

# Foreword

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The word “copy” is shedding the negative connotations that adhered to it during the period when artistic avant-gardes triumphed. Its historical importance, its fundamental role in the conservation of models, and its function in revealing hierarchies of taste have been accorded new recognition. To these gains in understanding due to recent research can be added both a radical questioning of the pertinence of the original in contemporary art and the proliferation of virtual objects in our daily environment. The moment is thus ripe, no doubt, to expand the inquiry, both historically and geographically. Indeed, to our knowledge, a comparative approach to the role of the copy in various civilizations has not yet been attempted. This issue of *Diogenes* is intended as a preliminary sketch of such an endeavor as well as a means of paying homage to Roger Caillois, who placed the copy at the center of his aesthetic reflection, as Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat’s postface reminds us.

True, many centers of cultural production are missing from the rolls, and the moment of synthesis is still far off. But the essays gathered in this issue will show how the place of the unique and the multiple is one of the fundamental keys to understanding a given society’s relation to the very notion of creation, to time, even to the sacred. Beyond their diversity of approaches, all of these contributions prove that what is at stake between the type and its reproductions exceeds the boundaries of the history of art per se and extends into the domain of anthropology. No duplication takes place without a departure from and a modification of meaning. In art, to copy is never to clone.

Translated from the French by Jennifer Curtiss Gage