex posed the question of what, exactly, the act of copying-of pirating- actually was. After all, a copy of the microcosm could never be exactly the same as the original. Material always differed to some extent in a reproduction. So did workmanship."ⁱⁱ There is an inherent loss of fidelity in a copy, such that a copy is not an original object, yet is, as we know it to be, a copy. It is in this loss of fidelity the true indicator of changing value is

relieved: fetishization. It is the fetish surrounding the idea of an original, exact object that adds value, not necessarily the function of an object itself. Mass produced shovels, for example, all come from an original blueprint, but each copy has slight differences in the structure of their material, and other flaws involved in manufacturing, or perhaps even design revisions on an original prototype. But each shovel functions in the exact same way, and accomplishes the exact same task. It is the power of fetishization that attributes value to the 'rare' prototype, rather than the mundane shovel. Uniqueness, and the fetishization that surrounds uniqueness, determine the value of an original versus a copy, and not the other way around.

So then what is the true issue at fault in cases of piracy? It appears paradoxical that value is attributed to an original and less so to copies, but the act of piracy is often considered as bad as stealing the original itself. This issue can be resolved with the concept of intellectual property, of ideas. While copies are not exact physical replications of their original, they are exact mental representations of the original idea behind a concept. As said in Johns about literary piracy, "A reprinted book was 'the very same substance,' replicated by a 'mere mechanical Act.' That was why it was accounted 'theft.'" ⁱⁱⁱ This supports the idea of counterfeits being copies of the fetishization behind the concept itself, and prey off of that fetishization in order to gain popularity, prestige, and distribution. The origins of the term piracy are easy to discern in this interpretation. A copy steals the value of an original for its own gain. The concept of intellectual property rights stems from recognition of this ideological fetishization, and acts to protect it. Copyright is a mechanism by which people protect their fetishized notions and ideas in order to propagate the fetishization to others, under their own control, rather than that of a pirate. It allows one to shape that fetishization in their own way, rather than in the way of others. In this way, copyright, and the fetishization which accompanies it, seeks to preserve the 'purity' of the idea; to prevent the degradation and deviation from an original, to prevent or at least slow the effect that a copy has. The idea is simple. As time marches on, a copy becomes the 'original' of a newer generation. Preventing deviation from the absolute original preserves the purity of an idea, and thus the controllable fetishization surrounding it. ^{iv}

Fetishization is at the core of the idea of value in society, even when, at first glance, there shouldn't be. An exact replica of an original would still be regarded as a copy due to fetishization, as the idea of time and history are fetishized far beyond basic physical composition. The concept of fetishization also allows an uninterrupted notion of identity, such as with the Ship of Theseus, or humans, or many other transient existences. Fetishes are valued so much, people enact laws and rules to protect their right to a definitive fetishization, which in turn, is another fetishization, this time of the concept of fetishization itself. Fetishization has always been, and will continue to be, the definitive way humans measure value, because humans are often not rational creatures, but emotional, irrational creatures, who value things for little reason, other than their being a value to valuing. In the end, piracy is a copying of a fetish, not a physical thing, and recognizing that allows one to uncloak the fetish, and perhaps act a little saner. Or not. The idea of rational decisions being an ideal is yet another fetish. So really, fetishes should be embraced, because everyone has them, and everyone always will. ^{vii}

ⁱ This section here reminds me of a concept I learned in my linguistics class this quarter. In the sounds of words, there are 'Phonemes' and 'Allophones'. Phonemes are the mental representations of sounds as we think of them, while allophones are the realization of those sounds in speech. One phoneme can have multiple allophones. For example, the sound /p/ takes on a different set of attributes depending on where in a word the sound is. At the beginning of a word, the /p/ sound is aspirated, we let out a large puff of air. But in the middle of a word, it is not aspirated. The sounds are slightly different, but we think of them as one sound. I apply the same idea to identities and fetishization. All the different realizations of one's identity come together to create the fetish of the overall identity.

ⁱⁱ Piracy, Johns pg 134

ⁱⁱⁱ Piracy, Johns pg 135

^{iv} I.e. The Disney purity idea that was brought up in class. And we are okay with that, because we want the fetishization of the Disney image to be as consistent as possible.

^v Not quite paper related, but on Monday you mentioned ACADs and EEPers. I enjoyed that, as I am an ACAD myself. In fact, there are two other ACADs in the class. I'll let you figure out who they are yourself, as not everyone advertizes it. Who doesn't like a little mystery? ;)

^{vi} While I do have quotes for direct lifting from Johns, a lot of these ideas in general take some inspiration from it. I have ended up combining my ideas with some of the good ones from Johns, and hopefully have produced something coherent. I couldn't really see much connection to treasure island though, but you did say to focus on Johns, so I suppose I'm ok.