

## *FLASH REASON*

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*by Gregory L. Ulmer*

The theme of a velocity of thought greater than any given velocity  
can be found in Empedocles, Democritus, or Epicurus.  
Gilles Deleuze

Paul Virilio stated the challenge to our information society: every technology includes its own disaster. The technology in question is that of our communications infrastructure, the digital media that function at the speed of light. The disaster Virilio has in mind is not only technical, but cultural and social as well (technics). The speed of our digital world has created a dimensional pollution, compressing everything into “now.” This condition threatens to render impossible any democratic public sphere since there is no time for deliberative reason, the persuasion and argument, needed to achieve the consent of the governed.

Post-criticism reads the collaboration of arts and philosophy in the industrial era in terms of apparatus theory: language technologies are not just equipment, but include institution formation (to develop and disseminate the relevant skill-set) and identity experience (ethical and political adaptations and adjustments to the new conditions). Experimental arts and theory are doing for electracy (the apparatus of digital technology) what philosophy in the Academy (and Lyceum) did for literacy in Ancient Greece. The pure and practical reason invented for literacy are not adequate to electracy and must be re-invented (such is the assignment of post-criticism). Even if we become “post-human” (cyborgs), the proposed invention must still include a practice or skill set that mediates between the body-mind and the equipment, just as the practices of literacy mediate between citizens and the library. A name for this image practice created by the experimental arts is “flash reason.”

A review of the tradition, having in mind the qualities of immediate insight, reveals that flash reason is associated with a particular virtue – that virtue without which all other virtues are useless, some have said: prudence, or *phronesis*, as Aristotle called it. Prudence is a time-wisdom, a capacity to make an appropriate decision in an instant of time by taking the measure of a particular situation in its temporal context. This virtue has a history that is not widely understood, causing it to fall out of favor or be reduced to caricatures (“expediency”) and even to be forgotten entirely. A premise motivating post-criticism is that the path to the invention of general electracy (a fully electrated society) passes through an updating of the virtue of prudence.

In the Medieval period prudence as a faculty or capacity of good judgment was associated with the Christian virtues. The practice of virtue in this synthesis was based on Aristotle’s account of “common sense” as the inner (sixth) sense, integrating into a unity the sensations provided by the five external senses. The schools packaged these collections according to endoxal norms, so that “common” also came to mean “community” standards for right conduct. Decorum was the equivalent in arts and letters of prudence in life conduct, to the point that it was assumed good judgment could be learned by studying and performing arts composition. The prestige and usefulness of Cicero to the scholastics secured the survival of rhetorical memory, as Yates explained, citing Cicero’s definition. “Prudence is the knowledge of what is good, what is bad and what is neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence, foresight (*providentia*). Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that

something is going to occur before it occurs” (20). Yates goes on to speculate about an antique source of the ethical or prudential use of artificial memory.

The stoics, we know, attached great importance to the moral control of the fantasy as an important part of ethics. As I mentioned, we have no means of knowing how the “things” Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and their parts would have been represented in the artificial memory. Would Prudence, for example, have taken on a strikingly beautiful mnemonic form, a persona like someone that we know, holding or having grouped round her secondary images to remind of her parts – on the analogy of how the parts of the case against the man accused of poisoning formed a composite mnemonic image? (21)

Yates proposes that this institutionalized habit of mnemonics influenced much of the cultural production of the epoch, and could explain better than does conventional notions of allegory the design of a great variety of works, including Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

### JUDGMENT

Immanuel Kant’s introduction of aesthetic judgment in his Third Critique is an innovation in the tradition of prudence. A feature of special relevance to electracy is Kant’s description of reflective judgment in which a person spontaneously recognizes some form in nature, a body, or art, and judges it to be “beautiful,” without benefit of a concept or rule guiding the judgment. This process of thinking without concepts provides a transition from the literate to an electracy apparatus (from conceptual categories to a new image category). The judgment of “beauty” assumes the existence of “common sense,” forming a community of persons sharing not any specific “taste,” but the capacity to experience beauty. The phrase refers not to our modern meaning of “good sense” or shared opinion, or even the “straight talk” of Thomas Paine, but to the inner or “sixth” sense that unified and synthesized the perceptions gathered from each of the five bodily senses. To convey the immediate and spontaneous certainty of reflective feeling, Kant associated it with the sense of taste. The Latin languages indicate a relationship between taste and knowledge with the near pun, *sapere* and *sapere*, relaying the flash of awareness between mouth and intellect measuring the range between sweet and bitter.

Reflective judgment works in the middle voice (the action affects the speaker). “Beauty” is not a property of an object or thing, but a feeling by which subjects become aware of a harmony among their own faculties. A concept or rule is lacking for the feeling. The judgment operates formally, by means of the proportional analogy “hypotyposis.” The bridge between the empirical causal world of sensible things and the moral realm of desire is accomplished analogically, with “beauty” (some sensible example) constituting a “symbol” of the supersensible “good.” Kant associated this rhetorical figure with the shift from representation

(Vorstellung) to presentation (Darstellung), with the latter emphasizing the vividness of an image, especially a visualization or “putting before the eyes” (Helfer 22).

Knowledge by analogy, Kant explains, “means not, as the word is commonly taken, an imperfect similarity of two things, but a perfect similarity of two relations between quite dissimilar things.” This definition, supported by examples that Kant gives of analogy in the *Critique of Judgment*, a definition that neither abolishes the heterogeneity of the things to be related nor affirms their complete separation, shows these dissimilar things to be similar merely in the way they themselves relate or depend on certain other things. To take Kant’s own example: a hand mill can be shown to represent a despotic state in spite of the absence of any similarity between the two “items,” because both function only if manipulated by an individual absolute will. Thus, analogical presentation does two things, as Kant notes. First, it applies the concept (here the despotic state) to the object of a sensible intuition (the hand mill), and then it applies “the mere rule of the reflection made upon the intuition [on the type of causality it implies] to a quite different object of which the first is only the symbol.” (Gasché 212)

Flash reason appropriates and updates hypotyposis as a support for judgment in electracy. The operation retraces familiar territory, articulating a passage between physical and spiritual experience. Kant’s analogical bridge, the commentators point out, retraces the path of ascent from physical love to love of wisdom mapped by Plato (for example, in *The Symposium*). In Plato’s story Eros is not beauty itself but seeks beauty (Fictioc 21). The search begins with a spontaneous experience of sexual attraction. The “disinterestedness” of the feeling is the *sensus communis* of the universality of physical attraction. Kant’s insistence on the disinterestedness of the reflective judgment is just to distinguish aesthetic feeling from other kinds of feelings. Foregrounding aesthetic judgment as a power in its own right is important to flash judgment, to establish in the larger context of the conflicts working in deliberative rhetoric the specific dimension of aesthetic pleasure-pain and the values associated with it, separated from the representations and values of knowledge and belief. After Kant judgment coordinates three axes: True-False (Understanding); Right-Wrong (Will); Pleasure-Pain (Aesthetics).

Hannah Arendt was convinced of the contemporary relevance of reflective judgment, which she called “the most political of man’s mental abilities. It is the faculty that judges particulars without subsuming them under general rules which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules. The faculty of judging particulars (as brought to light by Kant), the ability to say ‘this is wrong,’ ‘this is beautiful,’ and so on, is not the same as the faculty of thinking. Thinking deals with invisibles, with representations of things that are absent; judging always concerns particulars and things close at hand. But the two are interrelated, as are consciousness and conscience” (Arendt Vol. 1, 193).

The attraction to beauty in the beloved holds attention and stimulates reflection, revealing a harmony among the lover's faculties (*concinntas*) that gives pleasure distinct from sexual desire, that motivates the lover to begin the journey of becoming human. The process begins in aesthetic judgment, and leads into belief through custom, the social forms ordering human relationships, revealing the larger guiding patterns at work in society. Attention shifts away from the self to the other, to beauty of character and of social order. The third stage is knowledge, learning the sciences of form, such as mathematics. The final stage is wisdom: an intuition of Form as such (Fictioc, 85-86). Philosophers from Pythagoras to Kant (and beyond) based their optimism about the educability of the multitude (and their enlistment in an enlightened politics) on proportional ratios (music of the spheres). It is worth dwelling on this point, since it is possible in one respect to reduce the shift from literacy to electracy to a mutation in the standard of ratio (reason = proportion).

The most fundamental analogy of all, then, is that between love and wisdom (philosophy), concerned with the desire to know. The relationship or ratio between love and knowledge has to be adjusted in each epoch, not to mention for each apparatus. Kant's reflective judgment assumes the reality and universal irrefutability of a basic feeling: *life*. "One of the main aims of the Third Critique is to show that sensuousness is not alien to reason. It is the architectonic of reason itself, its systematic 'organic' structure constructed through the analogous *techne* with nature – that is 'signaled' in the apprehension of the beautiful. The feeling of life [*Lebensgefühl*] brought forth (experienced) in this apprehension marks the self as at once body and ethical being, because this realization of the self as body is concomitant with the realization of the 'mit' [*gefühl*] of being with the other, the feeling of the *sensus communis* and with the ethical as such" (Japaridze 41). This terminology signals a shift in metaphysics away from the transcendental subject to the immanent body of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. In formal terms, this life feeling creates a space, an opening in the world, giving a sense of something "more" (possibility, potentiality) that unfolds into an experience of freedom beyond or within necessity. "Reaching for an object that proves to be outside and beyond himself, the lover is provoked to notice that self and its limits. From a new vantage point, which we might call self-consciousness, he looks back and sees a hole. Where does that hole come from? It comes from the lover's classificatory process. Desire for an object *that he never knew he lacked* is defined, by a shift of distance, as desire for a necessary part of himself. Not a new acquisition but something that was always, properly, his. Two lacks become one" (Carson 33).

### SUBLIME

In the experience of the beautiful, the mind's eye is able to take in the whole of a situation in one glance (*Augenblick*). Prudence requires this power of *ingenium*, to run through the ratio of hypotyposis and grasp the proportion in one instant of wit. The goal of Renaissance pedagogy was to bridge the gap separating *ars* (teachable techniques) from *ingenium* (natural talent). The goal was to merge two

kinds of instantaneous analytical insights. “The first is *perspicacia*, which ‘penetrates the most distant and minute circumstances of every subject.’ This analysis is accomplished in terms of a supplementary list of Aristotle’s categories. The second is *versabilita*, which ‘rapidly compares all those circumstances among themselves, or with the subject; it joins and divides them, decides one from the other, indicates one by the other, and with marvelous dexterity puts one in the place of the other.’ There is, [Tesauro] says, little difference between *ingegno* and prudence” (Summers 100).

Kant’s innovation in this tradition was to add consideration of the “sublime,” referring to conditions that exceed the capacities of both the outer and inner eye, the glimpse in a moment that takes the measure of a situation. Within the conditions of decorum, (beauty), the faculties are in harmony. “To every empirical concept, namely, there belong three actions of the self-active faculty of cognition: (1) the apprehension of the manifold of intuition; (2) the comprehension, i.e. the synthetic unity of consciousness of this manifold in the concept of an object; (3) the presentation (*exhibitio*) [*Darstellung*] of the object corresponding to this concept in intuition. For the first action imagination is required, for the second understanding, for the third the power of judgment, which, if it is an empirical concept that is at issue, would be the determining power of judgment” (Kant, qtd. in Fictioc 128).

Confronted with some phenomenon or event in nature that exceeds the capacity of imagination to present an image adequate to the concepts of understanding, the harmony is destroyed, producing displeasure. The interest of the judgment of the sublime in conditions that expose the empirical impotence of a subject, however, is the paradoxical transformation of this displeasure into the bittersweet revelation of moral freedom. “The experience of the sublime constitutes a sudden aspect change, where the intelligible point of view somehow breaks into the empirical through a ‘negative pleasure’. We feel the presence of the other perspective, and are made aware of the primacy of the intelligible over the empirical, which can be expressed through the idea of freedom. This neither leads to concrete actions nor gives any insight in how to deal with moral dilemmas, but has its importance in signifying our moral vocation, which is tied to our rational nature” (Myskja 130). At stake in this experience is the capacity of the limitations of aesthetic form to evoke ethical intuitions that exceed form and experience alike.

Commentators agree that Kant’s sublime becomes the norm in conditions created by the industrial revolution, just beginning in Kant’s lifetime. Exemplifying the project to update hypotyposis, Jean-Francois Lyotard’s interest in the Analytic of the Sublime (just one part of Kant’s Third Critique) is due to the clue it offers for thought and action in an industrial and post-industrial society. In our terms, Lyotard’s adaptation of Kant’s sublime is an outline for deliberative rhetoric in electracy. The point that recommends Lyotard’s reading of Kant as a relay for flash reason (electrate prudence) is the support for thought provided by affect as a sublime feeling, and the rhetorical powers revealed in this experience of negative presentation. A theme of electracy (apparatus invention) is that the Western tradition already knows a great deal about flash reason (image metaphysics), and

that in some respects flash reason has been an aspiration of this tradition all along, couched as speculation about the *mind of God*.

Lyotard calls attention to the ontological and metaphysical innovations of his project, to emphasize that the aesthetic judgments of taste and of the sublime are not approached in terms of objects and properties, essences and accidents, but as feelings that organize the heterogeneous manifold by means of mood or atmosphere (*Stimmung*). This affective order involves not categories, but “tautegories.” “For ‘logically’ reflection is called judgment, but ‘psychologically,’ if we may be permitted the improper use of this term for a moment, it is nothing but the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. As a faculty of knowledge, it is devoted to the heuristic, and in procuring ‘sensations,’ the meaning of which will become clear, it fully discloses its tautegorical character, a term by which I designate the remarkable fact that pleasure and displeasure are at once both a ‘state’ of the soul and the ‘information’ collected by the soul relative to its state” (*Lessons* 4).

A tautegory is constructed according to the “manner” of its maker, a term that evokes the “conchetto” of practical reason.

The apparent sitter in a Renaissance portrait was thus an external appearance showing an inward truth, and so, it might be said, were Renaissance works of art in general. The spirit they expressed, however, was not simply that of their subject, it was also that of the artist, who gave the painting its “life.” The *Mona Lisa* is a painting of – taken from the appearance of – a Florentine merchant’s wife and at the same time a painting of – from the hand and sensibility of – Leonardo da Vinci. This second, genetic relation between artist and image was fully recognized in the Renaissance commonplace “every painter paints himself,” and the idea adds another dimension to the central paradox that the objective world is only evident from a point of view. Individual style, or manner, developed together with portraiture (and naturalism in general), so that the work itself became “physiognomic” at the same time that physiognomy became a part of the science of painting. (Summers 111)

Tautegories are physiognomic, “singularities” rather than universals, opening as they do a space of “rendezvous” hosting events of decision in practical reason. Tautegories are anchored in feeling (this is the key), and are useful for inquiry in conditions that exceed understanding and knowledge, for the sublime formlessness of experience in the (post)industrial city. The further reflective judgment moves from what in our context is “literate” metaphysics, into the unknowns of electracy, “the more manifest the tautegorical aspect of reflection becomes. There are signs of it in the more frequent occurrence of operators such as regulation (in the ‘regulative Idea’), guidance (in the guiding thread), and analogy (in the ‘as if’), which are not categories but can be identified as heuristic tautegories. Because of these curious ‘subjective operators,’ critical thought gives itself or discovers processes of synthesis that have not received the imprimatur of knowledge. Knowledge can only

draw on them reflexively, inventing them as it does according to its feeling, though it may have to legitimate their objective validity afterward” (Lyotard, *Lessons* 33).

A first step for the invention of flash judgment, as Lyotard makes clear, is the introduction of thinkers to what might be called the new “decorum,” the relationship among thought, art, and conduct in the sublime city. The place of individual “manner” in electracy, and the role of physiognomy in guiding inquiry, suggest what is at stake. In traditional emblematics, “virtue” is represented by a scene (hypotyposis) of a beautiful woman beating an ugly woman with a stick. To persist with traditional ratios, and to neglect a necessary reeducation of common sense in the sublime judgment (that works with the full range of the bittersweet, repulsion as well as attraction, “ugly” as well as “beautiful”) – in short, a literal and uncritical physiognomy – leaves citizens unprepared to make prudent policy decisions not just with respect to cosmetic glamour or even Nazi racism but the coming revolution in DNA manipulation.

In his reading of Kant, Lyotard identifies what thinkers at light-speed may experience, which also helps target faculties in need of prosthetic augmentation. “The mountain masses, the pyramids of ice, the overhanging, threatening rocks, thunderclouds, oceans rising with rebellious force, volcanoes, everything ‘rude’ to be found in nature is sublime in presentation because it is at the limit of what can be grasped in a single intuition. . . . This effort is similar to the effort of the will that aims for virtue” (127). The now-time of electracy demands an enlarged capacity of the single glance against all rudeness. Lyotard finds in the rhetorical figure of “retortion” (a dialectical figure that affirms by denial) an anticipation of the extreme discordance to be negotiated by sublime judgment at light-speed (128). We learn from Kant how to notice in the manifest unhappiness of finitude the latent happiness of infinity.

#### *DIFFEREND*

The term “differend” names the device Lyotard proposes for sublime prudence, that is, for the practice of flash judgment. That prudence is even possible in contemporary circumstances is due entirely to the negative presentation of a sublime aesthetics. “Auschwitz” names a feeling, that becomes the basis for further work addressed, deliberately, to the future (without knowledge or understanding). What is the destiny of this name? You decide, in your manner. “Auschwitz” may not be represented, but it may be witnessed. The differend is a device for giving testimony of a feeling. It is a judgment that persuades by creation of mood (*Stimmung*), and this is the new dimension that must be given a place in policy formation. The term “device” is a reminder that we are inventing a practice that involves formal and rhetorical procedures. The device functions as a bridge or “passage apparatus” (*Differend* 64). “Darstellung [presentation] is, in general, an adjoining, a conjoining, a setting side by side, a comparison, between an established or an unknown rule and an intuition (or whatever takes the place of intuition).” The device promises a minimum of at least one phrase, structured by nothing more than



the paratactic “and, and” that in modernist syntax replaced classical subordination (65).

We know that these procedures are to be derived from the experimental and avant-garde arts, but what are these arts expected to provide – *a means of linking together anything and everything that is incommensurable, mutually repellant or indifferent, disjunctive*. Rhetorically the task is described as bringing into relationship disparate phrase regimes or language games, different genres of discourse. Kant’s optimism about a bridge of aesthetic judgment is the philosophical justification of the differend. What requires updating are the terms of the ratio structuring the operation. The question for deliberative rhetoric is not Auschwitz yesterday, or Auschwitz today, but Auschwitz tomorrow, the future of “Auschwitz” (of disaster) as a phrase regime at work in the politics, ethics, and aesthetics of an Internet public sphere. The differend seeks to do for electracy what “definition,” as the primary procedure of concept formation, did for literacy.

Lyotard looks for the means of the differend (which “presupposes the communication of opposing causes”) in a new ratio, involving a major shift in the stakes of art and literature. “This shift in the finality of art and literature was pursued in Romanticism and the avant-garde and is still being debated. Its stakes can be formulated simply: is it possible, and how would it be possible, to testify to the absolute by means of artistic and literary presentations, which are always dependent on forms? Whatever the case may be, the beautiful ceases to be their ‘object,’ or else the meaning of the word is indeed subverted” (*Lessons* 153). In *The Inhuman*, Lyotard’s question is explicitly electracy, asking to think together the avant-garde arts and the new technologies. “The whole question is this: is the passage possible, will it be possible with, or allowed by, the new mode of inscription and memoration that characterizes the new technologies?” (57). The “passage” mentioned refers to Cezanne’s technique for creating a new pictorial space. It all remains to be tried out, he states, and his career is itself part of this test.

In our terms, the project is to invent an image metaphysics for electracy. The analogy is at least a hypotyposis: literacy used alphabetic writing of a natural language (Greek) to produce a new institution of reason in relation with external nature (*phusis* – the blossoming of everything). The practices of this institution (school, science) described nature in terms of “things” structured by essences and accidents, to be manipulated in discourse logically organized by predication. “School used to teach future citizens how to write. What institution has responsibility for teaching tele-graphy? Can the ideal pursued by such an institution still be the citizen? Is an institution for the telegraphization of humans even possible? Is the idea of an institution not linked to the State and to reading and writing? And thus to the idea of a political body?” (51). In our analogy with literacy, the new media replace alphabetic technologies; the experimental arts replace natural language; the Internet replaces school as the institutional site; the human libidinal body replaces external nature as the “energy” to be organized in the metaphysics. Electracy metaphysics does for feeling (affect) what literacy did for reasoning (logic). The relationship between the two metaphysics is supplemental.

The two apparati share recourse to Eros as a guiding idea and experience. Lyotard's prudence presupposes the psychoanalytic account of the human subject, which unpacks the sublime, we might say, in terms of the unconscious. Lyotard derives his proposed rhetoric from a combination of modernist arts and Freud's methodologies, especially "dreamwork." A shorthand version of how Lyotard adapts Kant is to say that all the resources of hypotyposis (the analogies replacing concepts in reflective judgment) and the negative presentation in general, are replaced in Lyotard by dreamwork (conduction, the fourth mode of inference). In developing this upgrade we should keep in mind the basic nature of hypotyposis as a figure. "As a result of the figure's emphasis on vivid sensible and visual presentation, hypotyposis has all the qualifications of pictorial representation. Du Marsais translates 'hypotyposis' as 'image' or 'painting' (*tableau*), and Fontanier speaks of it as a mode of painting that is so vivid and energetic that it puts things, as it were, before the eye. Hypotyposis, he concludes, turns a narration or description into an image, a *tableau*, or even a living scene. With this, another important feature of the rhetorical notion of hypotyposis comes into view; for what is a *tableau* if not the gathering and grouping of a manifold into a unique ensemble?" (Gasché 207).

Lyotard exploits the structuralist lessons that connected the basic features of dreamwork with the primary figures of rhetoric – metaphor and metonymy – generalizable as the two axes of language: paradigm and syntagm, selection and combination. The special relevance of dreamwork is that it is a means of negative presentation, of presenting the unrepresentable, hence sublime in principle. All four functions of the work are relevant – condensation, displacement, figuration (dramatization, *mise en scene*), and secondary elaboration. Lyotard is especially interested in the "figural," *mise-en-image*, literally hypotyposis, of which the prototype is the rebus, translating dream thoughts into hieroglyphics (also a favorite device of classic mnemonics). As was the case with Kant, using the sensible scene as a "symbol" of the invisible moral realm, so in dreamwork the scene figures another scene, *ob-scene*. The nature of the dramatization changes between Kant and Lyotard, of course, with hypotyposis assuming naturalistic representations, while the latter looks to the modernist inventions associated with the likes of Cezanne, Joyce, Duchamp.

The major innovation between Kant and Lyotard, of course, is Freud. As Sam Weber noted, Freud's contribution to the vanguard revolution in metaphysics includes the insight that *Darstellung* (the idealist and Romantic revision of *Vorstellung*) is itself part of dream work, functioning as secondary revision. The keyword of modernist hypotyposis is *Entstellung*. "For the dream 'itself' is already an *Entstellung*: not merely by virtue of what Freud describes as 'secondary elaboration (or revision)', but also because the specific mechanisms of articulation that constitute the distinctive language of the dream are all forms of *Entstellung*: a word that must read as an alternative to *Darstellung*, 'presentation' or 'exposition.' The dream, as a conflictual wish-fulfillment, distinguishes itself from waking thought not by its content, but by its form" (78). The ratios of hypotyposis operating in flash reason are "distortions," the displacements and deferrals summarized in

Derrida's term difference. Electrate flashes structure understanding not with the golden ratio but a repulsive stain.

*BACHELOR MACHINE*

From the point of view of electracy, the experimental avant garde functions as a laboratory for the design and testing of prototypes for the distorted ratios of electracy hypotyposis (aesthetic judgment). Art provides a "set-up" (*dispositif*) within which the (unconscious) primary process energy motivating dreamwork may appear. Lyotard's example for the full implications of art-as-transformer is Marcel Duchamp. A point of passage between Kant's reflective judgment and Duchamp's practice is the latter's use of Kant's primary example of hypotyposis (the hand mill) as a figure of auto-eroticism (onanism). Electrate metaphysics is grounded on the libidinal body, not the idealized eros of literacy. Duchamp regarded the "coffee grinder" (later a chocolate grinder) "as the key picture to his complete work. Looking back through the structure of his achievement, the elements, constantly in one mutation or another, in one degree of complexity or another, are all present in simple form in the *Coffee-grinder*: movement; the magic of mechanics; and the inimitable flair for pointed irony" (Janis 34). This flair is apparent in the place of the grinder in the design of the *Large Glass* ("The bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even"). "Within the context of the *Large Glass* the *Chocolate Grinder*, as the notes from the *Green Box* make clear, is the symbol for the male genitals, and hence the counterpart of the bridal sex cylinder" (Golding 64).

The relevant point for flash reason is that Duchamp is updating the old ratio bringing into relation aesthetic and ethical experience, guiding the passage from sexual desire to love of wisdom. The electracy ratio must take into account the discovery of the unconscious, which intervenes between the two faculties the way the continent of America came between Europe and India. The rhetorical form exemplified in Duchamp is that of the "bachelor machine." Lyotard contributed an essay (incorporated into his book on Duchamp) to the catalog of the famous exhibit in which Michel Carrouges established *bachelor machine* as a modern myth. These bachelors are imaginary machines, related to the absurdist science of pataphysics outlined by Alfred Jarry, whose machinations symbolized and allegorized human sexuality. The fate of Eros in modernity is expressed in these delirious devices, whose proliferation in art and literature Carrouges documented in his exhibition. The simplest prototype of bachelor machine functioning is Lautreamont's formula, adopted by Surrealism: "he is beautiful... like the chance meeting of a sewing-machine and an umbrella on a dissecting-table!" (Carrouges 22). Among the more famous examples are the ones described in Raymond Roussel's novels, some of Kafka's stories such as "In the Penal Colony," or Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum."

Works by Picabia and other artists associated with Dada and Surrealism tested this mental mechanism, articulating at once the new beauty and the new Eros, with Duchamp's *Large Glass* one of the foremost examples. The first bachelor machine, Lyotard proposes, was Pandora's Box, a trap created for man by Zeus, in

retaliation against Prometheus (*Duchamp's* 45). It is worth mentioning in our context that this genealogy links bachelor machines with the "fault of Epimetheus" that Bernard Stiegler uses to frame his account of grammatology as technics (Stiegler). Lyotard considers the contradictory structure of bachelor machines to fall within the tradition of topical *dissoi logoi*, the technique of arguing both sides of any question (47). Deleuze and Guattari's "desiring machine" is an extension of the bachelor machine, clarifying the sublime quality in these figurations of the unrepresentable, meaning the unconscious (Krauss, *Bachelors* 64). One encapsulation of the whole movement was proposed by the Tel Quel group, who replaced literate "measure" (and the principle of the excluded middle in logic) with a movement inhibition/transgression, based on Bataille's General Economy of expenditure (Guerlac 28).

Lyotard's reading of Duchamp's work as bachelor machine foregrounds how the design of the *Large Glass* specifically, and the relationship of the *Large Glass* to the final installation, "*Etant Donn e*," covering the whole course of his career, demonstrate the operation of the reflective bridge in sublime conditions. In sublime conditions of distorted presentation, the figural (as arts or aesthetic dreamwork) replaces the analogies of hypotyposis. Figural rhetoric abandons the ratios of proportion and slams (mashes) or imposes (superimposes) incommensurable states. The figural names the polysemy (plural) of arts practices, to compress several tracks into one, the propositional and the expressive. In the case of dreamwork, text, image, and form are guided not by mimesis but by the libidinal energy of desire and denial. This "enjoyment" functions in a matrix, whose prototype is described by Freud, and whose scene is condensed in the phrase, "a child is being beaten."

The woman, that is to say, her name, is an addressee in the universe presented by this phrase (a troubled addressee: when the phrase takes place, there is masturbation). But she is also the referent: she is the beaten child. The instance of the referent, however, is also occupied by "another child" beaten by the father. As for the father, he is instantiated as a reference, but he is also not instantiated at all (he is effaced). And who is the addressor presented in these mixed universes? That addressor is never marked in the phrase or phrases. Would it be the big Other, according to Lacanian metaphysics? The impossible, as you see, coexist marvelously. -Yes but they form a symptom. -They form an idiolect, to speak the language of Wittgenstein. -And the masturbating? -A mode of the simultaneous occurrence of the impossibles. Like a dream, a blush, a cramp, an oversight, an illness, a silence, a feeling, alcohol, or drugs. Agitation, in other words, a leaping from one version to another within a single instant (Lyotard, *Differend* 83).

The value of fantasy in a sublime matrix is that the dreamwork does not recognize the logical rules of contradiction, negation, opposition, and therefore

facilitate “transformation” across all possibilities. “The elements of the matrix, Lyotard thinks, do not form a system but a block. ‘If the matrix is invisible, it is not because it arises from the intelligible, but because it resides in a space that is beyond the intelligible, is in radical rupture with the rules of opposition. . . . It is its characteristic to have many places in one place, and they block together what is logically incompatible. This is the secret of the figural: the transgression of the constitutive intervals of discourse, and the transgression of the constitutive distance of representation” (Krauss, *Optical* 221).

Lyotard finds an arts demonstration of this blocking operation in Duchamp’s *Large Glass*. The visual rhetoric of blocking is demonstrated in the structure of the piece, divided into upper (bride) and lower (bachelor) sections, separated/connected by a hinge. The hinge operation is fully discussed in Duchamp’s notes, developing its powers of rotation to overlay one section of “window” upon another.

A hinge in logic would be a paradoxical operator, its minimum property would be to stand in the way of one of the great operators of congruence, for example implication (if  $p$ , then  $q$ ) which is the very serious logical causality. Would it be the case for an inclusive disjunction: and/or? *Monsieur Marcel and/or Mademoiselle Rose. Door (of the rue Larrey) open and/or closed. If man, then non-woman; but: if man and/or woman, what then?* The and/or hinge appears to affirm the symmetry and the incongruence of the two terms. An equivalent in the theory of modalities might be: it is contingent that it be necessary that... A temporal equivalent: a current future taken as a current past; theme of speed in Duchamp, and its “solution” sought on the side of “a time of 2 dim. 3 dim, etc.” (Lyotard, *Duchamp’s* 128)

Punning is the device that puts the “flash” in bachelor reason, much exploited by Duchamp, as it is in all the bachelor devices, giving two meanings (or more) within the space of one word. It is useful to register the pun at work in the French term (noted by Derrida in another context). “What is a *charniere*? This word can be taken in the technical or anatomical sense of a central or cardinal articulation, a hinge pin (*cardo*) or pivot. A *charniere* or hinge is an axial device that enables the circuit, the trope, or the movement of rotation. But one might also dream a bit in the vicinity of its homonym, that is, in line with this other artifact that the code of falconry also calls a *charniere*, the place where the hunter attracts the bird by laying out flesh as a lure” (Derrida 78). This reinforces the seductive or trapping powers of bachelor structure, but also evokes the tradition of commonplaces, for which hunting was one of the primary guiding figures. The continuities linking the philosophical images across epochs help track the central issue, which concerns the design of flash reason as a logic of judgment.

The implication of this bachelor logic for electrate prudence is that this hinge, as Lyotard explains, is positioned not only spatially by Duchamp but also temporally. It is an infra-thin, like the “hymen” Derrida analyzes, between before

after, the passage of any sort (Cezanne's passages), from virgin to bride. *Différance* (differ and defer) is a hinge. Lyotard ends his study of Duchamp with a comment that establishes the value of bachelor logic for judgment in Virilio's dromosphere: "Now makes a hinge between not yet and no longer [between the *Large Glass*, and *Given*]. That goes without saying for any event, erotic, artistic, political. And does not give place to mysticism" (Lyotard, *Duchamp's* 199). The hinge is an operator of decision. It is a "transformer" in the sense of a design generator that runs through all the possibilities of a set-up.

In accepting *The Large Glass* as a mock-up of Prudence today, it is useful to recall the biographical scene commemorated in its matrix. The point of departure for Duchamp's "Platonic" abstraction from embodied desire to machinic Eidos is registered in the first few notes of "The Green Box" referencing "The Jura-Paris road." An editor's note explains: "The Jura-Paris road refers to a trip taken by Duchamp, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Francis Picabia and his wife Gabrielle Buffet to Mme. Picabia's family home at Etival (Jura)" (Sanouillet and Peterson 27). "The Jura-Paris road, having to be infinite only humanly," Duchamp noted, "will lose none of its character of infinity in finding a termination at one end in the chief of the 5 nudes, at the other in the headlight-child" (27). *The Large Glass* suggests that judgment today is not a Platonic Idea but a masturbatory piston. It has been speculated that Duchamp was infatuated with Gabrielle. The drive to Etival would have been physically arduous, given the condition of roads and cars in 1912, but by all accounts the trip was productive. We are speaking of libidinal "drives," after all, in an industrial economy whose dynamic is expressed not by a plant (seed to flower), but by an internal combustion engine: not Goethe's *Urpflanze* but Duchamp's *Urgine*.

#### READYMADE

While the *Large Glass* situates Duchamp's example in the tradition of erotic wisdom, the model of judgment is demonstrated in his readymades. As Lyotard observed in the case of Duchamp's anamorphic machines, the new topological and non-Euclidean geometries created new kinds of spaces, enabling new ratios. The result, central to electrate rhetoric, was a "new cunning." Thierry de Duve's discussion of Duchamp's invention of the readymade establishes its importance as a relay for the new prudence – as an electrate deliberative reason. What becomes clear in de Duve's account is that the readymade is not an "object" but an action, a statement in a discourse, modeling how to "write" in electracy. de Duve foregrounds an aspect of readymades of special relevance to our context: the autonomy of judgment based on aesthetic feeling.

The "Bottle Dryer" of 1914 was Duchamp's first pure Ready-made. Alternately entitled a "Bottle Drainer," "Bottle Rack," and "Hedge-Hog," this piece was selected by Duchamp without the addition of other items or alterations. Essentially this object appears to be a work of "open" abstract sculpture, a symmetrical form that could have been made by some artist

anywhere from the 1920s to the late 1960s. But in titling it by its literal designation "Bottle Dryer," Duchamp was simply reinforcing an internal contradiction already established in many viewers' minds. These facts simply define its claim to be called art. But Duchamp's appellation of "hedgehog" for this restaurant appliance runs somewhat deeper. In an essay by Isaiah Berlin there is a comment on a line written by the Greek poet Archilochus, "mark one of the deepest differences which divides writers and thinkers, and, it may be human beings in general. The one type, 'the fox,' consists of men who live by ideas scattered and often unrelated to one another. But the man of the other type, the 'hedgehog,' relates 'everything to a central vision, one system more or less coherent or articulate... a single, universal, organizing principle.'" Not only does this appliance resemble a hedgehog, apparently it suggests a unified vision. (Burnham 83)

Readymades are a part of a larger context – the history of modern art – in which painters responded to the industrial revolution (the beginning of electracy) including the impact on their medium of the invention of photography and also of commercial tubes of paint. Although there are several interpretations of what happened, the basic facts are that in this period painting undertook a kind of Kantian Critique, in which it gradually shed most of its conventions, seemingly in pursuit of its essence as a medium and mode. Cezanne is the transformation point, in which painting discovered its power to create a new space. The trajectory led from Cezanne to pure abstraction in Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Malevich, all of whom believed that modern painting had discovered in pure color the possibility of a pictorial universal language. With the Bauhaus the utopian goals of these movements were institutionalized to a degree, with the intention of transforming contemporary mass sensibility by making the public sphere into an art school. In this context the avant-garde rejected the tradition inherited from the Renaissance (which also believed in painting as a universal language), placed all value on innovation, and counted on vindication from posterity.

These were the circumstances of the milieu in which Duchamp formed his desire to be a painter, with the additional stress of having two brothers who were already making names for themselves in the new cubist movement. During a year spent in Munich, to escape for a time the Paris art scene, Duchamp painted his most skillful work, *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*. In de Duve's reading, the composition of this work provided Duchamp with an experience of self-analysis, akin to that undertaken by Freud in his analysis of his own dreams that led to the invention of psychoanalysis (de Duve, *Pictorial*). The Kantian element of this account is the motivation of the revelation Duchamp experienced – his feeling of the impossibility of painting in an age of mechanical reproduction. de Duve argues that Duchamp's experience corresponded exactly with Lacan's theory of the subject. In the context of Lacan's late seminars, it is possible to see that Duchamp's career constitutes another example, similar to that of James Joyce, in which an artist uses his work to transform his symptom into a *sinthome* (a proper name, a brand). He sublimates, that is, the

problems associated with the name-of-the-father, into making his own name in art (gaining recognition from the Other in his career), so that his work itself serves as the object @ (holding the place of the Thing).

Duchamp's solution to the crisis of painting was more extreme than that of his colleagues, in that, while they were willing to strip away nearly every attribute of their practice, to reduce it to some essential property (e.g. flatness), Duchamp took the final step and abandoned painting altogether. The point that de Duve stresses, and that accounts for the title of his most important book (*Kant After Duchamp*), is that the readymade is an act of pure judgment, based on precisely an aesthetic feeling. It is an act of reflective judgment that puts the maker in the position of spectator, whose reception produces art. This act is the operator of electrate hypotyposis. That most of the readymades are commodities, commercial objects, is an important part of the invention, demonstrating that electrate authoring shifts to a meta-level, taking as the material of its discourse the commodity-information sphere. Again, a crucial point is that this judgment is distinct from both understanding and reason (conceptual knowledge and moral belief) and opens to ethics and ontology a region of valuation (the life feeling of "little sensations" – the infra-thin).

de Duve's detailed review of the R. Mutt case makes it possible to appreciate that the readymade is an utterance in a discourse and not an object, and hence to appreciate its status as a relay for electrate rhetoric. What it means to position oneself temporally in the hinge of Now (as Lyotard described Duchamp's stance), becomes clear in the cunning manifested in the process that resulted, eventually, in the recognition of a urinal, entitled "Fountain," signed by one R. Mutt, as a work of art. A further Kantian element of de Duve's history of this delay is his use of the formal ratio of hypotyposis, or the "algebraic comparison" as Duchamp called it, to articulate the steps Duchamp undertook to create his invention. As the story goes, Duchamp learned from his experience with *Nude Descending a Staircase* about the power of scandal to create publicity and status. He submitted "Fountain" anonymously, to test his colleagues' declaration that any work by any person would be admitted to the exhibition of independent artists, for which Duchamp himself was one of the organizers. The submission was a provocation, an experiment, a joke, a gambit, a wager on the future of art, a wager that Duchamp won.

The significant point for our purposes is that Duchamp did not simply submit the assisted readymade and leave it at that. He manipulated the situation behind the scenes, to get not the object, but the image of the object, into public circulation. Following the logic of a bachelor machine (and of language game), Duchamp was able to attach or link his statement to other statements, and then to let the ratios of information circulation do their work as transformers.

Making avant-garde art of true significance means anticipating a verdict that can only be retrospective. It means delivering the unexpected in lieu of the expected in such a way that betrayed and disappointed expectations show themselves, in the end, to have been fulfilled. Because it is in the nature of



expectations not to depend on factual verification for their truth as expectations – that is, as projected scenarios – the scenario that I have described as the chain of fulfilled expectations proves to be the right one. Indeed, let's reestablish the facts: instead of the *Chessplayers*, the Paris Indépendants were presented with the *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and they rejected it; instead of going directly to Stieglitz in order to gain avant-garde legitimacy for *Fountain*, Richard Mutt went to the Indépendants, and they rejected it. The last formula, the one that happily linked the two chains of algebraic comparisons, translates back into one that is familiar:

$Nude/Paris\ Indeps = (Nude)/(Armory\ Show) = Fountain/N.Y.Indeps$  (de Duve, *Kant* 141).

Duchamp put an emblem (an image, an idea, a label) into the temporal loop of time, the after-effect or retrospective emergence of meaning, the future anterior, in order to influence the values and practices of his institution. de Duve summarizes the ratios of Duchamp's phrase regime that constitute a formula for electrate prudence.

In art you can show but not prove. You don't deconstruct the allegorical appearance in order to strip bare, once and for all, the apparition which is its mold. You err between the appearance of apparitions and the apparition of appearances and you compare analogically: *a* is to *b* what *c* is to *x*. *Merdre est a merde ce que arrhe est a art*. You will never know what art is, for as Kant said, "the analogy does not consist in the equality of two quantitative, but of two qualitative relations." You won't know but you judge; you say, "this is art," speaking of a quality, not of a status. In order to judge, all you have is "a rule according to which you may look in experience for the fourth term" – the rule of *algebraic comparison* – and "a sign by which you may detect it" – the sign of the accordance. And now that you have judged, where will your conviction come from that you have judged well, that you have done Richard Mutt justice, if not, reflexively, from the assuaging feeling that you have judged according to the accordance, a sign which to you is its own proof? (143).

The adjustment to be made in this proportional analogy for electrate deliberation is to shift the setting out of art proper, to follow Duchamp's creation of the possibility of making art in general, rather than working in any specific medium. His answer to the question of the ontology of art (what is painting?) becomes the analogy for an art of ontology, that is, using the readymade as discourse, to articulate an image category for electrate metaphysics. The readymade opens the possibility not just of art in general, but of general electracy (a deliberative rhetoric accessible to all netizens). Question: who will play the Prince to Duchamp's Machiavelli?

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