

“THERE IS NO PROGRESS, CHANGE IS ALL WE KNOW.” NOTES ON DUCHAMP’S CONCEPT OF PLASTIC DURATION

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ABSTRACT

Henri Bergson is generally recognized as one of the most influential philosophers in the history of historical avant-gardism. Nevertheless, it has been widely neglected that Bergson’s philosophy also played a crucial role for the radically new concept of art that Marcel Duchamp developed based on his critical attitude towards the avant-gardes. First and foremost, this is apparent in view of Duchamp’s paintings *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* and *Bride* of 1912, as they both feature an idea of transition laying the foundation for his *Large Glass* and associated works. But there is also another cross-connection that one wouldn’t expect at the first glance. As this paper argues, Duchamp paradoxically also draws on Bergson’s ideas with his ready-mades, pointing to that productive interplay of intuition and intellect, which Bergson defined as a vital source for any kind of imagination and agency. Thus, Duchamp’s idea of choosing his ready-mades in terms of a “rendezvous with fate,” which he also reflected in his writing experiments *The* and *Rendezvous*, can be closely linked to his declared interest in Bergson’s “primacy of change,” leading him to explore the idea of “plastic duration.”

KEYWORDS

Marcel Duchamp, Henri Bergson, ready-mades, writing experiments, philosophy of time and space, intuition, humor

It was not until 1958, when Marcel Duchamp was already in his seventies and only just on his way to become one of the most celebrated artists of his time,¹ that in an interview with the Princeton undergraduate student Laurence Stephen Gold he underlined the crucial role that the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) played for his art with his “primacy of change in life.” “Change and life are synonymous. We must realize this and accept it,” Duchamp explained. “Change is what makes life interesting. There is no progress, change is all we know.”² At least this is what the young student remembered, as the possibility of change might also have

played a certain role in his documentation of the interview: “I did not take notes during the time I spent with Mr. Duchamp,” Gold actually had to admit, “but I feel that the following pages contain fair paraphrases of his comments, and in a surprising number of cases his exact words.”³ Despite conflicting views on Duchamp’s attitude towards Bergson’s philosophy in general,⁴ in view of Gold’s paraphrases one can assume that Duchamp had good reasons to bring Bergson into play at a moment of history when Bergson’s former glory had long since faded, yet to be restored by the groundbreaking work of Gilles Deleuze.⁵

Taking this assumption as a port of departure, this paper aims to argue that Duchamp’s concept of the ready-made, which he developed while working on the concept and realization of his masterpiece *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* in the period between 1912 and 1923 (Fig. 3.2), can be viewed in direct relation to Bergson’s philosophy, which had an immense impact on the art world of the beginning of the 20th century. In order to give an insight into Duchamp’s philosophical approach to the concept of the ready-made, this paper is structured in three parts. To begin with, it introduces Bergson’s concept of “duration” or “lived time,” forming an opposite pole to his idea of the “ready-made” as a starting point for Duchamp’s emancipation from historical avant-gardism. Secondly, it takes a closer look at Duchamp’s playful exploration of ready-made objects and concepts, which dates back to a series of experiments and notes from 1913 and 1914 and which Duchamp systematically put to the test after he had arrived in New York in 1915. And finally, it introduces some specifications on the principle of the ready-made against the background of Duchamp’s reflections upon the idea of “plastic duration,” interpreting Bergson’s philosophical “method of intuition” in terms of an artistic exploration of “time in space.”

I. VIEWS ON BERGSON’S PHILOSOPHY OF DURATION

Henri Bergson is generally recognized as one of the most influential philosophers in the history of early modernism. Proceeding from his groundbreaking concept of duration (*durée*), in his 1889 *Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* and subsequent works, Bergson pointed to the radical openness and unpredictability of lived time, arguing the case for a philosophy that focuses on the “perception of change” by “intuition” to counteract the well-established belief in pure reason as a means of understanding reality.⁶

Already in the early 1890s, Impressionist and Symbolist artists enthusiastically referred to Bergson’s philosophy, which seemed

to respond to the omnipresent feeling of “unrest” of an entire generation in every respect.⁷ With Bergson’s appointment as a professor at the Collège de France in 1900, his growing popularity soon gave rise to the phenomenon of Bergsonism.⁸ In the decade preceding World War I and in the context of the historical avant-garde movements, which strove to orient themselves toward the reality of life and pursued an idea of radical innovation, Bergson’s philosophy hit a vital nerve and was soon co-opted ideologically by the leading representatives of Fauvism, Futurism, and Cubism.⁹ This is not only apparent in view of Henri Matisse’s “Notes of a Painter” of 1908 and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “Manifest of Futurism” of 1909,¹⁰ but also in the case of a programmatic essay *On ‘Cubism’* which Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, the two leading intellectual figures of the Puteaux Cubists, published in the fall of 1912.¹¹

As Duchamp engaged with all these movements in the course of his artistic “swimming lessons” between 1902 and 1912,¹² one can safely assume that he was aware of Bergson’s ideas and their impact.¹³ But while leading avant-gardists like Matisse, Marinetti, or Gleizes and Metzinger related to Bergson’s philosophy dogmatically, in order to substantiate their ideas of innovation in art, Duchamp soon decided to take another direction and to break with any kind of dogmatism or unambiguity, be it artistic or metaphysical. As a result of this momentous decision, there are good reasons to believe that the deeply novel and speculative concept of art that he subsequently developed cannot be comprehended in all its complexity without considering Bergson’s understanding of intuition versus intellect, perception versus action, precision versus indifference, and duration versus the ready-made.

As a matter of fact, when in 1912 Duchamp turned his back on conventional conceptions of art, he did so not only to take a position against the dogmatic positions of contemporary avant-garde movements in general, and in particular those of the Puteaux Cubists, who vehemently rejected his painting *Nude, Descending a Staircase, N° 2* of January 1912, a work clearly indicative of Duchamp’s eclectic approach to art (Cp. Fig. 4.1). He did so also because he was interested in an idea of radical becoming and transition, which he expressed for the first time in his last two classic paintings, *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* and *Bride* of summer 1912. Thus, in view of the multifaceted and playful oeuvre that he developed from 1912 onward, it can be argued that Duchamp owed much more to Bergson’s philosophy than any of the ambitious exponents of avant-garde art who, under the simplifying banners of Fauvism,

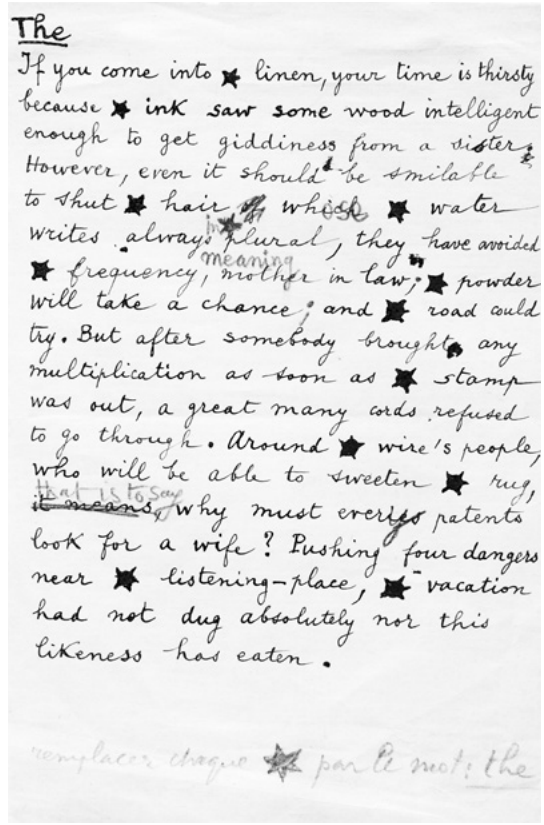


Fig. 4.1
 Marcel Duchamp, "Nu descendant un escalier" (1912), detail from *From or By Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy (The Box in a Valise)*, 1941/66. Staatliche Schlösser, Gärten und Kunstsammlungen Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Inv. n. 19316 Gr, photo: Gabriele Bröcker, Schwerin, © Association Marcel Duchamp / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018.

Fig. 4.2
 Marcel Duchamp, *The*, 1915. Ink and graphite on paper, sheet: 22,2 × 14,3 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

Cubism, and Futurism, purported to be in line with Bergson's concept of change, while actually propagating rather illiberal ideas. And as the phenomenon of Bergsonism was itself dominated by the polarizing views and readings, it is all the more important to note that Duchamp's critical attitude towards Bergsonism did not imply that he turned his back on Bergson's philosophy itself. At the same time, he wouldn't go so far as to put it on a pedestal under a different name. Rather, Duchamp's stratagem was to take up Bergson's ideas by referring to that paradoxical "method of intuition" which the philosopher had defined as his central instrument in his famous *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1903.

According to Bergson, the human intellect is a practical means to deal with practical problems, but as it basically works with ready-made terms and concepts, it is not at all equipped to deal with metaphysical questions. Thus, in order to free philosophy from its historical burdens, Bergson calls for the "method of intuition"—which should not be confused with some kind of emotional gut instinct or spiritual belief, as it rather points to an intellect that finally becomes aware of its own function and limits so as to provide a profound understanding of the complex and ever-changing reality of life itself.¹⁴ Such an understanding could at best be attained by a choice of "images as dissimilar as possible," which at the same time "all require from the mind the same kind of attention," Bergson makes clear. "No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized."¹⁵ Whereas the intellect can only work with a limited number of images, symbols, and points of view, Bergson argues that a true, intuitive understanding of reality would imply placing oneself within the material world itself: "A representation taken from a certain point of view, a translation made with certain symbols, will always remain imperfect in comparison with the object of which a view has been taken, or which the symbols seek to express. *But the absolute, which is the object and not its representation, the original and not its translation, is perfect, by being perfectly what it is.*"¹⁶

Thus, if Duchamp's reserve towards Bergsonism should prove to be productive for his own, highly original understanding of Bergson's philosophy, leading him to turn to the idea of *ready-made originals* instead of adhering to the idea of representation,¹⁷ it is not only because in 1912 he had decided to leave static symbols and points of view behind. What is more, in his restraint towards

Bergsonism, Duchamp also kept up with one of Bergson's central theses. In his epochal work *Creative Evolution* of 1907, which the French philosopher and writer Jean Guilton characterized as "bold, confusing, poetical, and revolutionary" book,¹⁸ Bergson argues that a philosophy of evolution that wants to truly justify its claims should pursue reality "in its generation and its growth" and should therefore "be built up by the collective and progressive effort of many thinkers, of many observers also, completing, correcting and improving one another."¹⁹

By implication, Bergson never claimed that he might have the last word with regard to such a philosophy. On the contrary, he pointed to the fact that as a philosopher, he was himself forced to draw on static images and prefabricated concepts while trying to open up new perspectives. As the human intellect only "feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids, where our action finds its fulcrum and our industry its tools," any approach via the medium of language, which functions on the basis of an agreement about ready-made words, necessarily fails "the full meaning of the evolutionary movement." Bergson points out: "In vain we force the living into this or that one of our molds. All the molds crack. They are too narrow, above all too rigid, for what we try to put into them."²⁰

Although calling explicitly for the progressive effort of many thinkers and many observers, "completing, correcting and improving one another," Bergson largely shared Duchamp's views on the contemporary avant-gardes and their reductionist understanding of his philosophy. In November 1911, when he was asked about the idea of "multiple perspectives" which the Puteaux Cubists related to his concept of duration, Bergson declared that, with regard to art, he would definitely challenge the recent phenomenon "that theory precedes creation." "For the arts, I would prefer genius," he explained, admitting that he actually had not even seen the paintings in question. And pointing at a reproduction of Rembrandt's *Philosopher Reading* on the wall behind him, he illustrated his own, quite anachronistic ideal of art by adding: "Rembrandt knew how to fixate the movement, the movement. What a miracle!"²¹

As the Puteaux Cubists would even try to win over Bergson to write a text for one of their catalogs shortly afterwards, it is safe to assume that they took notice of this interview of November 1911.²² And it is perfectly conceivable that Duchamp, who was an active member of the Puteaux group at that point, had some discussions around Bergson's theories in the back of his mind when

he made a series of paintings on movement in December 1911 and January 1912—*Nude, Descending a Staircase, N°2*, the last and most elaborate among them, even echoing Rembrandt's *Philosopher in Meditation* from the Louvre, with its spiral staircase and stair knob framing the descending figure (Cp. Fig. 4.1).²³

Significantly, Duchamp's *Nude, Descending a Staircase, N° 2* provoked a veritable scandal among the Puteaux Cubists when Duchamp wanted to show the painting in one of their exhibitions in spring of 1912. We know that Gleizes and Metzinger objected to its unconventional subject and the corresponding title, referring to a human figure in motion instead of the traditional pose and, to make matters even worse, standing as an integral part of the painting.²⁴ But given the Cubist's enthusiasm for Bergson's philosophy, it is almost more important that Duchamp's exploded view of the descending nude referred to the scientific method of chronophotography, which Étienne-Jules Marey, one of Bergson's colleagues and intellectual opponents at the Collège de France, had developed since the 1880s to allow for an abstract analysis of sequences of movement. After all, it is obvious that Marey's studies also played an important role for Bergson himself, as Georges Didi-Huberman remarks:

“Marey is never quoted in Bergson's books, but allusions to his work can undoubtedly be found there. When, in the *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, Bergson asserts that movement is as little divisible as duration is measurable, then Marey's whole attempt—with his visual fragmentation of gestures and the concomitant need to measure—is philosophically put in question; when Bergson strongly criticized those ‘who are content to juxtapose states [and] form from this a chain or line,’ he seems to reject Marey's chronophotographic series as [well as] the countless curves which were meant to give a legible trace—simultaneously indicatory and geometric—of vital phenomena [...].”²⁵

But just as Bergson claimed that with a series of static images, by no means could one express a real and lively movement,²⁶ Duchamp underlined that his *Nude Descending a Staircase* was definitely *not* to be understood as the representation of a real moving body, but on the contrary as a pure “abstraction of movement.”²⁷ In analogy to Marey's multiple exposures, merging various phases of movement in an abstract image, *Nude* “does not give an illusion of movement,” but it “does describe it,” Duchamp explains: “After all, a painting is the diagram of an idea.”²⁸ Thus, Duchamp's *Nude* can be understood as a diagram of the very same abstract idea of movement that Bergson tried to counteract with his method of intuition.

II. DUCHAMP'S RENDEZVOUS WITH THE READY-MADE

Even if Duchamp had every reason to criticize the dogmatic Bergsonism of his artist colleagues, the artistic ideal of Bergson himself must have appeared to him equally backward. Thus, it can be argued that he wanted to go one step further by using not only the scientific method of chronophotography, but also the negative foil of Rembrandt's winding staircase as a basis for his own abstraction of movement. This is also what we can gather from one of Duchamp's early New York notes on the idea of a "reciprocal ready-made" with which he knocked from his pedestal none other than the artist who had been able to "fixate movement" according to Bergson. Seen from that angle, Duchamp's note "Se servir d'un Rembrandt comme planche à repasser" can be understood not only in the verbatim and highly provoking sense of "Using a Rembrandt as an ironing board," but also more subtly as "Using a Rembrandt as plate to leave something behind."

In line with this argument, Duchamp often emphasized that his reflections on an artistic representation of movement caused him to completely reassess his values. "When the vision of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* flashed upon me, I knew that it would break forever the enslaving chains of Naturalism," he explained in 1936.²⁹ And ten years later, he added: "Reduce, reduce, reduce was my thought,—but at the same time my aim was turning inward, rather than toward externals. And later, following this view, *I came to feel an artist might use anything—a dot, a line, the most conventional or unconventional symbol—to say what he wanted to say.* [...] I was interested in ideas—not merely in visual products. I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind."³⁰

With a view to an advanced understanding of Bergsonism, it is significant that after Duchamp had dedicated several paintings to his analysis of *movement in space*, in the process of emancipating himself from the contemporary avant-gardes and opening to new horizons, soon after he turned towards the much more complex issue of *movement in time*, that is, to the very same idea of a purely qualitative form of becoming and transition which Bergson addressed in his philosophy of duration. Instead of promoting a mechanistic conception of movement, Duchamp's painting *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*, which he completed during his two-month sojourn in Munich in summer 1912, actually describes "something open, in process and dynamic," "an active field of potentially infinite relationships," as Jonathan Crary aptly remarks.³¹ Moreover, the two enigmatic subjects of 'virgin' and 'bride,' which Duchamp finally merged into a single figure in his

second Munich painting, *Bride*, can be seen as a first abstract expression of Duchamp's idea of using a 'virginal' medium to 'marry' the sensuous qualities of painting with a much more conceptual approach, an idea that he later expressed in the formula "painting of precision, and beauty of indifference" by referring to the two domains of his large-scale multimedia work *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (Fig. 3.2). Thus, it is no coincidence that *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* and *Bride* were to remain Duchamp's last paintings in a traditional sense, whereas the subject of the bride would henceforth lead him to an exploration of a whole variety of media, concepts, and strategies.

In fact, since Duchamp had started working on his concept for the *Large Glass*, his whole oeuvre was dedicated to the figure of an organic "bride" being confronted with mechanistic "bachelors" or "casting molds," allegorizing a complex interplay between the opposite poles of time and space, intuition and intellect, perception and action, the ever-changing reality of life and the ready-made character of human interactions and conceptions—opposites which already Bergson had defined as the central source of any kind of imagination and agency.

Now, it seems quite easy to relate Bergson's primacy of change to conceptual works such as the *Large Glass* (1915–23) and the associated *Green Box* (1934), both being linked to an idea of constant transformation; Duchamp's female alter ego *Rose Sélavy*, which he brought into being in 1920 so as to test out the idea of a change of identity; Duchamp's understanding that finally, it is the spectators who "make the pictures;" Duchamp's portable museum titled *From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy (The Box in a Valise)*, a collection of miniatures of his central works reminding of a game collection in its variable structure (1935–41) (Fig. 3.1); or, last but not least, his final coup *Étant donnés* (1946–66) (Fig. 2.4), which opens up a new view on his *Bride, Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*.³² But actually, and paradoxically so, Duchamp also referred to Bergson's idea of change with his concept of the ready-made.

In the fall of 1915, only a few weeks after he had arrived in his adopted home of New York, Duchamp began experimenting with the idea of depriving everyday objects of their familiar context and thus of their actual function.³³ The common English term 'ready-made,' which not only points to contemporary consumer culture and its rich offers for women as a new class of customers, but also evokes the idea of a willing girl, a 'ready maid,' inspired him to draw on works he had made earlier, namely a *Bicycle Wheel* (Fig. 5.4) which he had mounted on a kitchen stool in 1913 as well as

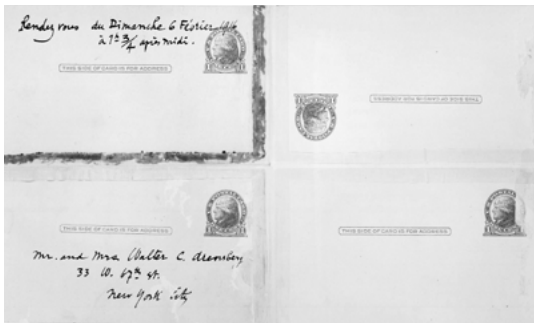


Fig. 4.3
 Marcel Duchamp, *Rendez-vous of Sunday, February 6, 1916 (Rendez-vous du Dimanche 6 Février 1916)*, 1916, recto and verso. Typewritten text on four postcards, taped together, 28,4 x 14,4 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

toir. On manquera, à la fois, des
 soins qu'avant cinq élections et
 aussi quelque accoutance avec q-
 uatre petites bêtes; il faut oc-
 cuper ce dilice afin d'en décoller
 toute responsabilité. Après
 douze photos, notre hésitation de-
 vant vingt fibres était compréh-
 ensible; mais le pire accrochage
 demande coins ports-bouches sans
 compter interdiction aux lins: O-
 nement ne pas épouser son soind-
 re opticien plutôt qu'il supporter
 leurs sèches? Non, décidément, der-
 rière ta canne se cachent arbr-
 ures puis tira-bouchon. "Cepend-
 ant, avouèrent-ils, pourquoi vis-
 er, indisposer? Les autres ont p-
 ris désangelaisons pour construi-
 re, par douzaines, ses lacesants.
 Dieu sait si nous avons besoin, q-
 uoique nombreux sangsues, dans la
 défalquant." Défense donc au tri-
 ple, quand j'explorai, dis te, or-

este pour les profits, devant la-
 squels et, par précaution à prop-
 os, elle défonce desserts, sans o-
 uis qu'il est défendu de souer.
 Ensuite, sept ou huit poteaux boi-
 vent quelques conséquences saine-
 tenant appointés; ne pas oubli-
 er, entre parenthèses, que sans M-
 éconost, puis avec saine resbl-
 able occasion, reviennent quatre
 fois leurs énorces lins; qu'il
 alors, si la férocité débouche de-
 rrière son propre tapis. Dès des-
 ain j'aurai enfin sis excoctes-
 t des piles là où plusieurs fende-
 dent, acceptent quoique sandant
 le pourtour. D'abord, piquit on
 lignes sur bouteilles, malgré leu-
 ur importance sans cent sérni-
 tés? Une liquide algarade, après
 semaines dénonciatrices, va en y
 désteter la valies par sa bord

ment, après avoir raii vous ex-
 no. N'espéche que le fait d'éte-
 indre six boutons l'un des autr-
 es paraît (sauf si, lui, tourne a-
 outour) faire culbuter les bouto-
 annières. Reste à choisir: de lo-
 ndus, fortes, extensibles défaut-
 ions trouées par trois filets u-
 cés, ou bien, la seule enveloppe
 pour être-ndre Avec vous acceptés
 des manches? Pouvais tu prendre
 sa file? Peut-être devons nous a-
 ttendre son pilotis, en même tem-
 ps sa difficulté; avec ces chos-
 es là, impossible s'ajouter une hu-
 itième laiane. Sur trente misé-
 rables postes deux actuels veul-
 ent errey, encouragés civiquement,
 refusent toute compensation hors
 leur sphère. Pendant combien, pou-
 rquoi comment, lisitera-t-on sin-
 ce étranger autrement dit: cious
 refroidissent lorsque ne nous ou
 lissent enfin derrière, contents

porte, dès maintenant par grande
 quantité, pourront faire valoir l-
 e clan oblong qui, sans être auc-
 un traversin ni contourner soie
 -s de grelots, va remettre. Deux
 fois seulement, tout élève voudra-
 it traire, quand il facilite la
 bascule dissimée; mais, comme q-
 uelqu'un démonte puis avale des
 déchirements mains nombreux, soi-
 compris, on est obligé d'entasser
 plusieurs grandes horloges pour
 obtenir un tiroir à bas âge. CO-
 nclusion: après saints efforts
 en vue du peigne, quel dosage!
 tous les fourreurs sont partis e-
 t signifient ris. Aucune deman-
 de ne nettoie l'ignorant ou so-
 ré teneur; toutefois, étant don-
 nées quelques cages, c'eut une
 profonde écotion qu'exécutent t-
 toutes colles altées. Penus, v-

a *Bottle Rack* which he had installed in his Paris studio in 1914 while working on his concept for the *Large Glass*. What is more, the idea of the 'ready-made' might also have attracted Duchamp's attention, as the corresponding French term—*tout fait*—played a central role in Bergson's popular essay on *Laughter* of 1900.³⁴ As Duchamp always had a distinct passion for humor, this little book was of particular interest for him and even found its way into his library.³⁵

Repeatedly drawing on the metaphor of ready-made clothes, Bergson argues that whereas a prefabricated object or idea can never really fit the needs of an individual being, humor can be an effective tool to get rid of constricting patterns and stereotypes and to virtually come back to life: "The rigid, the ready-made, the mechanical, in contrast with the supple, the ever-changing and the living, absentmindedness in contrast with attention, in a word, automatism in contrast with free activity, such are the defects that laughter singles out and would fain correct."³⁶ And in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson goes even further, explaining that the history of philosophy also shows us "the impossibility of satisfactorily getting the real into the ready-made garments of our ready-made concepts."³⁷ "In order that our consciousness shall coincide with something of its principle, it must detach itself from the *already-made* and attach itself to the *being-made*." Bergson makes clear: "It needs that, turning back on itself and twisting on itself, the faculty of *seeing* should be made to be one with the act of *willing*,—a painful effort which we can make suddenly, doing violence to our nature, but cannot sustain more than a few moments."³⁸

We know that between 1915 and 1917 Duchamp bought a snow shovel, a steel dog-grooming comb, a urinal, and a number of other ready-made objects, which he inscribed with seemingly meaningless phrases and his autograph so as to reflect upon the question "Can one make works that are not works of 'art'?"³⁹ But it is important to note that while making his first ready-mades based on his earlier *sculptures toutes faites*,⁴⁰ Duchamp also started toying with the ready-made character of language by freeing words from their conventional function. Here again, he is in line with Bergson's idea that the intellect was originally "fashioned to the form of matter," and that language, "which has enabled it to extend its field of operations," is "made to designate things, and naught but things." "Concepts, in fact, are outside each other, like objects in space; and they have the same stability as such objects, on which they have been modelled."⁴¹ At the same time, Bergson underlines that "because the word is mobile, because it flies from one thing to another," the intellect could actually "apply it to an object which

is not a thing and which, concealed till then, awaited the coming of the word to pass from darkness to light.” And he points out that, as a consequence, “the word, by covering up this object, again converts it into a thing.” “So intelligence, even when it no longer operates upon its own object, follows habits it has contracted in that operation [...]. It must, therefore, in order to think itself clearly and distinctly, perceive itself under the form of discontinuity.”⁴² In other words, if the intellect must perceive itself under the “form of discontinuity,” this kind of discontinuity is none other than the very same “abstraction of movement” which Duchamp expressed with his *Nude, Descending a Staircase* while explicitly referring to the medium of language with its literary title.

But let us take a look at what Duchamp tried to bring “from darkness to light” by also toying with the ready-made character of language itself. Making use of his basic English skills, Duchamp wrote a short experimental text titled *The* in October 1915 (Cp. Fig. 4.2), which he published in October 1916 under the revealing headline “THE, Eye Test, Not a ‘Nude Descending a Staircase.’”⁴³ As he stated many years later, his aim in the process of this experiment was to build sentences that were grammatically correct, but that were not to have any meaning or to make any sense. “That was only a kind of amusement,” Duchamp explained by pointing to the striking difficulties involved in his experiment: “The construction was very painful in a way, because the minute I *did* think of a verb to add to the subject, I would very often see a meaning and immediately [if] I saw a meaning I would cross out the verb and change it, until, working for quite a number of hours, the text finally read without any echo of the physical world.”⁴⁴

Now, regardless of whether this was Duchamp’s true intention, his project was of course doomed to fail from the start. For even if one can argue that the text makes no sense, the individual words and word combinations inevitably evoke certain associations and thus that kind of “echo” which Duchamp allegedly had tried to avoid. Moreover, it is impossible to ignore that many words actually seem to have been chosen with care and to refer to a very specific context. Replacing each asterisk with the definite article “the” as per Duchamp’s advice, we read: “If you come into * linen, your time is thirsty because * ink saw some wood intelligent enough to get giddiness from a sister.” Thus, already in the first sentence, Duchamp not only alludes to the medium of painting (linen) and his current joy in experimenting (your time is thirsty), but also links it to the act of writing (ink) and a certain ease, that might have connected him to one of his kindred spirits, namely to his friend Beatrice Wood (* ink

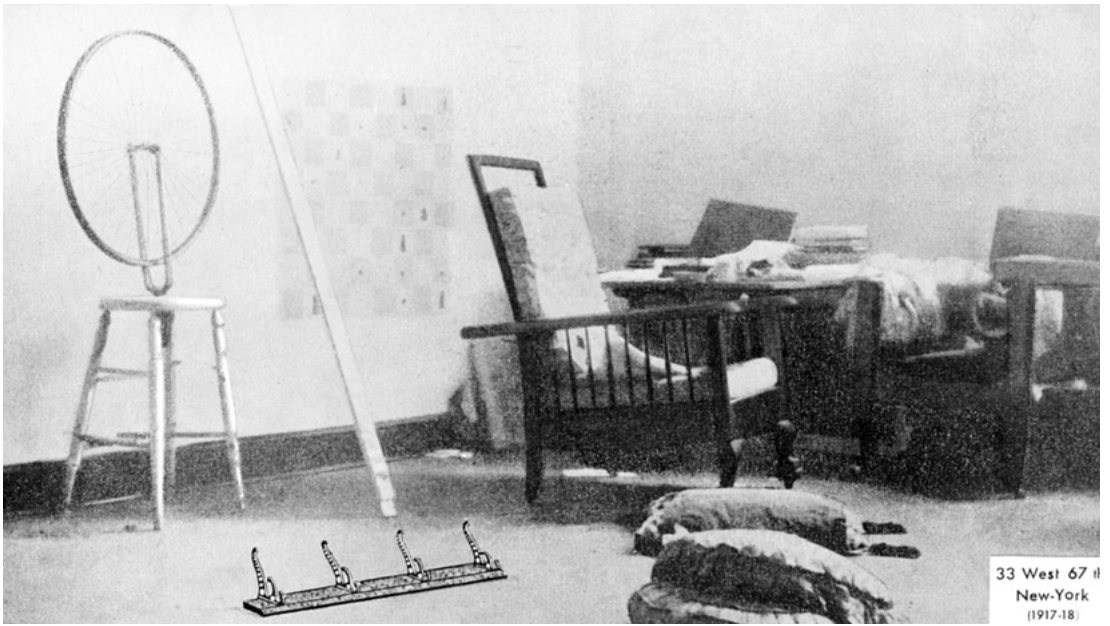


Fig. 4.4

Marcel Duchamp, "Studio at 33 West 67th New York (1917-18)," detail from *From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy (The Box in a Valise)*, 1941/66. Staatliche Schlösser, Gärten und Kunstsammlungen Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Inv. n. 19316 Gr, photo: Gabriele Bröcker, Schwerin, © Association Marcel Duchamp / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018.

saw some wood intelligent enough to get giddiness from a sister). Apart from hinting at his fatigue with painting and expressing his pleasure in discovering new horizons, Duchamp also brings forth ideas characterizing his new conception of art, such as the principle of contingency and the idea of delay, that both played a central role in his ready-mades and random experiments. Not surprisingly, the text also seems to anticipate one of his later experiments with the phrase “* powder will take a chance.” He would finally realize it in 1920 by cultivating a respectable layer of dust on the surface of the “Bachelor’s domain” of his *Large Glass* and capturing this *Dust Breeding* photographically with the help of Man Ray.

Furthermore, in *The Duchamp* opens up several links to another experimental text which he wrote in the fall of 1915, this time in French, and which he transferred onto four pre-stamped postcards with an Underwood typewriter in February 1916 by deliberately separating words and sentences or just cutting them off.⁴⁵ After pasting the cards together, he inscribed the work’s title *Rendezvous of Sunday, Feb. 6, 1916, at 1:45 in the afternoon* on the back side and addressed it to his patrons Louise and Walter Arensberg in black ink (Fig. 4.3). Quite obviously, the term “wood” in *The* resonates with this typewriter, which Duchamp literally stripped bare by converting its protective cover into a ready-made *Traveller’s Folding Item* later this year. And after all, with the phrase “somebody brought any multiplication as soon as * stamp was out,” in *The Duchamp* also highlights his interest in the principle of multiples as a means to move on from the multiple perspectives of Cubism while at the same time pointing to the pre-stamped postcards that he used for his *Rendezvous*.

Duchamp’s gesture of linking his writing experiment to a clearly identifiable moment in time opens an interesting perspective on the conceptual framework of his *Rendezvous of Sunday*, which deals with the notion of delay and starts with the following lines: “One will be without, at the same time, less than before five elections and also some acquaintance with four little animals [or: jackasses, *bêtes*]; one must occupy this delight so as to decline all responsibility for it. After twelve photos, our hesitation in front of twenty fibers was understandable; even the worst hanging [or: collision, *accrochage*] demands good luck corners [*coins porte-bonheur*] without counting the prohibition as to the linens: How not to marry one’s least oculist rather than stand their curls [or: wicks, fuses, drill bits, *mèches*]? No, decidedly, behind your stick [or: cane, *canne*] marble veining[s] [or: marblings, *marbrures*] then corkscrew are hidden.”⁴⁶

As in *The earlier*, in *Rendezvous* Duchamp brings forth ideas, images, and feelings that he was also developing in the surrounding oeuvre, namely the *Large Glass* and a number of ready-mades, which could arise out of a certain “prohibition as to the linens” that he had imposed onto himself after being offended by the Puteaux Cubists, whom he possibly considered as “jackasses” as a consequence of some “liquid scolding, after denouncing weeks.”⁴⁷ “A choice remains: long, strong, extendable defections pierced by three worn out nets,” Duchamp writes alluding to the three “draft pistons” from the *Large Glass*, which owe their shapes to three snapshots that Duchamp made of a square piece of gauze hanging in front of an open window. Instead of the *Bottle Rack* (*porte-bouteilles*) that Duchamp had installed in his studio in 1914, in *Rendezvous*, there is a mention of “good luck corners” (*coins porte-bonheur*), while the “bottles,” a “corkscrew” and the pictorial association of “cages” appear elsewhere in the text. Duchamp then brings up the question whether something should be “limited” (just like he limited the number of ready-mades) or rather be made “from now on in large quantity” (like his boxes). Duchamp talks about “an effort in view of the comb,” which should lead to the corresponding ready-made of 1916, about a “valise” anticipating his later miniature museum *From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy* (*The Box in a Valise*, 1935–41), about certain “marblings” resonating in the cubes of marble in *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921), about the idea “to open up several large clocks,” possibly so as to make room for the unforeseen, and so on and so forth.

In view of these manifold cross-references between Duchamp’s early ready-mades and his writing experiments, one can conclude that the concept of the ready-made cannot be reduced to the great iconoclastic gesture that art history has widely made out of it. On the contrary, it can be understood as a highly differentiated and experimental form of artistic reflection upon philosophical and practical problems, emanating not only from diverse products of a rapidly changing everyday culture, but also from Duchamp’s interest in contemporary literature and philosophy. So, in line with Bergson and in view of Duchamp’s ready-mades, one could argue that “the more we descend from the motionless idea, wound on itself, to the words that unwind it, the more room is left for contingency and choice. [...] Our ear only hears the words; it therefore perceives only accidents. But our mind, by successive bounds, leaps from the words to the images, from the images to the original idea, and so gets back, from the perception of words—accidents called up by accidents—to the conception of the Idea that

posits its own being. [...] Thus Science is obtained, which appears to us, complete and ready-made, as soon as we put back our intellect into its true place, correcting the deviation that separated it from the intelligible. Science is not, then, a human construction. It is prior to our intellect, independent of it, veritably the generator of Things.”⁴⁸

III. SPECIFICATIONS FOR “PLASTIC DURATION”

Given the fact that Duchamp’s *Rendezvous of Sunday* is full of allusions to notions and practices around the concept of the ready-made (or ‘ready maid’) it is unsurprising that the latter also played a crucial role in the text’s production process. Duchamp not only used pre-stamped postcards as well as the ready-made typeface of an Underwood to give his handwritten text the perfect finish, he also lifted the protective cover of the very same typewriter to the status of a ready-made with his *Traveler’s Folding Item* of 1916. What is more, eleven days after his *Rendezvous*, on February 17, 1916, at 11 a.m., Duchamp bought said dog-grooming comb, inscribed it with the exact date and time of its acquisition and added the cryptic sentence “3 or 4 drops of assertiveness have nothing to do with savagery.” This object entitled *Comb* figures as the first of exactly five ready-mades that Duchamp chose in 1916 in accordance with the “five elections” mentioned in *Rendezvous* (Fig. 4.3).⁴⁹ Furthermore, with its original function as a comb for dogs and the inscribed term “savagery,” the ready-made points to his disengagement from the “little animals” or “jackasses” that had put his “assertiveness” to the test.

Thus, *Comb* can also be related to the French phrase *bête comme un peintre*, which Duchamp once used to explain why he admired the literary oeuvre of Raymond Roussel, an author he discovered as a source of inspiration for his own work in 1912, during the time when he had only just decided to turn his back on contemporary art movements. “I felt that as a painter it was much better to be influenced by a writer than by another painter,” he remembered. “This is the direction in which art should turn: to an intellectual expression, rather than to an animal expression. I am sick of the expression ‘bête comme un peintre’—stupid as a painter.”⁵⁰

In line with this argument, in his speech “Apropos of ‘Ready-mades’” of 1961, Duchamp also underlined that the choice of his ready-mades “was never dictated by aesthetic delectation,” as it was actually “based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste.” And adding that an “important characteristic was the short sentence which

[he] occasionally inscribed on the 'readymade,'” Duchamp made clear: “That sentence instead of describing the object like a title was meant to carry the mind of the spectator towards other regions more verbal.”⁵¹

As for the special “delight” that Duchamp felt in the process of making a ready-made “so as to decline all responsibility for it,” when referring to *Comb*, he also mentioned some “amusing situations with the ready-mades,” such as “deciding about a certain hour, a certain day to choose a ready-made” in terms of a “rendezvous with fate.”⁵² This is also what we learn from a French note from the *Green Box*, dating back to the time when Duchamp had only just arrived in New York and documenting Duchamp’s use of the English term ready-made. Under the heading “Specifications for ‘Readymades,’” Duchamp brings up the idea of “planning for a moment to come [...] ‘to inscribe a readymade’ [which] can later be looked for [...] with all kinds of delays. The important thing then is just this matter of timing, this snapshot effect, like a speech delivered on no matter what occasion but *at a certain hour*.” Duchamp explains: “It is a kind of rendezvous.” And naturally, he adds, one has to “inscribe that date, hour, minute, on the readymade as *information*.”⁵³

By explicitly linking the concept of the ready-made with potential “delays” (*avec tous délais*), a special kind of “timing” (*horlogisme*), a photographic “snapshot” (*instantané*), and “a kind of rendezvous” (*une sorte de rendezvous*), Duchamp defines the constitutive act of choice by analogy to an open-ended encounter. And as in the phrase “one must occupy this delight so as to decline all responsibility for it” from *Rendezvous*, he attaches particular importance to the idea of subverting every form of personal taste or interest by leaving the final appearance of his ready-made sculptures entirely to the potential of the moment. With this, it becomes clear that Duchamp’s ready-mades follow the same principle as his *Large Glass*, to which he also added a temporal dimension when reflecting upon a possible subtitle in one of his notes from the *Green Box*: “Delay in Glass—Use ‘delay’ instead of picture or painting; picture on glass becomes delay in glass,” Duchamp suggests in order to find „a way of succeeding in no longer thinking that the thing in question is a picture;“ “‘delay in glass’—as you would say a poem in prose or a spittoon in silver.”⁵⁴

This strategy of working with a certain kind of “timing,” the notion of “delay” and a “kind of rendezvous” can also be found in the *White Box*, which contains notes from 1914 to 1923 and is itself linked to an open-ended process, as suggested by its title

In the Infinitive. In one of the notes, Duchamp suggests that one should “try to discuss *plastic* duration,” an idea that he explained to the editor Cleve Gray by stating: “With this I mean time in space.”⁵⁵ Thus, it can be argued that while Bergson tried to draw on “many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things,” so as to come to an “intuition of duration” on a theoretical level, Duchamp aimed to borrow objects and concepts from daily life to open up new perspectives on art and to plunge into other dimensions via a tactile exploration of “time in space.” So, whereas the Cubists referred to Bergson’s concept of “duration” with their multiplication of viewpoints on a figurative level only, Duchamp came to the conclusion that real duration could never be expressed by the medium of static images, that is, by a “demultiplication of movement.”⁵⁶ Thus, by introducing the principles of chance and continuous transformation into his work, not only did he try to escape the ready-made nature of the ready-made objects, he also made clear that “time in space” could only surface within the process itself, which, in his view, necessarily included the (conscious or unconscious) cooperation of any arbitrary present or future beholder.

Significantly, Bergson addresses a similar idea of exploration in his essay on *Laughter* stressing that he does not intend “imprisoning the comic within a definition,” because he sees it “as something living,” going along with “the strangest metamorphoses” and thus calling for “something more flexible than an abstract definition,” in other words, some kind of “practical, intimate acquaintance,” which could in his eyes be described at best by *concrete* examples.⁵⁷ And presuming that laughter requires “indifference” on the part of the beholder, as it has “no greater foe than emotion” or “affection,” Bergson gives the example of a man running on the street, who suddenly stumbles and falls, causing some passers-by to laugh.⁵⁸ According to Bergson, what actually makes them laugh is not the sight of a man having fallen, but the fact that his change of position had been involuntary: “The laughable element consists of a certain *mechanical inelasticity*, just where one would expect to find the wideawake adaptability and the living pliability of a human being.”⁵⁹ Thus, according to Bergson, it is the ready-made as opposed to “the supple, the ever-changing and the living,” it is “absentmindedness in contrast with attention” which “laughter singles out and would fain correct.”⁶⁰

Seen from this angle, the ordinary wall coat rack which Duchamp nailed to the floor of his New York studio in 1917 and which he titled *Trap* is exemplary of his concept of the ready-made,

especially since the original French title, *Trébuchet*, literally means 'stumbling block' (Figs. 4.4 and 5.1). This ready-made sculpture unfolds its humor only through the eventuality of being unnoticed, opening up for the inattentive spectator both an obvious possibility of a physical fall and a much more discreet possibility of an involuntary change of position in the figurative sense.

As such, Duchamp uses the rigid and stereotypical character of an ordinary mass product so to create a margin for the unexpected and remarkable: With *Trap*, he gives the visitors of his studio or exhibitions the chance to laugh at his artwork as well as at his or her own imperfection. Thus, from a Bergsonian point of view, Duchamp's ready-mades can be regarded as a highly effective means of underlining and correcting stereotypical concepts and behaviors, which can prove to be a stumbling block for everything living—given that it is always the spectators who have the choice how to make the pictures.

- 1 Cf. *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, eds. Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).
- 2 Duchamp as qtd. in "Interview with Marcel Duchamp," in *A Discussion of Marcel Duchamp's Views on the Nature of Reality and Their Relation to the Course of His Artistic Career*, by Laurence S. Gold, B. A. Dissertation (Princeton: Princeton University, 1958), I–XIII, V.
- 3 Laurence Stephen Gold, introductory comment to "Interview with Marcel Duchamp", *ibid.*, without page number.
- 4 Cf. Lucia Beier, "The Time Machine: A Bergsonian Approach to 'The Large Glass' *Le Grand Verre*," in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6, November 1976, 194–200; Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Identities in the Career of Marcel Duchamp, Anti-Bergsonian 'Algebraicist of Ideas'," in *aka Marcel Duchamp. Meditations on the Identities of an Artist*, ed. Ann Collins Goodyear and James W. McManus (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2014), 76–106; Federico Luisetti, "Reflections on Duchamp: Bergson Readymade," in *diacritics* 38/4, winter 2010, 77–93; Theodore F. Villa, *Marcel Duchamp and the Utopian Philosophies of Peter Kropotkin and Henri Bergson*, M. A. thesis (Michigan: Michigan State University, 1998). Cf. also Sarah Kolb, *Painting at the Service of Metaphysics. Marcel Duchamp and the Echo of Bergsonism* (Schwerin: Schwerin State Museum, 2015); *id.*, *Bildtopologie. Spielräume des Imaginären nach Henri Bergson und Marcel Duchamp*, PhD thesis (Vienna: Academy of Fine Arts, 2016).
- 5 Cf. Francois Azouvi, *La Gloire de Bergson. Essai sur le magistère philosophique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2007); Gilles Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), English edition: *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991).
- 6 Cf. Bergson's major works *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2001), *Matter and Memory* (1896), trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), *Laughter. An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900), trans. Cloudesley Shovell Henry Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), *Creative Evolution* (1907), trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan and Co, 1922) as well as his collection of essays and lectures written between 1903 and 1923 and published in *The Creative Mind. An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Anderson (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2007).
- 7 Cf. Benjamin Jacob, "La philosophie d'hier et celle d'aujourd'hui," in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 6 (1898), 170–201. See also chapter 2 "Une philosophie décadente, symboliste et impressionniste," in *La Gloire de Bergson*, by Azouvi, 59–76.
- 8 Cf. Azouvi, *La Gloire de Bergson*, 99ff.
- 9 Cf. *ibid.*, 218–234; Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson. Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); *The New Bergson*, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); *Bergson and the Art of Immanence: Painting, Photography, Film*, ed. John Mullarkey and Charlotte de Mille (Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
- 10 Henri Matisse, "Notes d'un Peintre," in *La Grande Revue* 2, no. 24, December 25, 1908, 731–745; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Manifeste du Futurisme," in *Le Figaro* 55/3, no. 51, February 20, 1909, 1. Cf. Lorenz Dittmann, *Matisse begegnet Bergson: Reflexionen zu Kunst und Philosophie* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007); Francesca Talpo, "Der Futurismus und Henri Bergsons Philosophie der Intuition," in *Der Lärm der Straße. Italienischer Futurismus 1909–1918*, ed. Norbert Nobis (Hannover, Milan: Sprengel Museum, 2001), 59–71.
- 11 Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, *Du 'Cubisme'* (Paris: Figuière, 1912). See also the trilingual edition *Du 'Cubisme' / On 'Cubism' / Über den 'Kubismus'*, trans. Fritz Metzinger (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Verlag, 1993). For an analysis of references to Bergson's philosophy, cf. Kolb, *Bildtopologie*, Chapter 1.2.2: "La Section d'Or: Kubismus à la Puteaux," 46–58.
- 12 Duchamp as qtd. in Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (1966), trans. Ron Padgett (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 27. After Duchamp had experimented with Symbolist, Impressionist, Fauvist, and Cubist methods up to 1910 (cf. *ibid.*: „From 1902 to 1910, I didn't just float along! I had eight years of swimming lessons.“), he obviously already felt more self-confident as an artist when he came in close touch with the Putaux Cubists and at the same time developed his interest in Futurism in 1911 and 1912. Cf. *ibid.*, Chapter 1: „Eight years of swimming lessons,“ 15–27.
- 13 Cf. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bachelor Stripped Bare. A Biography* (Boston, Mass.: MFA Publications, 2002), 58: "His [Bergson's] lectures at the Collège de France between 1900 and 1904 attracted a broad segment of Paris intellectuals. Within the following six years, a young man who claimed 'extraordinary curiosity,' as Duchamp did, could not fail to learn about the philosopher's notions. With Cartesian logic and clarity, Bergson had attempted nothing less than to reconcile technology and art, science and the human spirit."
- 14 Cf. Bergson's dissertation *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* of 1889.
- 15 Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Thomas Ernest Hulme (New York/London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912), 16f.
- 16 Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 5f., emphasis added.
- 17 Cf. Molly Nesbit, "Ready-made Originals: The Duchamp Model," in *October* 37, summer 1986, 53–64.
- 18 Jean Guittou, "Leben und Werk von Henri Bergson," in *Schöpferische Entwicklung*, by Henri Bergson, trans. Gertrud Kantorowicz (Zürich: Coron-Verlag, 1967), 23–35, 33.
- 19 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, xiv.
- 20 *ibid.*, ix–x.
- 21 Henri Bergson as qtd. in Maurice Verne, "Un jour de pluie chez M. Bergson," in *L'intransigent*, November 26, 1911, 1 (trans. Sarah Kolb). As a reference for Verne's interview, cf. also Jean Metzinger, "Cubisme et tradition," in *Paris-Journal*, August 16, 1911, 5: "Le

- tableau possédait l'espace, voilà qu'il règne aussi dans la durée."
- 22 Despite Bergson's assessment of Cubism, the famous art critic Louis Vauxcelles, who supported the Puteaux group, was still convinced in June of 1912 that Bergson could be won over to write a foreword for the catalog for the exhibition *La Section d'or* planned for October 1912. Cf. Louis Vauxcelles, "La Section d'or," in *Gil Blas*, June 22, 1912, 3. However, Bergson would not warm up to this idea and once more denied any affinity to avant-garde art in 1913: "C'est étrange, on croit généralement que j'ai de la sympathie pour les cubistes, pour les futuristes! Je n'ai jamais vu de ces sortes de peintures! Je n'ai aucune idée ce qu'elles représentent! [...] Je déclare que je ne saurais approuver les formes révolutionnaires dans l'art." Henri Bergson as qtd. in Villanova, "Celui qui ignore les cubistes," in *L'Éclair*, June 29, 1913.
 - 23 In contrast to Rembrandt's *Philosopher Reading of 1631*, Rembrandt's *Philosopher in Meditation of 1632*, which Duchamp probably knew from one of his visits in the Paris Louvre, is structured around a monumental circular staircase ending in a stair knob in the right lower corner like Duchamp's *Nude*. Aside from the two main figures, an old man seated at a table in front of a window and an old woman working at a fireplace, the third figure of a woman standing in the shadow of the stairs and turned to the spectator is visible in 18th- and 19th-century engraved reproductions of the painting, but virtually invisible in the painting's present state. Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher_in_Meditation (accessed on September 4, 2018).
 - 24 Cf. Kolb, *Painting at the Service of Metaphysics*, 91.
 - 25 Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Eye Opens, the Lamp Goes Out: Remarks on Bergson and Cinematography," in *Instruments in Art and Science: On the Architectonics of Cultural Boundaries in the 17th Century*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte and Jan Lazardzig (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2008), 421-436, 431. For a detailed juxtaposition of Bergson's and Marey's works, cf. Georges Didi-Huberman and Laurent Mannoni, *Mouvements de l'air. Étienne-Jules Marey, Photographe des Fluides* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2004), 216ff.
 - 26 Cf. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Chapter IV: "The Cinematographical Mechanism of Thought and the Mechanistic Illusion," 287-391. As for the "contrivance of the cinematograph," which Bergson uses as a metaphor for the "trick of our perception" and the "mechanism of our ordinary knowledge," cf. *ibid.*, 321-325.
 - 27 Marcel Duchamp in a 1916 interview with Nicola Greely-Smith, as qtd. in Dawn Ades, "Duchamp's Masquerades," in *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 94-114, 103.
 - 28 Duchamp as qtd. in *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, interviews by Georges Charbonnier, conducted between December 6, 1960, and January 2, 1961 (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1994), 59.
 - 29 Marcel Duchamp in a 1936 interview with Daniel MacMorris, as qtd. in *Marcel Duchamp: The Bachelor Stripped Bare. A Biography*, by Goldfarb Marquis, 295.
 - 30 Duchamp as qtd. in James Johnson Sweeney, "Eleven Europeans in America," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 8, no. 4-5, New York, 1946, 19-21, 20, emphasis added.
 - 31 Jonathan Crary, "Marcel Duchamp's *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*," in *Arts magazine* 51, January 1977, 96-99, 98.
 - 32 For a detailed analysis of interconnections between those works and Bergson's concept of change, see Kolb, *Painting at the Service of Metaphysics*.
 - 33 At the same time, Duchamp regarded the body of his own works as a kind of family. "I would like this painting (if it leaves you) to join its brothers and sisters in California," he wrote in September 1937 in a letter to Walter Pach, who was just about to sell Duchamp's painting *Jeune homme triste dans un train* of December 1911. For the original quote in French, see *Affectt Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, eds. Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 215.
 - 34 The full title is *Laughter. An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.
 - 35 Cf. Marc Décimo, *La Bibliothèque de Marcel Duchamp, peut-être* (Paris: Les Presses du reel, 2002), 92.
 - 36 Bergson, *Laughter*, 130.
 - 37 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 51.
 - 38 *Ibid.*, 250f.
 - 39 Duchamp posed this question for the first time in one of his notes dating back to 1913, which is contained in the *White Box*. See Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe*, ed. Michel Sanouillet (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 105.
 - 40 Although he had experimented with the principle of the ready-made already earlier with his *Bicycle Wheel* and *Bottle Rack* of 1913 and 1914, Duchamp defined those works as "sculptures toutes faites" only in January 1916 in a letter to his sister Suzanne. Cf. *Affectt Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Naumann and Obalk, 43.
 - 41 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 168f.
 - 42 *Ibid.*
 - 43 Duchamp's handwritten text was printed for the first time in the October 1916 issue of *The Rogue* (New York) under the title "THE, Eye Test, Not a 'Nude Descending a Staircase.'" Cf. *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, by Schwarz, 638.
 - 44 Marcel Duchamp in an unpublished interview with Arturo Schwarz, between 1959 and 1968, as qtd. in *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, by Arturo Schwarz (New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 2000), 638/642.
 - 45 So-called 'pre-stamped postcards,' also called 'penny postcards,' were customary in the United States from 1873 on. Next to the inscription "THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS," the 1-cent-cards printed in green from 1914 to 1916 showed a stamp with the portrait of the American founding father and president Thomas Jefferson, who is considered to be the author of the Declaration of Independence of 1776. Cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcard> (accessed on September 4, 2018). The typewriter that Duchamp used for his experiment belonged to his friend and patron Walter Arensberg, to whom he also addressed the work. Cf. Molly Nesbit and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, "Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg," in *The Duchamp Effect. Essays, Interviews*,

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- Round Table*, eds. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 131–175, 155.
- 46 Marcel Duchamp, “Rendez-vous du Dimanche 6 Février 1916,” in Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, 208, Engl. transl. Arturo Schwarz, comments added.
- 47 Here and in what follows, cf. *ibid.*
- 48 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 338f.
- 49 In 1916, Duchamp made exactly five ready-mades: *Comb, With Hidden Noise, The Battle Scene, Traveller’s Folding Item*, and *Apollinère Enameled*. Cf. *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, by Schwarz, 643ff.
- 50 Duchamp in a 1946 interview with James Johnson Sweeney, as qtd. in George H. Bauer, “Duchamp’s Ubiquitous Puns,” in *Marcel Duchamp. Artist of the Century*, eds. Kuenzli and Naumann, 127–148, 132.
- 51 Marcel Duchamp, “Apropos of ‘Ready-mades,’” in *Art and Artists* 1, no. 4, July 1966, 47.
- 52 Duchamp as qtd. in Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, 68. Engl. transl. Uta Hoffmann.
- 53 Duchamp as qtd. in *The Large Glass and Related Works*, Vol. 1, by Arturo Schwarz, trans George Hamilton (Milan: Schwarz Galleria d’Arte, 1967), 166.
- 54 Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe*, 41. English translation as qtd. in *The Large Glass and Related Works*, Vol. 1, by Schwarz, 118–120.
- 55 Marcel Duchamp, *Die Schriften*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Serge Stauffer (Zurich: Regenbogen-Verlag, 1981), 129, note 123.
- 56 Duchamp as qtd. in *MARCEL DUCHAMP*, eds. Anne d’Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Prestel, 1989), 256.
- 57 Bergson, *Laughter*, 2.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 10/15.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 130.