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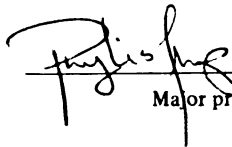
**Marcel Duchamp and the Utopian
Philosophies of Peter Kropotkin
and Henri Bergson**

presented by

Theodore F. Villa

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in **Art**



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MARCEL DUCHAMP AND THE UTOPIAN PHILOSOPHIES
OF PETER KROPOTKIN AND HENRI BERGSON

By

Theodore F. Villa

A THESIS

Submitted to

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ABSTRACT

MARCEL DUCHAMP AND THE UTOPIAN PHILOSOPHIES OF PETER KROPOTKIN AND HENRI BERGSON

By

Theodore F. Villa

This thesis examines the influence of utopian philosophy on Marcel Duchamp. It relates his art to the anarchist philosophy of Peter Kropotkin, and the metaphysics of Henri Bergson. This investigation reveals some striking similarities between them and suggests that Duchamp was more firmly rooted in the intellectual culture of the day, and susceptible to its influences, than previously thought.

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INTRODUCTION

When Marcel Duchamp arrived in Paris in 1904, at the age of eighteen, he entered a city struggling to define modernity. The effort to determine the nature of modernity had long been underway in Europe, and by 1904 was not a new phenomenon. However, the onset of the twentieth century lead to an intensification of the desire to define the modern on the parts of many sectors of society. Following in the footsteps of his older brothers, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Marcel gained entree into one of the most influential groups in the debate: the artistic and literary avant-garde. Residing along the Left Bank of the Seine in Paris, the bohemian, and politically left-leaning painters, sculptors and writers agitated for the creation of a utopian, collectivist, anarchistic society much like the one that they created on the Rive Gauche.¹

In the decade preceding World War I such a vision seemed achievable given the growing power of labor unions and their ability to promote their political agenda. Largely socialistic, the unions represented an organized approach to balancing the needs of labor and capital in an equitable

¹ See Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years, (NYC: Vintage,

fashion that would allow both to share in the great promise of ever-improving methods of mass-production. The most important of these advances occurred in 1908 when Henry Ford created the production line. This development pushed the industrial revolution into its final and most productive stage and showed that anything, including cars, tractors and eventually tanks and planes, not just shoes, clothing and furniture, could be built quickly, efficiently and cheaply.²

These realities relegated European romantic views of

1968).

² While Ford and the automobile were distinctively American, the societal effects of the automobile and its method of manufacture spread beyond the borders of this country and influenced every western European Nation as the onset of WWI demonstrated. The Ford attitude, and the forms that it produced, from the goods themselves, to the buildings where they were constructed inspired the European designers, especially Peter Behrens, and later Gropius at the Bauhaus, and Le Corbusier during the late teens and early twenties. Their views, especially those of the Bauhaus, embodied the utopian spirit of Modernism better than other movements. Despite the destruction wrought by mass produced goods during WWI, Bauhaus members maintained hope that machine produced goods could redeem and unify humanity; see William J. Curtis, Modern Architecture Since 1900, (Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1987) 60 - 74, 104-131. Their inability to truly adopt a machine based methodology, and their persevering love of the handmade, as well as the downfall of the Weimar republic, and the ascension of the Nazis in 1934 doomed the utopic vision; see Lynn H. Nichols, "Prologue," The Rape of Europa, by Nichols (NYC: Knopf, 1994) 3 - 25. By 1945 any vision of redemption through industrialization had been smashed, and the reality of mass production as a cheap way to provide goods prevailed.

agrarian and artisanal lifestyles to history.³ The transition from the pre-modern model of the world to the modern ideal received its first artistic treatment in England during the 1830s, most notably in the paintings of J.M.W Turner -- for example, *The Fighting Temeraire*, 1838, *Rain, Steam, Speed - The Great Western Railway*, 1844. In the second half of the century the realities of daily life supplanted Turner's romanticized notion of modernity, and became popular subjects for the nineteenth century French artistic avant-garde. Edouard Manet's *Concert in the Tuileries*, 1862. Claude Monet's *Railway Bridge at Argenteuil*, 1873, and Georges Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières*, 1884.⁴ demonstrated a belief -- within more progressive

³ America did not experience the same level of angst about becoming an industrialized nation as did Europe because it lacked the long tradition of craftsmanship that Europeans revered at the turn of the century. The utopic vision of John Ruskin and William Morris did not seem to hold the same power in America -- largely comprised of European immigrants, and thus not so enamored of the past as were Europe's middle and upper classes. America promised a future utopia to the immigrant (fugitive) from rigidly stratified European society. The feudal past, of John Ruskin's Gothic visions must have held little for the lower classes to celebrate; see John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, (Boston, 1897). While things were not as utopic in American factories as reported to incoming immigrants, such ahistorical sentiment helped push America to the fore of the increasingly global economy, and thus compelled Europe to follow in order to compete.

⁴ See Aimee Brown Price, "How the 'Bathers' Emerged," *AIA*, Dec. 1997: 56-63+. This piece depicted working class men,

circles -- that the events of contemporary life were worthy of artistic representation. These artistic innovators abandoned academic ideas of beauty, compositional harmony, spatial relationships and notions of "finish" to express a contemporary and individualistic view of the world. Their rejection of the academic, classical model shocked the middle classes who favored sensual academics works like William Bouguereau's *The Birth of Venus*, 1874.⁵

Paul Cézanne's belief that a painter created an object -- a painting -- not actual space and light, liberated subsequent artists from the traditional art historical conceptions. Freed from tradition, artists pursued new artistic goals and sought new definitions of painting. Painters were no longer satisfied to represent the visual reality of the new century -- photographers replaced them as chroniclers. In this milieu of rapid change -- in which painting must be regarded as an anachronism -- painters searched for a mode of expression that captured the complexity of the new era and also affirmed painting's

at a working class beach, and highlighted artists' shift away from the heroic past.

⁵ Lorenz Eitner, An Outline of 19th Century Painting (NYC: Harper Collins, 1987) 271. Eitner relates the story of the fin de siècle dinner party where the guests decided that the two most important painters of the century were Bouguereau and Meissonier.

viability as a modern practice.

Cubism emerged during the first two decades of the twentieth century and appeared to fulfill the needs of an art world suffering an identity crisis. Its radical redefinition of space, resulted from both a rigorous application of fourth dimensional geometry and the anarchistic tendencies⁶ of many Cubist painters building on the new freedom provided by Cézanne. Duchamp came late to the movement but worked diligently as a Cubist during 1912 - - four months of which he spent in a self imposed exile in Munich. By 1913 he had broken free of the movement's critical and stylistic dictates, which were as strict as those of the Academy, and moved into a wholly new expressive realm.

Duchamp's artistic statement fell beyond the boundaries of any definition of art at that time and much effort has been expended in trying to determine the factors that inspired the change in his artistic philosophy. Famously coy and ambiguous when discussing his art, Duchamp avoided definitive statements about his work and often deferred to

⁶ See Linda Dalrymple Henderson, The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983); and Patricia Leighton, Reordering the Universe, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989).

the opinions of others.⁷ Irony made his works funny -- while making complex socio-artistic statements -- but, slightly inaccessible to viewers. Such a stance enabled him to avoid the tendencies of critics and historians to pigeonhole artists and their work in any particular movement.

While his work and ideas eventually secured Duchamp a place in the annals of twentieth-century art history, initially it earned him scorn from contemporary critics and a place in the margins of art history until the mid-fifties.⁸ During the years since his death in 1968 many have speculated on his contemporaneous influences. While Duchamp at first appeared unique in the history of twentieth century art, he was a man of his time, and, dealt with the same issues and influences as his contemporaries.

In this thesis I will compare Duchamp's art to the work of the utopian philosophers Peter Kropotkin, and Henri Bergson. The former was the premier anarchist theorist of this century; and the latter was the chair of the modern

⁷ Duchamp did not even contradict Arturo Schwarz's opinion that much of his early work stemmed from an unconsummated incestuous desire for his younger sister Suzanne.

⁸ Cynthia Lee Henthorn, "Responses To Marcel Duchamp: An Examination of Shifting Interpretations in The Critical Approaches to Art," unpublished thesis, Michigan State University, 1989.

philosophy department at the University of Paris. At the time of Duchamp's arrival in Paris both were widely published, and read by members of the avant-garde with whom Duchamp associated. The respective philosophies of these two men reflected the general zeitgeist of change that permeated many sectors of society, and appeared very strongly in Duchamp's work and personal philosophy. Duchamp took their utopic philosophies and the atmosphere of change that pervaded the time to invent a new mode of artistic expression that contradicted the prevailing social and artistic views of the early twentieth century. While Duchamp's humor complicated the determination of his true intentions, the influence of Kropotkin and Bergson's ideas - - both diametrically opposed to prevailing socio-cultural beliefs -- placed him in opposition to both the academic and avant-garde artistic establishments that had come to an impasse in the debate about the definition of art in the new century.

DUCHAMP AND PETER KROPOTKIN

In a widely circulated revolutionary pamphlet, "The Spirit of Revolt," Peter Kropotkin wrote:

There are periods in the life of human society when revolution becomes an imperative necessity, when it proclaims itself as inevitable. New ideas germinate everywhere, seeking to force their way into the light, to find an application in life; everywhere they are opposed by the inertia of those whose interest it is to maintain the old order; they suffocate in the stifling atmosphere of prejudice and traditions.'

The spirit of this piece, written in 1880 and frequently republished in later years, reverberated within the avant-garde during the turn of the century -- a period that many saw as the beginning of a new age of prosperity and equality. Known the world over, highly respected by members of the political avant-garde,¹⁰ and widely translated, Kropotkin's writings very clearly expounded the benefits and ideals of anarchist society. The spirit of opposition that Kropotkin demonstrated in these pamphlets echoed in Duchamp's art and life long views.. He confronted not only

⁹Peter Kropotkin, "The Spirit of Revolt," Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (NYC: Dover, 1970) 35. Originally published in *La Révolté*, in 1880.

¹⁰ Emma Goldman writes almost rhapsodically about the times that she met Kropotkin while in the new Soviet Union. See

traditional conceptions of authority but also those of the avant-garde, who, despite their claims to be free of the limits of history, and tradition, merely reinterpreted them to fit their aesthetic and critical program. In this chapter I will compare Duchamp's work to the writings of Kropotkin in order to illuminate the often overlooked influence of contemporary political thought on his art.

Ostensibly, Duchamp created art about art. A decent, but not extraordinary painter, he moved ably through Cézannean influences in the early years of the century, then Fauvism and eventually Cubism.¹¹ When Duchamp entered the Cubist fold in 1910 it was as institutionalized as the movements, and artistic establishment that it claimed to replace. The rejection of *Nude Descending a Staircase, no. 2* (1912, Philadelphia Museum of Art)¹² from the Salon d'Indépendants in February, 1912, by its chief organizers Albert Gleizes, and Jean Metzinger, exposed the strict, and limiting dogma of the avant-garde to Duchamp. He told Pierre Cabanne that after the incident he felt "there's no question of joining a group -- I'm going to count on no one

Emma Goldman, Living My Life, 2 vols., (NYC: Dover, 1970).

¹¹ Thierry de Duve, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint," ArtForum, May 1988: 110-121.

¹² Marcel Duchamp, "1914 Box," The Writings of Marcel Duchamp, ed. Michel Sanouillet & Elmer Petersen (Oxford:

but myself, alone."¹³ He also told Cabanne that the experience instilled within him "a distrust of systematization," that manifested itself as an inability to "accept established formulas, to copy or to be influenced to the point of recalling something seen the night before in a gallery window."¹⁴ The experience at the Indépendants radicalized him and marked the beginning of his search for an alternative to prevailing definitions of art. In the oppositional spirit of anarchy, and with a hefty dose of humor Duchamp's works during this period represented musings about the authority of any organization to impose a standard upon the individual and the public.¹⁵

Standard Stoppages (1912, Museum of Modern Art, New York City) represented the beginning of his withdrawal from the artistic establishment, as well as a clear enunciation of anarchist ideals. Duchamp created *Standard Stoppages* by cutting three, one meter long, pieces of string. He based the length of the strings on the governmental standard of France -- a platinum rod held by the bureau of weights and measures in a climate-controlled room. Then, one at a time,

Oxford, 1973).

¹³ Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, trans. Ron Padgett, (NYC: Viking, 1976) 31.

¹⁴ Cabanne, 26.

¹⁵ For a brief history of the salon system, see Eitner,

he held a length of string horizontally, one meter above the ground, and dropped it onto a painted, Prussian blue canvas sheet.¹⁶ He made no effort to control the fall, and allowed the string to distort "itself as it pleases" (Duchamp's emphasis).¹⁷ He then traced the shapes onto individual pieces of wood to create an "approximate reconstitution [Duchamp's emphasis] of the measure of length."¹⁸ Duchamp's reconstitution of the official meter challenged the authority of the French government, and that of any organization to mandate standards of any sort. *Standard Stoppages* provided a launching pad for his future artistic investigations and also demonstrated how members of a society, free of a standardized and regulated system of measurement interacted with one another.

The viability of such a measurement system as represented in *Standard Stoppages* relied upon the anarchistic notion of mutual aid -- the cornerstone of Kropotkin's anarchistic model.¹⁹ Kropotkin wrote a famous

Outline, 269-288.

¹⁶ Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp*, (NYC: Henry Holt, 1996) 131-2.

¹⁷ Duchamp, "1914 Box," 21.

¹⁸ Duchamp, "1914 Box," 22.

¹⁹ Mutualism, or *mutuellisme* comes not directly from Kropotkin himself, but from the economic theories of Paul Proudhon. Kropotkin mentions him prominently in his *Encyclopedia Britannica* definition. He cites that Proudhon was the first to use the "name of anarchy with application

definition of anarchy that appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1905 that began by stating that an

anarchistic society is conceived without government -- harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups . . . freely constituted for the sake of production, consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being. In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the state in all its functions . . . Moreover, such a society would represent nothing immutable. On the contrary -- as is seen in organic life at large -- harmony would (it is contended) result from an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences . . . ²⁰

Duchamp's critical model, as first seen in *Standard Stoppages*, rested on the values of cooperation and communication between individuals, free of larger governing bodies, that Kropotkin identified as key elements of mutualism. In creating a piece, Duchamp -- the artist --

to the non-government state of society" (Kropotkin, 290). The system that he proposed as a way of achieving the anarchistic state relied on *mutuellisme* or the strictly equivalent exchange of services (Kropotkin, 291). This would remove the impetus of profit from people's dealings and lead to a more equitable and harmonious society.

²⁰ Peter Kropotkin "Anarchism," Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (NYC: Dover, 1970) 284.

proposed that the object was art. His definition most likely differed from that of the viewer. This difference between artist and viewer required them to compromise in order to create a mutually agreeable signification -- much as would have been required of two people with self-defined meters. This interaction between the artist and viewer stood at the center of Duchamp's conception of art. He told Cabanne that he believed

very strongly in the 'medium' aspect of the artist [the artist as a medium]. The artist makes something, then one day he is recognized by the intervention of the public, of the spectator; so later he goes on to posterity . . . it's a product of two poles -- there's the pole of the one who makes the work, and the pole of the one who looks at it. I give the latter as much importance as the one who makes it.²¹

Like Kropotkin's definition of mutualism, this definition of art was eminently fluid and changed as the positions of artist and viewer changed.²²

Art viewing, in the Duchampian model, became an active

²¹ Cabanne, 70.

²² The viewer may become more educated, and more familiar with Duchamp's efforts and goals, hence the nature of the definition will change. In her essay, "Marcel," Beatrice Wood explained how under Duchamp's tutelage she came to understand the goals of the avant-garde, and to understand and appreciate modern art. Beatrice Wood, "Marcel," Artist of the Century, ed. R.E. Kuenzli & F.M. Naumann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 12-17. For further discussion of this interaction of artist, work and viewer, esp. In regards to

exercise. The opinions of viewers replaced those of critics, museums and selection committees. Duchamp's inclusion of the viewer in the determination of artfulness, reduced the power of the institutional arbiters of taste. This posed a problem for art historical traditionalists -- including members of the avant-garde - who based their definition of art upon appearance and relative considerations like taste and beauty. This model did not obviate the creation of beautiful art, but it devalued beauty as a criterion for artfulness. Duchamp's fluid conception of the critical model represented a radical reconception of art world hierarchies that contradicted both the academy and the avant-garde. His adoption of the Readymade aesthetic distinguished him from other artists in the same way that Kropotkin defined the difference between reformers and revolutionaries in "The Spirit of Revolt." He wrote that reformers who called for everything to "be reorganized, remodeled, established on a new basis" failed to recognize that it was

impossible to make things over, to remodel anything at all because everything is interrelated; everything would have to be remade at once . . . Such periods demand revolution. It becomes a social necessity; the situation itself

the idea of the "unfinished," see the next chapter.

is revolutionary.²³

Duchamp created works that filled the gap between the remodeled and the revolutionary in the post-Cézannean world of art where the artist was freed from the important and quasi-religious act of applying paint to a surface and began creating an independent object in space that both was, and represented, its own reality. Avant-garde painters failed to grasp the full ramifications of "painting as object." They missed the opportunity to revolutionize painting in the sense of abandoning it altogether as the technological innovations and new forms of the twentieth century demanded. Truly modern painting, according to Duchamp's model, had very little to do with the Cubistic manipulations of space upon a flat surface.

The Cubists startled both the public and critics, but essentially maintained the framework of artistic determinacy developed during the Renaissance, and perpetuated by the academy, and created their own stringent critical model. Originally rejected by the more prestigious, and socially accepted salons of early twentieth century Paris, they, like their nineteenth century predecessors, continued to exhibit

²³ Kropotkin, "Spirit," 37.

in independent salons and liberal galleries.²⁴ As the rejection of *Nude* demonstrated, juries for these shows judged the acceptability of work as strictly as their traditional counterparts.

This work, rendered in the muted brown and yellow palette of Analytic Cubism depicted a faceted Cubist figure descending a flight of stairs before large planar areas of paint in the background. The repetition of the head and torso across the canvas, and the small, semi-circular, dotted line at the elbow lend an air of frenetic motion to the composition.²⁵ Despite the similarities between this work and other Cubist canvases of the period, it failed to conform to the movement's rules that Gleizes and Metzinger had codified in their writings between 1910 and 1912. *Nude* followed, and in a certain respect, exceeded Metzinger's praise of Georges Braque as seen in his 1910 "Note on Painting:

Whether it be a face or a fruit he is painting, the total image radiates in time, the picture is no longer a dead portion of space. A main volume is physiologically born of concurrent masses. And this miraculous dynamic process has a fluid

²⁴One may argue that such practices were necessary if they were to present their art to the public.

²⁵ References to Edward Muybridge's use of a high-speed camera to capture people in motion and create chronophotographs that influenced later artists abound throughout the literature on this period.

counterpoint and a color scheme dependent on the ineluctable two-fold principle of warm and cold tones.²⁶

Metzinger extolled Cubism's "abandonment of the burdensome inheritance of dogma; the displacing . . . of the poles of habit; the lyrical negation of axioms; the clever mixing . . . of the successive and the simultaneous."²⁷ The reaction to *Nude*, however, demonstrated the Cubist displeasure with Duchamp's interpretation of the movement, and revealed the "poles of habit" that persisted even amongst Cubists. The Cubist, avant-garde criteria of acceptability, while fundamentally different from those of the academy, functioned on an equally narrow basis of judgment, one not at all open and free, as befitted their radical political posturing.²⁸

After his experience at the Indépendants, Duchamp

²⁶ Jean Metzinger, "Note on Painting," trans. Richard Fry, from Art in Theory, 1900-1990, ed. Charles. Harrison, Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 178. This piece originally appeared in *Pan* in 1910, and again at the time of the Salon des Indépendants, 1911.

²⁷ Metzinger, "Note," 178.

²⁸ The famed bohemian lifestyle of the left bank, the *demi monde* of the night club, and radical political cells that centered in the cafes of this area of Paris were the outward manifestations of the countercultural views of the avant-garde. See Alexander Varias, Paris and The Anarchists, (London: St. Martins, 1996), and Shattuck, Banquet Years.

traveled to Munich where his anarchist ideas coalesced.²⁹ Duchamp did not entirely abandon the Cubist mode of representation as his work from this period demonstrated. The three paintings that he produced while living in Munich -- *The Virgin no. 1* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), and *The Bride* (Philadelphia Museum of Art)--and an initial sketch for *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* appeared cubistic, but they represented preliminary investigations of his highly subjective expressive and thematic investigations of the following years.³⁰ The model of secession that dominated the artistic avant-garde in Munich informed his mode of interaction with Parisian

²⁹ When Duchamp returned from Munich, Cubism had moved into its synthetic phase and abandoned the analytic style from which these works arose. During this time Duchamp began a general move away from the creation of traditional art objects; and eleven years after his rejection at the Indépendants, and following "completion" of *The Large Glass*, Duchamp left art completely -- according to legend. He continued to work in secret on *Étant Donnés*. The secrecy of this work, in progress for nearly half a century, represented his ultimate, anarchist statement, and subversion of the critical process. Sequestered away on 14th St. in New York City (Tomkins, 377). He went underground -- the only place from which he foresaw the creation of true art -- beyond the influence and values of the mainstream.

³⁰ For a more detailed discussion of these works see the next chapter, and Thierry de Duve, Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade, trans. Dana Polan, THL 51 (Minneapolis: U. Minn. Press, 1991).

artists.³¹ When Duchamp returned to Paris in the fall of 1912 he continued his social association with members of the avant-garde but rejected their artistic program.

Much of the conflict between Duchamp and the avant-garde came down to differences in taste. Despite the fact that artists of the avant-garde claimed to have abandoned history, their conceptions of art were very much beholden to traditional definitions and methods. The appearance of Duchamp's Readymades did not fit with these critical definitions and lead to his rejection. Duchamp understood what industrialization meant for artists in particular, and society as a whole better than his contemporaries. He absorbed and utilized the potential of mass production as a way to preserve the viability of art. Rather than spelling the end of art, as many believed, the new industrial goods promised to revitalize art

After his return to Paris from Munich Duchamp toured the Salon de la Locomotion (open between October 26 - November 10, 1912) with Constantin Brancusi, and Fernand Léger.³² As the trio stood before an airplane propeller he said to his companions "painting is over and done with. Who

³¹ Thierry de Duve, "Resonances of Duchamp's Visit to Munich," Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century, ed. R.E. Kuenzli and F.M. Naumann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 41-64.

could do anything better than this propeller? Look, could you do that?"³³ Duchamp thus revealed his sentiments about the place of the artist in relation to the forms of the twentieth century. He demonstrated a new understanding of aesthetics, art and beauty as he looked at the propeller. In that moment Duchamp recognized the new art, and identified the modern artist's need to combine art and technology in order to avoid obsolescence.³⁴ He soon abandoned the historical conception of art altogether, and moved into the realm of the Readymade, as represented by the mass-produced objects of factories in Europe and the United States.³⁵

Thierry de Duve, wrote that at this moment, Duchamp abandoned painting, and moved into the Modern Epoch of art.³⁶ The artist "had designated the readymade, Bleriot's airplane and propeller, and soon the bridges and plumbing fixtures of the New world, as the only things worthy of supplanting painting under the title art."³⁷ This placed Duchamp in company with Muthesius, Sullivan and later

³² de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

³³ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

³⁴ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

³⁵ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

³⁶ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

³⁷ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

Le Corbusier, as functionalists.³⁸ Unlike these men however, Duchamp "did not reinvest this sensitivity in a voluntarist aesthetic based on the machine."³⁹ Instead, he asserted his individuality and utilized the freedom afforded by the rise of the machine, and its aesthetic, to secede from the dogmatic avant-gardism of the Cubists.⁴⁰ Duchamp showed an understanding that the machine had liberated society from historical conventions and opened up an entirely new realm of possibilities.⁴¹

Duchamp was not the only artist employing mass produced goods in his work. By the time he returned from Munich, Picasso and Braque had moved into the synthetic phase of Cubism. They used newspaper clippings, chair caning and other mass produced goods to make collages like *Bottle of Suze* (1912). While Picasso and Braque understood the significance of these objects as "modern media," they utilized them like paint and applied them to the flat surface of the canvas. These pieces occupied a point between painting's potential future and its past.⁴²

³⁸ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

³⁹ de Duve, "Resonances," 54.

⁴⁰ de Duve, "The Readymade," 117..

⁴¹ Theodore F. Villa, "Cela ne pas d'importance," unpublished essay, Michigan State University, 1996.

⁴² Picasso's *Bottle of Suze*, made a pointed statement about the growing troubles in Yugoslavia that lead to WW1. The

Duchamp re-presented readymade objects in such a way that they stood on their own as aesthetically and artistically worthy objects. He valorized factory-produced forms by utilizing their expressive and symbolic potential independently from the art historical model. Duchamp did not attempt to adapt the new forms to fit with preconceptions of art. He said to Pierre Cabanne "that the modern world moves in and takes over, even in painting. It forces things to change naturally, normally."⁴³ Duchamp regarded mass production as the end of painting as traditionally defined.

Artistic innovation often mirrored socio-cultural advances in science, literature and politics and incorporated these changes into the expressive model."

news print delivered a socio-political critique and also served a formalistic, expressive role. Picasso was obviously focused on the problems of painting in this work. However, he either refused, or failed to acknowledge the full ramifications of news-print-as-artistic-media in regards to artistic production. See Paul Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry, Primitivism, Cubism and Abstraction (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994) 87-100.

⁴³ Cabanne, 93.

⁴⁴ The use of single point perspective in the Renaissance enabled the artists of the day to represent the physical world in a manner more in keeping with the increasingly rational world view that typified the Renaissance. Another example of this integration of socio-cultural influence can be found during the Baroque period when Catholic painters like Peter Paul Rubens created great bold works in order to capture the wavering hearts of Catholics during the Counter-

Synthetic Cubism represented a first tentative step in that direction yet Duchamp later stated that "the whole trend of painting was something I didn't care to continue."⁴⁵ Other painters of the period worried about avoiding obsolescence and fussed around the edges of the growing chasm between themselves and the new society. Duchamp bridged the gap between industrial and art exhibitions and revealed a more hopeful vision about the future of art. He elevated the readymade object from its quotidian, and less appreciated spot in the industrial exhibition, into the rarefied air of the artistic. Duchamp shattered the boundaries between high art and the utilitarian or decorative arts by reconceiving the process and products of creation.

Duchamp streamlined the creative process and removed the weight assigned to relative values like appearance and beauty. The most elemental aspect of the artistic process lay not in manual skill, but rather, in how artists expressed their ideas. As Duchamp wrote in defense of *Fountain* (1917, Philadelphia Museum of Art):

Reformation. During the period of the Barbizon school the painters moved out of the studios into the countryside to paint directly from nature. The readymade tube of paint made this move possible, and expanded the possibilities for artists, and began the general redefinition of art that typified the second half of the nineteenth century.

⁴⁵ From Tomkins, Duchamp, 162 (see note in Tomkins, 474).

Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view -- created a new thought for that object."⁴⁶

Duchamp winnowed the artistic process down to its most basic aspect, disposed of all questions of taste, beauty, skill, and acceptability and valorized the artist as the primary determinant of artfulness. All others, whether viewer, critic, curator or art historian were free to either approve or disapprove; but, their opinions did not alter the artist's choices.

While Duchamp's selection and naming of readymade objects brought the art world down to a more common level it did not make art more accessible to the general public."⁴⁷ The ability to name a thing "art" was, on one level, egalitarian; but, the thought process behind Duchamp's decision excluded most people from understanding the chosen object as art. His choice of objects from beyond the

⁴⁶ Marcel Duchamp, "The Richard Mutt Case," Art in Theory 1900-1990, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) 248.

⁴⁷ It is hard to imagine a more accessible artist than Bouguereau, painting, as he did, works that depicted images of beautiful figures in idealized settings. But the consummate skill that he demonstrated in these works reminded the viewer that they indeed could not reproduce his technical mastery.

accepted boundaries of art precipitated a realignment of socio-artistic values with objects that he did not make but rather chose and were impossible to judge by any standard of the day. Guillaume Apollinaire wrote that "an artist as disengaged from aesthetic preoccupations . . . as Duchamp" had reconciled "Art and the People" with his Readymades.⁴⁸ More accurately though, Duchamp reconciled art with other parts of society from which it had grown increasingly distant. He recognized the artisanal roots of modern art practices, based in the guild system and workshops of the Renaissance. He viewed artists as skilled craftsman but resisted the accompanying sentimentality of this glorious

⁴⁸ Cabanne to Duchamp in *Dialogues*, 37. Duchamp rejected Apollinaire's statement out of hand and called it a "joke" (Cabanne, 38). Duchamp believed that Apollinaire felt obligated to mention him because of his friendship with Picabia, "because at the time, I wasn't very important in the group." (Cabanne, 38). Such an attitude allowed Duchamp to distance himself from binding perceptions of his work. His famous irony comes to the fore in his belief that he was not important. By belittling his own efforts and ideas, Duchamp distanced himself from his works and made them seem inconsequential, like a joke. This permitted him to retain a level of fluidity in his artistic production that allying himself with a serious statement, or point of view would have nullified (see next chapter). While humor was an important and indispensable component of his work (see, Ivor Davies, "New Reflections on The 'Large Glass:' The Most Logical Sources For Marcel Duchamp's Irrational Work," Art History, March, 1979: 89-94. See also de Duve "The Readymade," 110-121), it should not overshadow the implied message that artists of the period needed to examine their creative practices in light of the twentieth century's

past that persisted in the avant-garde even as it strove to move into the future." This put them on the same level as furniture makers, weavers and other craftsman who no longer had a place in economies of mass production. Duchamp acknowledged this shift in the craft trades and redefined "artist" -- at least in his own case -- to comply with this change.⁵⁰

Unlike Kropotkin's communal ideal for the new anarchist society, Duchamp's ideal model of criticism was subjective and relied on the interaction of individuals. This subjectivity went against the grain of Kropotkin's pamphlets in which he presented a vision of change on a larger and

industrial advancements.

⁴⁹ Unlike many of the other members of the avant-garde Duchamp did not attend The Ecole de Beaux-Arts. This academy rejected him soon after his arrival in Paris in 1904, and he began to attend the Julian academy, a second tier school. His rejection from the Ecole represented the beginning of his disillusionment with, and questioning of, the artistic establishment's rules. Another element of his artistic education, that may have helped Duchamp avoid becoming overly protective about the discipline may have been his designation as an art worker. He trained as a printer, in the shop of his grandfather in Rouen in order to avoid the draft, and to be released from military service. See de Duve, "Resonances."

⁵⁰ Artists, unlike other artisans, could maintain their viability if they turned their creative energies to the reinterpretation, and use of the new material and forms that the mass produced society had provided. This allowed them to survive, unlike other artisans. Despite the functionality of Duchamp's aesthetic, his works are function-less except as the explication of an idea about the

more communal scale. Kropotkin wrote that "individualism, narrowly egotistic, is incapable of inspiring anybody. There is nothing great or gripping in it. Individuality can attain its supreme development only in the highest common social effort."⁵¹ Duchamp never exhibited a social consciousness in his art the way that Kropotkin did in his writings. His art dealt with issues specific to the relationship between art itself and a society in which the best signifiers of the time were its mass-produced forms not its art works.⁵² His art was, in a sense, very limited in its scope and did not represent outright political statement like Picasso's *Bottle of Suze* or Kandinsky's abstractions.⁵³ Duchamp was concerned more with preventing art from declining into "objective uselessness"⁵⁴ than with saving society. His work bridged the gap between art and the mass

role of the artist in this new society.

⁵¹ Kropotkin, from the introduction by Roger N. Baldwin. Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, ed. Baldwin (NYC: Dover, 1970) 5.

⁵² By way of further illustration there are many works that have become indicative of the *zeitgeist* and of certain periods in world history. Amongst these emblematic works Chartres Cathedral comes to mind when thinking of the Middle ages; as does Michelangelo's when thinking of the Renaissance. When thinking of the twentieth century the Wright Brother's plane, the automobile, the atom bomb and the personal computer resonate as the great emblems of this century.

⁵³ See Note 42 above.

⁵⁴ de Duve "The Readymade," 111.

produced society but said more about art than the latter. Duchamp connected art to society by redefining the artist as but one type of contributor to the material culture of the twentieth century, not a specially gifted seer of abstract truths.

Duchamp rebelled against this sort of characterization and called himself an "anartist."⁵⁵ Given his penchant for word play, and his contrarian attitude, Duchamp, the anartist, opposed the artistic establishment and created original works that he called art based on a subjective definition that fell outside of all contemporary definitions of art. Duchamp's use of this pun did not amount to an admission of political ideology -- years later he would tell Pierre Cabanne "I don't understand anything about politics, and I say it's really a stupid activity."⁵⁶ Despite this attitude, his use of the pun highlighted Duchamp's recognition of a correlation between art's search for valorization in the twentieth century and anarchy's antiestablishmentarian stance. Duchamp's career trajectory demonstrated his understanding of the artistic establishment's need to abandon its historical self-

⁵⁵ de Duve, Pictorial Nominalism, 17.

⁵⁶ Cabanne, 103.

perceptions as well as the vocabulary that had long defined it in order to remain viable in the twentieth century.

Kropotkin's system of fluid interaction and free-association echoed in Duchamp's works and attitudes towards the artistic establishment.

DUCHAMP AND HENRI BERGSON

While Duchamp based his opposition to the artistic establishment on an anarchist model, his adoption of a new vocabulary and way of thinking about art and the artist came not from Kropotkin, but rather from the theories of Henri Bergson - a strong influence on the left-leaning artists of the Puteaux Cubists, particularly Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger.⁵⁷ Scholars linked Duchamp and Bergson in matters of humor and irony but never mentioned the striking similarities between the artist's life and work, and the philosopher's metaphysics.⁵⁸ In this chapter, after providing a brief overview of Bergson's phenomenology, I will highlight areas where Duchamp's art and attitudes coincided with Bergsonian metaphysics. Duchamp's anarchistic leanings aside, his engagement with socio-artistic issues hinged, as did Bergson's metaphysics, on the creation of a new system of knowledge, free from connection to models of the past. Finally, this chapter will end with a brief discussion of how Bergson's philosophy influenced

⁵⁷ See Mark Antliff, Inventing Bergson, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

⁵⁸ Lucia Beier, "Time Machine: A Bergsonian Approach to 'The Large Glass.'" Gazette des beaux arts, November 1976: 194-200.

Duchamp after 1915, for it is then that Duchamp's work most definitively manifested the influence of Bergson's key work, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*.

Henri Bergson defined metaphysics as "the science which claims to dispense with symbols."⁵⁹ A hallmark of his metaphysical treatise was its open-ended subjectivity. The student of Bergson came to a knowledge of the nature of reality by engaging it through direct interaction. This approach earned Bergson's philosophy the title of Vitalism and distinguished it from the detached, cerebral approach historically associated with philosophy and, after the Enlightenment, science. Bergson confronted prevailing systems of knowledge and tried to strip away the layers of accumulated social values, customs, and perceptions that occluded a true understanding of reality.⁶⁰ An antirationalist, Bergson confronted the western scientific establishment and its effort to understand and define the world with its system of empirical methods. *An Introduction to Metaphysics* revolved around Bergson's distinction between intuition and analysis -- the only two ways to know

⁵⁹ Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme, (NYC: Liberal Arts Press, 1949) 24.

⁶⁰Bergson, 22-4.

something.⁶¹ Intuition, which he favored over analysis, was an "intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible."⁶² It arose from within the subject, depended upon neither symbols nor a point of view to provide an understanding, and yielded an absolute knowledge.⁶³ Bergson wrote that the absolute was synonymous with perfection because "the object and not its representation, the original and not its translation, is perfect, by being perfectly what it is."⁶⁴ Bergson opposed analysis because it provided a relative form of knowledge⁶⁵ and never yielded the absolute because "it expresses something as a function of something other than itself. All analysis is thus a translation, a development into symbol, a representation taken from successive points of view."⁶⁶

Bergson utilized the metaphor of photography to differentiate intuition, from analysis. The pictures of a town taken from every conceivable angle never yielded an absolute and perfect knowledge of the town because the photo, a representation (symbolization) of the original,

⁶¹ Bergson, 25.

⁶² Bergson, 24.

⁶³ Bergson, 21.

⁶⁴ Bergson, 23.

⁶⁵ Bergson, 21.

separated the viewer from the town itself -- and thus was an inadequate signifier.⁶⁷ In Bergson's metaphysics, the world, and all of its elements, from towns to individuals, changed with the passage of time - he labeled this aspect the *élan vital*, or essential spirit -- and no method of symbolization could ever capture this aspect.⁶⁸ Bergson wrote that all things, inherently changeable, were connected by, and comprised, the *durée*, or duration.⁶⁹ Despite this continual state of flux, the duration was inherently stable. It contained a built-in memory mechanism in that each state of the duration contained an element of the one immediately

⁶⁶ Bergson, 24, 35.

⁶⁷ This directly contradicted the basic feeling of the day that the photograph was an actual and accurate representation of reality.

⁶⁸ Perhaps the easiest way to explain this is the formula $a \neq a$. By way of analogy, person "a" sitting is not the same as person "a" standing. The latter contains elements of the former, but in the transition from sitting to standing became a new entity, which in and of itself will be different when "a" takes a step or sits back down. Even sitting down again transforms "a" into a new "a," one that contains elements of both the first seated, and the standing "a." Thus, individuals exist within the duration, continuously changing - stasis is impossible.

⁶⁹ This idea of component durations forming a larger duration reflected the influence of G.W. Leibniz's (1646-1716) monadology. The German philosopher felt that these monads -- singular entities -- were the building blocks of reality. He likened them to mirrored entities that both reflected, and comprised the world. While Bergson's conception of reality is more fluid than Leibniz's an interesting connection exists between the two philosophers.

preceding.⁷⁰ The idea of "moment," as captured in a photo, did not exist in Bergson's conception of the duration.⁷¹ Instead, he conceived of it as a seamlessly integrated, infinite series of ever-shifting states too intertwined to be unwound.⁷² From the Bergsonian perspective, the empirically based system of western knowledge that substituted an aspect of duration for the whole, rested upon a series of allusions to it, yet never explained it.

Bergson did not deny the usefulness of simple definitions in daily life for they facilitated interaction with the elements of life.⁷³ They yielded, he wrote, "a possible attitude of the thing towards us, as well as our best possible attitude toward it. This equals the ordinary function of the *readymade* [my emphasis] concept - those

⁷⁰ Bergson utilized an allusion to the spectrum in an effort to illustrate his point. If one conceived of the duration as the spectrum then the interstices of the colors, the transition from blue to green for example, show how closely the states within the flow of time are related to one another (Bergson, 26). He amended this soon afterward to say that even the spectrum is more fragmented than the duration. He eventually settled on the example of an infinitely stretchable rubber band, pulled in a straight line from a point in space, without focusing on the actuality of the rubber band, but focusing instead on the motion. (Bergson, 26). See note 64.

⁷¹ This use of a temporal entity is impossible in Bergson's philosophy, for the duration may not be segmented -- this was antithetical to his notion of time, and is used here, only as a device to aid the discussion.

⁷² Bergson, 25.

stations with which we mark out the path of becoming."⁷⁴

Bergson believed that these smaller concepts "divide the concrete unity" of the duration, and that this prevented people from coming to a true understanding of its nature.⁷⁵

Rather than using the simple to explain the complex, as Bergson wrote the sciences do, metaphysics needed to start with the complex, and move towards the simple.⁷⁶ Bergson opposed rationalism and the empirical methods of the west in a gentle way because they were integral to his own efforts. He wrote of broad concepts and avoided the specific except in relation to the emerging science of psychology. He viewed psychology as especially reliant upon the readymade concepts of modern, empirical methodology. Rather than explaining human nature, psychology's conceptual basis formed an impediment to understanding our own duration - the only one that an individual may know in and of itself.⁷⁷ Psychology substituted and divided characteristics of individual duration into singular personality traits. This, in Bergson's view, lead to an incomplete representation of an individual's duration and typified the incomplete nature of

⁷³ Bergson, 30.

⁷⁴ Bergson, 45.

⁷⁵ Bergson, 30.

⁷⁶ Bergson, 24.

⁷⁷ Bergson, 25.

knowledge that passed as definitive in the western system.

Bergson emphasized the constantly changing and interconnected nature of the duration. He believed The Enlightenment destroyed the true nature of reality by categorizing and quantifying everything from objects to ideas. He recognized the need for a realignment of the empirically based system of western knowledge that subsumed not only the sciences, but also art. It was along these lines that Duchamp began his critical monologue about art in the early years of this century. When Duchamp adopted the Readymade object as his expressive medium he stated that the mass produced objects of the new century represented the new art that his avant-garde contemporaries struggled to create -- fully formed, immediate and unmitigated by definitions and notions of art in the true spirit of Bergsonian metaphysics. Through the simple act of naming a thing "art" Duchamp introduced an entirely new way of thinking about art that stripped away all of the values and preconceptions that had long surrounded it. With the Bergsonian strategy of redefinition Duchamp began the process of redefining the vocabulary used to discuss and think about art.

Duchamp began this process with the definition of art itself. He stated to Cabanne that western culture regarded

the quotidian objects of "primitives" -- spoons, bowls and the like -- as art, even though these people possessed no word for "art" in their languages. He said that "it is we who have given the name art to religious things; the word itself doesn't exist among primitives."⁷⁸ Picasso and others used African masks for inspiration and as motifs in their work.⁷⁹ These objects were decontextualized by western museums and became art in the western sense of the word -- because of their aesthetic preciousity -- even though their original creators did not regard them in the same way. In contrast to such valorizations, Duchamp identified the "aesthetics of indifference" as central to his artistic approach, and goal of "putting painting at the service of the mind."⁸⁰ The appearance of an object had very little importance in his work although it was very important in the artistic milieu in which he worked. His aesthetics of indifference removed art and the artist from their elevated status in the western world. He placed them both into a more utilitarian mold that contradicted the general orthodoxy of the discipline's history and values as established during the Renaissance. Duchamp's art, unlike the "primitive"

⁷⁸ Cabanne, 100.

⁷⁹ See Pablo Picasso, Demoiselles d'Avignon, MOMA, New York.

⁸⁰ Numerous places, this phrase often appears in relation to

objects that inspired his contemporaries, served no purpose and stood in opposition to the idea of art for art's sake.

This notion, predicated on beauty, automatically required viewers to approach art in a specific way that established a series of expectations that affected how viewers judged a work and colored their conclusions about it. Duchamp called this the retinal quality of painting and believed that a beautiful thing appealed to the eye but not necessarily the intellect.⁸¹ The determination of the beautiful rested upon an ever shifting, culturally determined set of values. This created an unstable foundation upon which to judge the aesthetic worth of an object. In order to counter this, the Academy based its definition of beauty upon the Renaissance model. This definition persisted even as society moved forward and new forms and ideas changed the way people lived.

The avant-garde rebelled against academic definitions of art but, as noted in the pervious chapter, created a new academicism that differed from the old in kind, not quality. Avant-garde painting, regardless of its appearance, was still painting, in the oldest definition of the practice: the application of paint to a flat surface. The search for

Duchamp and his methodology.

a new art required the abandonment of this idea. This was complicated by the fact that painting occupied the pinnacle of artistic expression in the minds of most artists, regardless of their affiliation, and became synonymous with art. Painters created a separation between painting and the other manual arts based on the perception of painting as a privileged occupation. Such attitudes formed the basis of connoisseurship that was synonymous with taste. Taste represented the antithesis of Duchamp's aesthetic of indifference, because as he told Cabanne, it equaled a habit.⁸² This avoidance of habits demonstrated a Bergsonian influence that resonated throughout his work. The philosopher wrote that the individual should avoid, at all costs, the assumption of a point of view, or the adoption of an opinion, which they would be compelled to defend.⁸³ Adherence to opinions, and attitudes limited one's ability to interact with the duration in an immediate manner, and locked the holder into a framework of reference from which they were expected to interpret the world around them.

Duchamp and Bergsonism most closely intersected in *The Bride Stripped bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-1923,

⁸¹ See Cabanne, 77.

⁸² Cabanne, 48.

⁸³ Bergson, 44.

Philadelphia Museum of Art), a piece that Duchamp called a "hilarious Picture."⁸⁴ The original idea for this piece appeared in a sketch, of the same title that he did in Munich.⁸⁵ It marked the zenith of his critique of contemporary art practice, and represented the dilemma of the modern painter. Duchamp created the work, which now resides in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, on plate glass that he divided into an upper and lower half. In the top half he located the mechanomorphic⁸⁶ and mysterious form of the bride that he called "basically . . . a motor."⁸⁷ Her veil, comprised of polyhedrons in a cloud, trailed behind her.

The lower half contained a more complex group of objects. This was the realm of the bachelors whom Duchamp represented as forms for readymade clothing. He attached nine of these "malic moulds"⁸⁸ to a wheel that connected to a slider that was driven by a water mill that Duchamp rendered in perfect isometric perspective. To the right of the

⁸⁴ Marcel Duchamp, "The Green Box, sect 2: Laws and General Notes," The Writings of Marcel Duchamp, ed. M. Sanouillet & E. Petersen (Oxford: Oxford, 1973).

⁸⁵ See previous chapter.

⁸⁶ Anne d' Hannoncourt, Etant Donnes: 1er la chute d'eau, 2eme le gaz d'eclairge: Reflection On a New Work by Marcel Duchamp. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987) 14.

⁸⁷ Duchamp, "Green Box, sect. 8: The Bride."

Bachelors floated five opaque yellow cones, or parasols,⁸⁹ that lead the eye towards the center of the composition. Duchamp situated a machine with a long pole connected to the top of a chocolate grinder - a reference to his 1914 drawing, that itself was a reference to the French adage that "the Bachelor grinds his chocolate himself"⁹⁰ -- also in isometric perspective. He topped the pole with a large pair of shears that protruded dangerously into the Bachelors' line of rotation. In the upper right hand corner of the lower half, four symbols from an optometrist chart floated in space.

The Large Glass was an allegory about painting's search for meaning in the twentieth century. It catalogued Duchamp's ideas about the definition of art and where he stood in relation to the prevailing beliefs about it. His use of plate glass subverted the traditionally illusionistic nature of painting. The transparent surface negated the need to create the illusion of perspective because the viewer could look through the glass and see behind the piece. This referred directly to Bergson's idea that the model -- isometric perspective in this case -- was no substitute for

⁸⁸ Duchamp, "Green Box, sect. 11: Malic Moulds."

⁸⁹ Duchamp, "Green Box, sect. 10: The Illuminating Gas."

⁹⁰ Duchamp, "Green Box, sect. 21: The Chocolate Grinder."

the actual. The Bride, Duchamp's allegorical representation of painting, was not beautiful in the traditional sense of the word. He did not represent her as a muse in flowing robes, or any variation upon that theme. She was a mechanomorphic amalgamation of elements that represented the new goal and direction of art that artists sought, but were unable to achieve given their maintenance of traditional definitions of painting and the painter.

The Malic Moulds, attached as they were to a wheel represented the futility that painters experienced in holding to the definition of the painter while trying to reinvent art in light of the new realities of the twentieth century. The Bachelors also represented another interesting connection between Duchamp and Bergson. The moulds were adapted from models that were used to make uniforms for a Priest, Gendarme, Cuirassier, Flunky, Department Store Delivery Boy, Page Boy, Undertaker, Stationmaster, Policeman.⁹¹ Bergson had previously utilized readymade clothing as a metaphor to describe the analytical model and wrote:

The task of . . . true metaphysics is difficult because it rejects the use of . . . readymade concepts in the process. These thoughts that run daily operations are chosen from a heap - no need

⁹¹ Duchamp, "Green Box, sect. 11: Malic Moulds."

to cut them out on the model. Stock size clothes that work as well for Peter or Paul, but set off the form of neither."⁹²

Duchamp represented the Bachelors as dummies, each represented the accepted, and expected idea of the painter according to a set definition. He criticized these definitions because they locked the bachelor into a situation in which no growth was possible. They rotated aimlessly above the isometric water mill -- symbol of illusionistic painting -- from which they tried, yet were unable, to escape.

The avant-garde maintenance of the traditional idea of painter doomed them to the lower half of the composition and prevented them from capturing, and having, The Bride. The Chocolate Grinder also turned in a circular fashion, mimicking the circular path of The Bachelors, and drove the cutting motion of the shears that cut on the same level of The Bachelors' genitals, or what Duchamp called their "pnt. of sex."⁹³ The Chocolate Grinder reflected Duchamp's belief that painting was "olfactory masturbation,"⁹⁴ and that the codification of its rules and attention to surface --

⁹² Bergson, 37.

⁹³ Duchamp, "Green Box, sect. 11: Malic Moulds."

⁹⁴ de Duve, "The Readymade," 111.

⁹⁴ de Duve, "The Readymade," 111.

practiced by both the avant-garde and the academy -- ultimately prohibited its progress. Painting had become, in the words of de Duve, "objectively useless and subjectively impossible."⁹⁵

While his contemporaries struggled to concretely define art in a way that accounted for the realities of the new century, Duchamp permitted the flow of time to provide him with the answer. The idea that a new classicism existed in some all-encompassing idea of modernity assumed that the revered, and idolized forms of the past were themselves definitive. Art history, however, demonstrated that none of these forms dominated the cultural consciousness for more than 250 years, and that no single movement represented a classical moment more than any other. Twentieth century Modernists picked specific moments against which to rebel without considering the larger intellectual, social and technological advancements that gave rise to specific movements. By focusing on the appearances of these movements rather than the cultures in which they arose, academics and avant-gardists ignored the interconnectedness between art and society that typified art history. Duchamp understood the importance of this synergy between art and

society, and the Bergsonian model of reality as an ever-flowing entity, modified artistic efforts to match societal changes. Duchamp's work, like the Bergsonian metaphysical model was one element in an interconnected matrix.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the greatest irony of Duchamp's career was that his artistic and personal philosophy reflected the influence of the utopian philosophies of Bergson and Kropotkin. Nothing in Duchamp's work or personal life ever hinted at any utopic tendencies. This differed from the aspirations of his contemporaries throughout Europe who celebrated the new technologies and ways of thinking that promised an egalitarian period of advancement and prosperity. As appealing as this vision seemed, Duchamp was more interested in the system of critique and intellectual engagement that composed the foundations of Kropotkin and Bergson's philosophies.⁹⁶ Whether or not Duchamp intended to change artistic practice was not clear. Yet, the mere existence of his work proved unsettling to the artistic community -- both avant-garde and academic -- and generated debate and conflict between those who saw the logic of his work and those who envisioned a modern classicism in which painters played a central role.

The Readymades highlighted the sort of radical reconception of art that was necessary to solve the artistic

⁹⁶ Cabanne, 98.

identity crisis of the period. Duchamp co-opted these mass produced objects -- of aesthetic indifference -- and re-presented them in roles that created new levels of significance. The Readymades contradicted the rules of both the academy and the avant-garde and revealed the latter's deeply entrenched traditionalism. The philosophies of Kropotkin and Bergson complimented one another. The anarchist model of Kropotkin, and its opposition of hierarchical organizations informed Duchamp's repudiation of the artistic establishment. The influence of Bergsonian metaphysics on his dissent was more subtle. In order to realize the ideals of the anarchist revolution as envisioned by Kropotkin, the Bergsonian process of redefinition needed to be undertaken before any change was possible. Duchamp understood better than other avant-gardists that the new idea of painting needed a new vocabulary which he introduced in the form of the Readymades. These objects signified modernity and were Duchamp's answer to the questions surrounding art's role and form in the new century. The Readymades were a bomb that Duchamp filled with humor and tossed into the midst of the

debate about the definition of modern art.

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