

Jack Burnham

In the summer of 1912, Marcel Duchamp began to prepare the *Large Glass* as a predictive device designed to chronicle all the final stages of art. At the time, this would involve all the movements of nonobjective art and those of its elemental-material sequels. Like a proper hermeticist, the artist prepared the *Glass* with several covering ruses, the most popular of which is the idea that the *Glass* portrays modern unrequited sexuality and mechanical sexuality. Indirectly, both themes have their place in the *Glass* and Duchamp never went out of his way to correct critics with fertile imaginations. The aim of every skilled hermeticist is not to lie, but to veil his messages in themes so obscure or uni-

DUCHAMP'S BRIDE STRIPPED BARE

versal that the possibility of a true identity is never apparent to the public.

The *Glass's* bipartite structure reiterates the single most important law of occultism: from the Emerald Tables of Hermes Trismegistus one reads, "What is below is similar (NOT EQUAL) to what is above, and what is above is similar to what is below in order to insure the perpetuation of the miracle of the Unique Thing." This axiom is mirrored in the division Duchamp makes in the title of his work which appears on the reverse side of the Chocolate Grinder: LA MARIEE MISE A NU PAR / SES CELIBATAIRES, MEME / MARCEL DUCHAMP / 1915-1923 / ... inachevé / ... cassé 1931 / ... réparé 1936.

The entire message of the *Glass* is en-

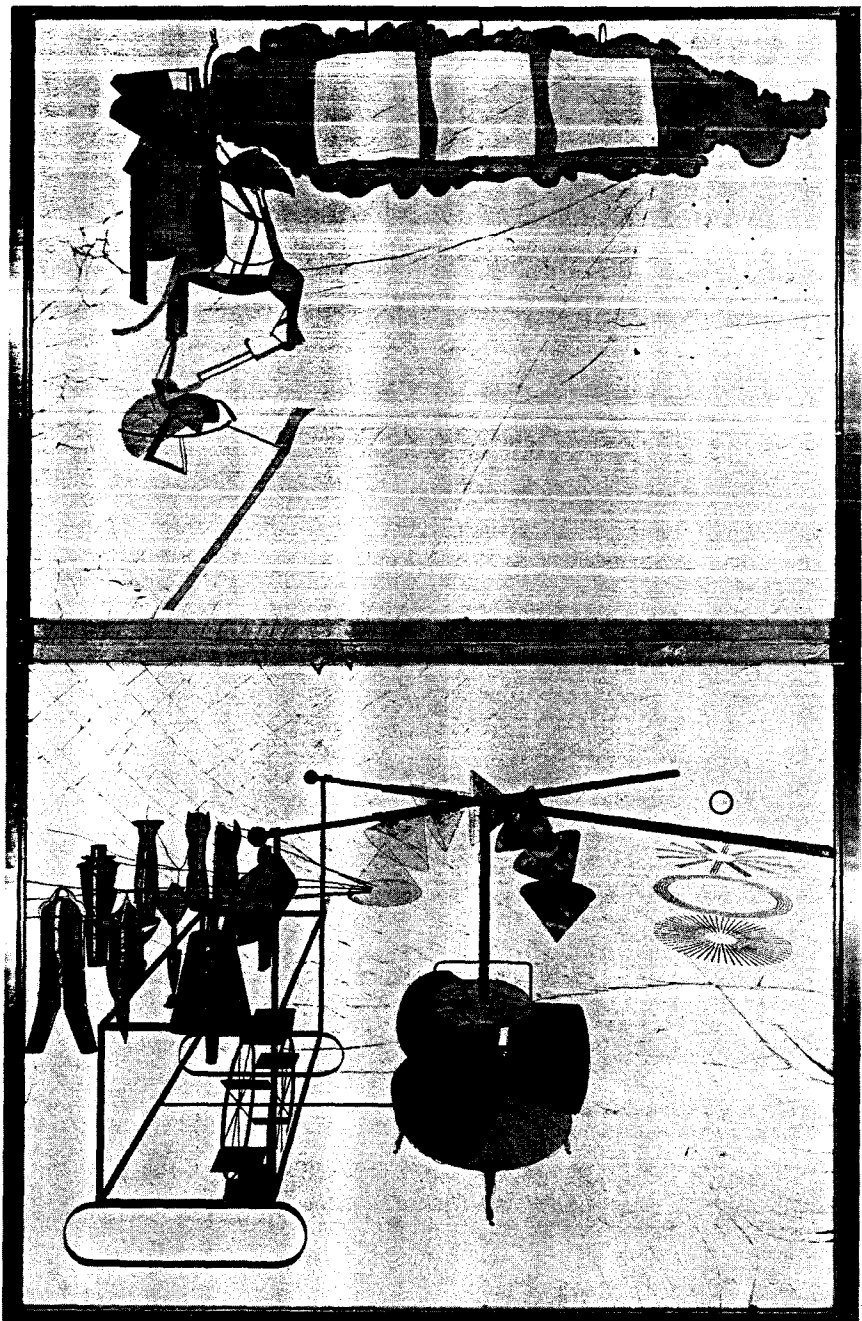
capsulated in the numerology of the title. The sum of letters up to the first slash, *La Mariée mise à nu par*, is eighteen. While the section after, *ses célibataires, même*, adds up to nineteen. Eighteen reflects the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot, The Moon, which governs the

The Meaning of the "Large Glass"

period of complete decay. Since the Moon is female and controls the power for the forces of WATER, Duchamp attaches his Arcanum to the Bride. Nineteen, on the other hand, signifies the first physical beginnings of regeneration through the male Sun. If the Bachelors are the cause

of all the trouble, they will also help overcome it. The additional and seemingly superfluous *même* at the end of the title could mean same, even, themselves, or possibly, as Ulf Linde suggests, be a verbal pun changing *même* to *m'aime*. It implies that what happens in the Bride's

area is recapitulated by the Bachelors' Mechanisms. *Même* also contains four letters in sets of two, not unlike the male-female repetition found in the Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton. As a principle of cognition, *même* 'completes' the Bachelors, bringing their number



Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23). Katherine S. Dreier bequest, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

from
ninet
In
word
horiz
chaos
while
boun
unity
made
So th
the t
glass
gion
assoc
els: i
as un
in th
is bo
level
discr
mech
the
consi
"The
elors'
attai
Bach
ness-
of al
In
opus
help
tion
Im
the
is
tha
of
or
sta
dis
wa
gu
No
all
ra
ea
vi
en
m
In
half
sion
more
W
the
or a
fann
prop
cal
cred
refo
forc
Ciau
heir
cons

from fifteen, the key of the Devil, to nineteen and redemption.

In Gnosticism and the Tarot, two keywords address to the number nine are horizon and ocean. The ocean represents chaos, disunity and contrasting elements, while the horizon acts as the infinite boundary separating chaos from the unity of the sun (see the artist's *Hand-made Stereopticon Slides* of 1918-1919). So the *Glass* retains a horizon line in the three Gillespie's fins suggested by glass strips. Symbolically this middle region makes possible the hermaphroditic association of the female and male panels: in hermetic systems this is described as unity above and division below. Within the *Glass* the separation of qualities is both relative and absolute. On the level of art-making, division implies all discrete psychological and historical mechanisms responsible for art; unity in the Bride's domain depicts the unified consistency of nature. Its antithesis is "The World of Forms," i.e., the Bachelors' Odyssey. In the level of spiritual attainment, the Bride's union with the Bachelor represents total cultural oneness—the goal of the esoteric foundations of all religion.¹

In order to view Duchamp's *magnum opus* in the largest perspective, it will help to restate its message in a description taken from Tantric Buddhism:

Image an inevitable ocean in which there are innumerable vials. Each vial is filled with sea-water belonging to that very ocean and each is composed of a substance that gradually thickens or dissolves in response to circumstances. Under suitable conditions it dissolves altogether, whereupon the water it contains becomes indistinguishable from the rest of the ocean. Not one drop of water ceases to exist; all that is lost is its apparent separateness. In this analogy, the water in each vial represents a so-called individual being and the gradually thickening or dissolving vial symbolizes his mental and physical characteristics . . .²

In quite the same way, the bottom half of the *Glass* is an illusionary version of the top half; but even this is more complex than it seems.

When in his notes Duchamp depicts the *Glass* as an "Agricultural Machine" or an "Apparatus . . . instrument for farming," he refers to one of the crucial properties of hermetic FIRE. In alchemical terms, FIRE represents the lesser sacred element. It signifies the constant refocusing of attention on the opposing forces which make life possible. As Claude Lévi-Strauss and Emile Durkheim have indicated, the sacred in part constitutes what is crucial but inescapa-



The Fool, first Key to the Major Arcana of Tarot, from the Rider Deck by Arthur Edward Waite and drawn by Pamela Coleman Smith.

bly ambiguous to the welfare of a culture, that is, perpetual cognizance of the natural dichotomies (life and death, abundance and famine, hot and cold, etc.).

Visual Perspective in the Bride and Bachelor Machine

Prefatory to the iconography of the *Glass*, there must be some understanding of the graphic modes employed by Duchamp. Here again, the artist gives us a lesson on the nature of cultural delusions. *Ars perspectiva* derives from the Latin verb *perspicere*, meaning "to examine," "to see clearly," "to see through," and "to regard mentally." Duchamp understood Renaissance perspective as a pyramid with its apex at the observer's eye, truncated by the canvas or picture plane which acts as a transparent window. The fact that perspective suggests mirror reflection led to a metaphysical idiom, also incorporated in the *Glass*, which circumscribes the particular cosmology involved in seeing evidences of God in terms of finite, rectilinear, and relational space. Not until Erwin Panofsky's illuminating article of 1924, *Perspective as 'Symbolic Form,'*

On the other hand, AETHER necessitates supreme awareness of culture as a mythic system *par excellence*. No writing, no public art, no commercial enterprise, or making art is without its subconscious significance as a sacred performance. Ideally, culture exists with this knowledge intact. Every relation becomes a symbolic act of religious expression, a sign of a pervasive set of holy truths. All AETHER (*Yod-Hé-Vau-Hé/Elohainu / Yod-Hé-Vau-Hé*) involves a two-part consistency: the first is recognition and instigation of some sacred truth concerning the unalterable order of the Universe; the second involves the eventual fulfillment of this cognition by naturally assisted occupations. Consequently procreation, husbandry, baking, agriculture, and wine-making are a few of the activities possessing a sacred nature; in the same sense as sacred myth, they recapitulate the symbiosis of human impulse (*Yod*) joined with the fecundating impulse of Nature (the second *Yod*). The two *Yods* are complimented by the two *Hés* of materialization. Duchamp alludes to this basic cycle. His "delay in glass" is simply the time period between depicting the natural fate which will befall nonobjective art, and its inevitable enactment by artists in years to come. Just so, the farmer plants seed so his crop will grow to be harvested.

was it evident that the conventions of perspective are in significant disagreement with the physiology of vision. Duchamp grasped this as early as 1913. One of the illusions of perspective rests on the assumption that depth in relation to a point of view presupposes a "psychic distance" from the scene depicted. In occult terms this "psychic distance" reflects human alienation, major symptoms of which are rationalism and value-free science raised to guiding principles. So in the hermetic scheme followed by Duchamp, the notion of feeling the presence of God in an icon is vastly inferior to sensing the presence of God in everything—just as witnessing the presence of God in perspective is a degraded form of iconization. The "point of view" presupposes, as Panofsky understood, the fiction of two separate egos: God's and the human beholder's.³ Hence, as strict

reliance on geometric perspective was gradually undermined through the seventeenth and ensuing centuries, there appeared with that "involution" an opportunity to rectify the delusions of a millennium.

The schema which Duchamp maintains throughout the *Glass* is contained in an introductory note for the Bachelor Machine:

The principal forms of the Bachelor Machine are imperfect: rectangle, circle, parallelepiped, symmetrical handle, demi-sphere=i.e. they are mensurable (relation of their dimensions among themselves, and relation of these principal forms to their destination in the Bachelor Machine). In the Bride, the principal forms are more or less large or small, have no longer, in relation to their destination a mensurability: a sphere, in the Bride will be of some radius or other (the radius given in the representation is fictitious and dotted).⁴

The differences elaborated in the above description may be summarized as the attributes of a picture with perspective (the Bachelor Machine) and as those of a picture without perspective (the Bride). In the first everything conforms to an internal system of measurement; hence perspective implies a doubly articulated system, forms and colors regulated by a visual syntax.⁵ The forms of the Bride are just as elaborately described by Duchamp in his notes, but they conform to no system of measurement or perspective; he remains quite clear about that. Consequently, the Bride implies all the attributes of perspective, i.e., internal consistency, spatial depth, modeling, and separation, but in reality none of these qualities is present. The Bride is a singly articulated system of forms and colors without a true visual syntax; its virtual syntax is implied from various three-dimensional circumstances attributed by the artist, just as the real syntax of the Bachelor Machine is implied through the perception of four-dimensional activities to be carried out in real time.

In terms of spatial organization the *Glass* stresses the occult theme of unity above and division below. All the forms of the Bachelor Machine focus in one-point perspective on a point exactly in the center of the three glass parting strips. The Bride section is virtually free of perspective. In effect, the rear of the *Glass* forms a hypothetical half-pyramid. The Gilled Cooler or isolating plates act as a psychical horizon line, one that separates forms in the occult and visual sense.

The Cabalistic Tree of Life (or Tree of Knowledge)

The mechanisms of the Bachelor Machine, and their interrelations, are principally an interpretation of the cabalistic Tree of Knowledge as the secret unwritten Cabala describes the evolution of art. Frequently the *sephiroth* of the Tree and their paths are supplemented with imagery borrowed from the Arcana of the Tarot.

The extremely deceptive structure referred to as the Tree of Knowledge commands a central position in the Judaic hermetic tradition. Within the past thousand years, hundreds of books and charts have been written on this single diagram which is reputed to contain all the important structures and sequences of human existence. The system of *sephiroth* (*sephira* being the singular) is based on the primary, androgynous manifestation called Kether. Kether represents the highest cosmic abstraction, the One Light, or what one might call in Christian terminology, the Godhead. As a fusion of 1 and 0, Kether defines being and nonbeing, self and selflessness together. This first manifestation is matched by two other members, one positive and one negative, which make up the Supernal Triad. The superior Ternary is twice reflected in two inverted triads, and finally manifested in a single *sephira* called Malkuth. To the right of Kether stands Chocmah, or wisdom, the positive manifestation of the illusion of Self, personified as change in stability. To the left of Chocmah stands Binah (understanding), the negation of Self and vehicle of sorrowful realization through unstable change. Because of its generative function, the Supernal Triad is referred to as the World of Emanations.

Directly below it resides the World of Creations where we encounter the first active *sephira*, Chesed (Grace and Charity), reflecting a desire for knowledge in Chocmah. Chesed is considered to be paternal and authoritative. To Chesed's left stands Geburah (Severity and Strength) deriving the quality of Endurance from Binah above. Just as Kether combines the qualities of Binah and Chocmah, Tiphereth (Beauty and Harmony) joins Chesed and Geburah so that they are neutralized (the process of neutralization involves borrowing some qualities from two or more related sources so that a synthetic result substitutes for the originals; neutralization is the essence of significant change as it occurs in the second articulation of all semiotic systems; it is also the mechanism of the

Hegelian synthesis).

The second reflection of the Supernal Triad is called the World of Forms, since it deals with the purely formal manifestations of all systems. Netzah represents the forward thrust of Victory over the stability and perfection of Tiphereth. To its right stands Hod (Glory or Peace), the emissary of life without movement, an apparent contradiction. Their synthesis in the *sephira* Yesod (Foundation) is transitional since it signifies stability in change. Directly below Yesod lies Malkuth (Kingdom), the World of Objects or Relative Reality. Unadulterated materialism is finally reached through Malkuth.

The ten *sephiroth* are represented as a five-part family divided into upper and lower planes.

Macroprozopos:

- (I) Kether (1)—The Upper Androgyne
- (II) Chocmah (2)—Father
- (III) Binah (3)—Mother

Microprozopos:

- (IV) Chesed (4); Geburah (5), Tiphereth (6), Netzah (7), Hod (8), Yesod (9)—The Children of the Macroprozopos and the Lower Androgyne
- (V) Malkuth (10)—The *Bride* of the Microprozopos

This basic structure is redivided into four different sephirothic trees or worlds, entitled respectively the Atziluthic World, the Briatic World, the Yetziratic World, and finally the World of Assiah. Presently, we are living at the very end, in fact, the completion of the tenth sphere of the Assiahic World. Outwardly, these four superordinate Worlds represent the transition from complete integration and implicit belief in a single cabalistic Godhead, the source of all earthly structures, to the most extreme depletion of spiritual values, resulting in absolute materialism. The four sephirothic world define the stability of a culture at any period in its development. The more monolithic and tightly bound its mythic structures remain, the closer a culture comes to perfect self-knowledge about the nature and validity of its own beliefs. In theory, complete knowledge allows total personal freedom. Moralities, religious doctrines and legalisms denote states of less than perfect knowledge. One of the three great books of cabalistic interpretation, the *Sepher ha Zohar*, speaks of

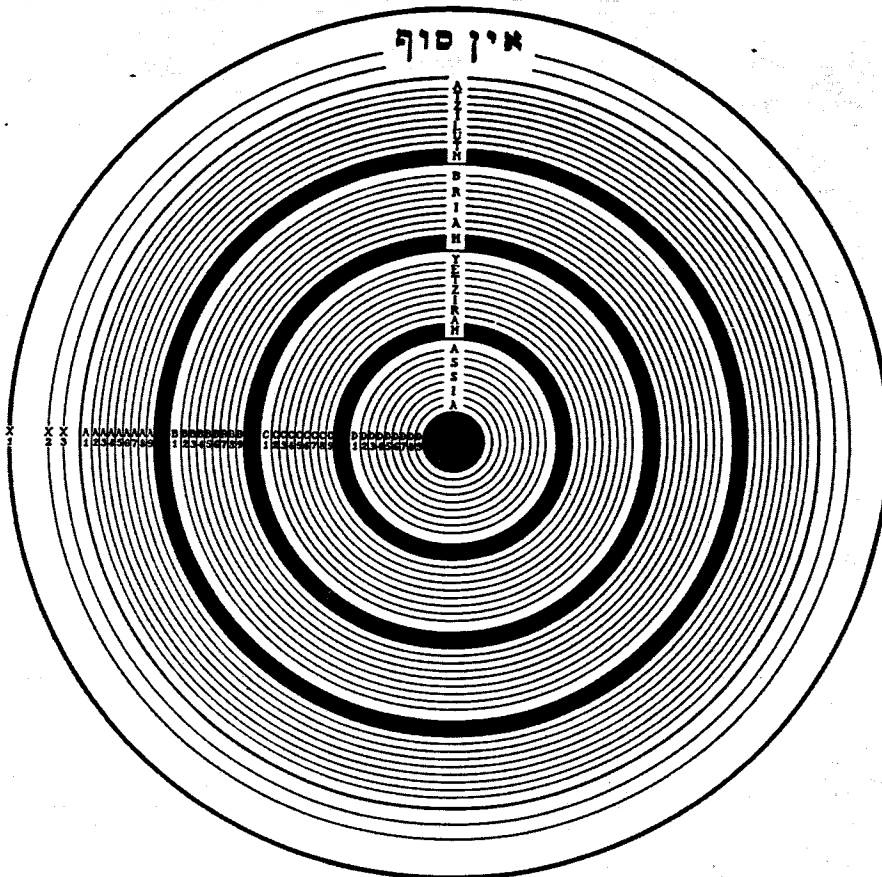
the "garments," or logical rules and allusions, visible to every man in reading the Cabala. Of course more meaningful than the garments is spiritual comprehension of the underlying code. This can be gained in one of two ways: either through intellectual perseverance tempered by the necessary mental attitudes, or through realization precipitated through the eventual self-destruction of the sephirothic worlds. Thus the cabalis-

tic Bride is unadulterated materialism, brought about by the gradual decay of existing mythic structures which bind culture together.⁶ *Stripping the Bride* symbolizes the gradual transition towards materialism. This in turn forces a traumatic acceptance of the fact that myth is an indispensable ingredient of culture. Central to every hermetic philosophy stands the realization that cultures cannot exist without myths; con-

sequently the message of the Cabala and gnostic thought is an understanding of the continuity between human cognition and all natural creation.

Within the scope of the gnostic-cabalis- tic tradition the last phases of the Atziluthic World probably occurred during the twelfth or thirteenth centuries A.D. The Briatic World, or World of Beauty, reached full power with the Renaissance and continued in diluted form until the sixteenth century. The Yetziratic World, or World of Forms, originated in the fifteenth century and disappeared by the twentieth century. The World of Materialization, Assiah, had its origins in the beginning of the nineteenth century and continues through the present. The eighth sphere of Assiah, Kokab, is controlled by Mercury and defines the final stages of figurative art in Cubism.

Considerable overlapping occurs between the sephirothic worlds and their spheres. Of importance is the emergence of each 'new' or avant-garde tendency. This implies further materialization for the cabalist, hence a point closer to the absolute stripping of the Bride of Microprozopos. The *Large Glass* specifically recapitulates the ninth sphere of Assiah, Levanah, signifying the transition between figurative art and the complete materiality of Earth Art, Systems Art, Body Art and other contemporary phenomena. This ninth sphere specifically embodies all nonobjective forms of painting and sculpture.



THE QABBALISTIC SCHEME OF THE FOUR WORLDS.

The Qabbalistic Scheme of the Four Worlds. The diagram above represents the divisions between the four Sephirothic Trees as they are revealed in forty concentric circles. Each of the four trees with its ten subdivisions discloses the organization of the hierarchies controlling the destinies of all creation. The trees are the same in each of the four worlds, but the powers vested in the globes express themselves differently through the substances of each world, resulting in endless differentiation.

X1, X2, and X3 respectively denote Ain, Ain Soph, and Ain Soph Aur. Ain Soph constantly encloses upon itself, thus producing what is called the "primitive dot." This dot encloses all the emanations from A1 to D10. A1 controls the powers of the 39 rings located within it, just as each ring controls a decreasing degree of power within the Sephirothic Worlds. As the greatest spiritual solidarity, or permanence is at the circumference of the circles and the greatest material density, or impermanence, is at the center of the diagram, the rings as they decrease in power become more material and substantial until the center sphere D10 symbolizes the actual four chemical elements of the earth.

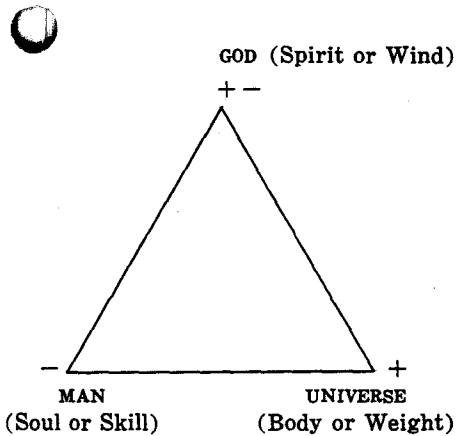
The above illustration may be found in Manly P. Hall's "An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy" (1928), The Philosophical Research Society, Inc., Los Angeles, 16th edition, 1969, pp. 119 and 121.

The Bachelor Mechanisms

Many students of Duchamp's work have commented on the repetitious use of the triadic theme in the iconography of the *Glass*. Its appearance is not accidental. This triangular structure is the basic tenet of cabalistic theogony and is known as the First Three Principles. By themselves, the First Three Principles are stable and absolute. When a dot is placed in the center of a triad, the new four-pointed figure becomes unstable, precipitating further evolution. Such a structure, relating to the four points of the Tetragrammaton, represents the origin of all dialectical progressions. Duchamp summarizes these Principles as:

Wind—for the draft pistons
Skill—for the holes
Weight—for the standard stops
to be developed⁷

In cabalistic terms these are represented by:



The Bachelor Apparatus is a machine, and like all machines, it contains a power source, parts which function in unison, and an output. There are actually three sources of input energy. The most generally understood is the Waterfall emanating from the Bride and powering the Water Mill. The Mill Wheel turns on a long rod-like axis extended to the rotating mechanism of the Chocolate Grinder. Duchamp's Waterfall is simply a pseudonym for the joint effects of WATER and EARTH on the Nature side of the chemical Pyramid. Hence, the entropic effects of Nature are extremely important in wearing down various cultural systems once they have begun to decay through illusions of rationalism and progress. Similarly, unstable semiotic systems appear to 'progress' as they are exposed to uninhibited usage.

The vehicle supported by two runners, variously denoted as the Chariot, Sleigh, or Glider, runs back-and-forth on a very short rail from A to B. The Glider is a synthesis of two Arcana of the Tarot: the seventh key, the Chariot, and the fifteenth key of the Devil. The Chariot is a cube-shaped vehicle denoting success or triumph for the artist. Driving the Chariot gives the illusion of movement. Significantly, Duchamp's Chariot or Glider consists of only a half cube, similar to the half cube of stone used as the Devil's throne of the fifteenth Arcanum. This half cube portrays the instability of singly articulated semiotics; in the *Glass* this may be defined as art lacking equality between its Plane of Content and Plane of Expression (e.g., $C = E$ or $n(C) = n'(E)$). This same illusion controls many of the working methods of contemporary science and technology.

From a mechanical point of view, the Glider resembles the balance arms and regulating weights of a Foliot balance, the first escapement used to control wheelworks of 14th and 15th century

clocks. As the Foliot swings to and fro, the teeth of the escapement wheel are released one by one. The timing of the swing to some extent, and the weights, control the clock. A Foliot balance (or the Glider) defines visible motion by the passage of time from one tooth to the next (or one art movement to the next), while in fact it simply alternates between two stationary points. Duchamp notes that "the chariot is emancipated horizontally."⁸ In respect to occult literature, the arms of the quadrant or Tetragrammaton stand in symbolic contrast to each other. The vertical arm represents eternity and spirituality while the horizontal arm depicts historical time and worldliness.

A somewhat fork-shaped hook mentioned by Duchamp in the notes drops from the very top of the Apparatus into two holes spanning the Water Mill axis and lying between the Glider and the Chocolate Grinder. The immovable axle represents 'the possibility of the existence of illusion;' on another level, it simulates the inertia of matter as opposed to the kinetic energy simulated by the outer rim of the Wheel. Duchamp observes that the Hook never touches any of the Mechanisms.

The Hook may be identified with the eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *Tzaddi*, representing a fish hook or roof. An esoteric interpretation identifies *Tzaddi* (the Star) with the Fool, the first or last card of the Major Arcana. *Tzaddi* connects the clearly revealed with the image of drawing fish out of water. Fish are equated with transforming reproductive power, while one of the meanings of water relates it to subconscious mentality. Thus *Tzaddi*—the water bearer and sign of dissolution—is concerned with the subconscious powers of artists in discovering new art forms. The Fool, on the other hand, is a man with power which may or may not be used according to the dictates of wisdom. On one level the Fool represents impulsive behavior, a creature without true knowledge. Quite likely then, the Hook is a symbol of any advanced artistic impulse leading towards new esthetic and ultimately spiritual discovery. The fact that the Hook never touches the Bachelor Apparatus is analogous to its symbolism as a vessel of unfulfilled hope. (There can be little doubt that Duchamp took the Fool as a personal device. In German, *selig*—related to 'silly'—means holy or blessed; thus holiness and foolishness have been traditionally paired with one another. The Hebrew word for 'silly' [spelled Aleph-Vau-Yod-Lamed] connects the key of the Fool [Aleph] with the spiritual illumination of the Hanged Man [Lamed] by way of the fifth arcanum [Vau], representing

the revelation of sacred things, and the ninth arcanum [Yod], the unconscious personification of the Fool's state. Hence a Fool is also someone of extraordinary powers and occult insight who hides his wisdom through ridiculous acts.)

1. One can speculate on a far more profound meaning for the placement of the Bride above the Bachelor Mechanism. There is some well-founded conjecture that the Tarot cards are an ancient time-keeping device and calendar. One spread of the cards stabilizes the year according to a lunar-solar scheme which is in harmony with the rhythms of menstrual periodicity. Its counterpart is a "male" reading of the Tarot allowing for the interpretation of the great cycles of growth and decay, i.e., historical civilizations. Analogous to this, in the *Zohar* we find the diagram:

A	H	I	H
I	H	V	H

On the lower level, the Tetragrammaton (*Yod-Hé-Vau-Hé*) defines the basic law of man and nature. The formula above (*Aleph-Hé-Yod-Hé*) mirrors the Tetragrammaton except that it signifies the Divine Plan and the Forces of Nature transcending all forms of human intervention. Duchamp's schema for the *Large Glass* involves the cabalistic relationships established within any "male" or diachronic culture. The Bride's panel above represents the Forces of Nature (female and chaotic) constantly eroding the male-dominated mechanisms of culture below. The ideal of a hermeticist such as Duchamp is to aid in the inversion of the panels so that culture is stabilized according to the female bio-rhythms. Culture below would be "female" and thus in ahistorical harmony with the Divine Plan above. Consequently the Divine Plan (*Aleph-Hé-Yod-Hé*) emerges as the superconscious organizing agency of the cosmos. This allows the "male" Godhead to remain in stability with the "female" Tetragrammaton below. Hence the "Great Work" is completed. Both formulae reflect a bisexual character which shifts according to the polarities set up by the culture in question.

2. Blofeld, John, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet*, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1970, p. 58.
3. Avoiding any deep involvement in the semiotic implications of art as a historical phenomena, one might say that art begins in the ritual act carried out so that it mirrors a cosmic scheme; in time this is equated by symbolic patterns of the same relationship, i.e., the Cross or Mandala. Gradually the symbol is anthropomorphized and given an illusionary pictorial space which recapitulates the sacred dramas. In time genre scenes and material techniques substitute for the depicted archetypal dramas. These seem to have a separate life and purpose, as detached as they appear to be from the sacred neumena.
4. Duchamp, Marcel, *Notes and Projects of the Large Glass* (edited by Arturo Schwarz), Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1969, No. 90.
5. I have discussed the problem of double articulation in previous articles, the first entitled "Unveiling the Consort" in the March and April 1971 issues of *Artforum* magazine. Briefly, all natural languages seem to operate through a reciprocal code which consists of meaning on one axis and phonetic structure on the other. The idea that an "analogous categorical structure" exists between the two axes or planes of articulation is, to my knowledge, not a very well explored principle. Nevertheless, it seems to be the essence of any semiotic theory, one recognized in certain perverse ways by Duchamp in his notes and by modern linguists such as Louis Hjelmslev in his *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (translated by Francis J. Whitefield), Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, pp. 73 and 111.
6. The Bride is covered by three veils which Duchamp alludes to in notes for "3 nets" or "3 draft pistons." The first veil is Ain, vacuum of pure spirit, located just below the Supernal Triad of the Tree of Life. The second veil, Ain Soph of limitlessness, spans the Tree below Tiphereth. The third veil falls in front of Yesod, covering Malkuth, and represents the Ain Soph Aur or limitless light. Making art historically strips the veils from the Bride, thereby revealing essential truths about the nature of reality represented by Malkuth.
7. In the triangular structure representing "Wind," "Skill," and "Weight," "Wind" represents synchronic or perfect time from which all art emanates and eventually returns; "Wind" is ritual and balanced knowledge of the semiotic trajectory through history. "Skill" symbolizes the male pulse to articulate and dominate art through innovation; "Skill" signifies the major source of the art impulse through dialectical strategies for maintaining art's historicity. Finally, "Weight" embodies the final phases of the art semiotic, in as much as gravity and other natural forces control the consistency of the art made.
8. Duchamp, *op. cit.*, No. 132.

Jack Burnham Duchamp's Bride Stripped Bare:

The Meaning of the Large Glass—Part II

Bachelor Mechanisms (Continued)

In the notes for the Bachelors's section Duchamp writes: "—It is by this oscillating density that the choice is made between the three crashes: according to the strength of the fall of the hook . . . the right is chosen rather than the left or alternatively or the center."¹ "Oscillating density" alludes to the mercurial composition of the hook controlling artistic choice. Suspended from the sephirothic pillars, the fluctuating composition of the hook determines which sephiroth or aesthetic prototype the artist assumes. "The three crashes" refer to the three planes of cognition (Mental-Astral-Physical) that gradually disintegrate through the devolution of the Spheres. (See No. 129)

An aesthetic device, the Chocolate Grinder functions as a dialectical program. Its three revolving rollers determine the devolution of the triadic structure controlling nonobjective art. Its Louis XV nickeled chassis is a direct allusion to that monarch's craving for splendid art. This title also happens to coincide with another ruler enslaved to unstable thought, the Devil of the fifteenth Arcanum. The "nickled" chassis reminds us that iron, the Alchemical metal

of lust and blind craving, is an underlying element of this machine. While the onastic implication of Duchamp's maxim, "The Bachelor grinds his chocolate himself," has always amused critics, its real message is simply that the Bachelor (or artist) defines his own content while creating nonobjective art; his "content" is a metalanguage with no direct visual reference to painting or the physical world.

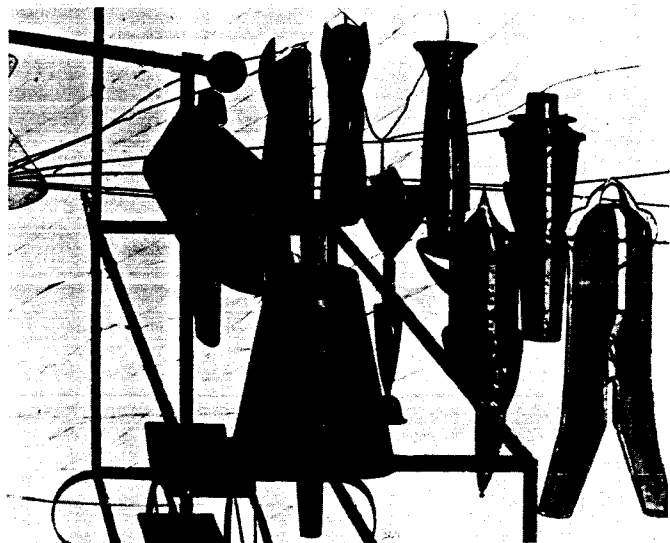
The progressive involution of nonobjective art (the seven lower Spheres of *Levanah*) operates through dialectical relations. The Chocolate Grinder turns seven times in descending order. (See Fig. 1)

Each triad represents the subtraction of a particular visual relationship from the complex of Gestalts used in nonobjective art. The nature of these relationships is prescribed by the Sieves. The end of nonobjective art is signaled by the fact that the Hook (Tsaddi, The Star) no longer drops into the two holes on either side of the Mill Wheel axis. As this happens, the Grinder and Scissors stop, the string *temporarily tied* to the Glider becomes undone, and except for the grand finale on the Tobaggan Slopes,

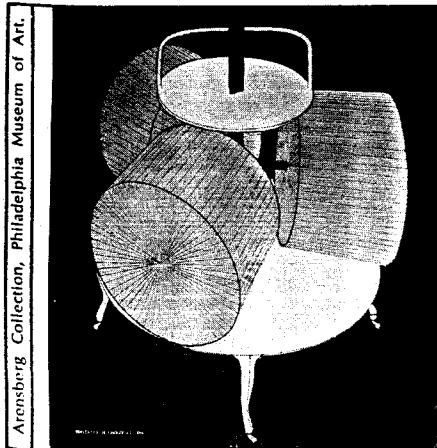
the Bachelor Mechanism ceases completely. (It thus becomes evident why Duchamp never completed the *Glass* and labeled it "1923/—unfinished." The *Glass* is, after all, a "work in progress," only consummated in the last few years.)

A few words should be said about the Bayonet. This "First-class article" is, according to the artist's description, a kind of decision device, supporting the large scissors and isolating plates. The Bayonet protrudes vertically from the top of the Grinder and portrays the Ace of Swords in the Tarot deck. This card is "the primordial energy of Air," a male descendent of Fire, Sun, and the Phallus. The Ace of Swords lacks the purposefulness and decisiveness of its related court cards. But by transforming the Sword into a Bayonet, Duchamp is reaffirming its aggressive and analytical character, its desire to strike without any clear idea of its goals. (See No. 144)

"Appearance" and "apparition" refer to singly articulated paintings (nonfigurative) and doubly articulated paintings (representational). The "mould" in this instance is the illusion of a negative relief which any painting in perspective



The "Nine Malic Moulds," a detail of the Large Glass.



Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

No. 129

The Chocolate Grinder is essentially composed . . .

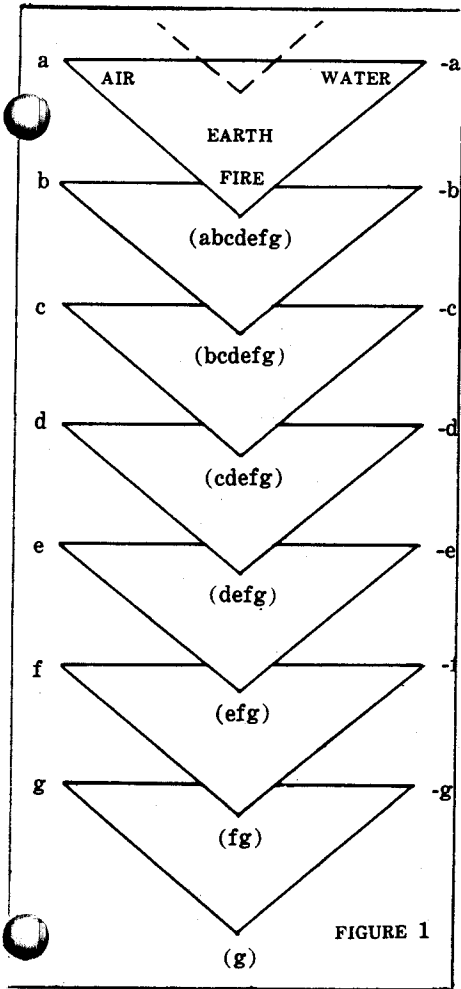
The chocolate of the rollers, coming from one knows not where, would deposit itself after grinding, as milk chocolate. . .

The necktie (insert a letter referring to a diagram) with brilliant shimmering would have been of aluminum foil stretched and stuck down, but the 3 rollers always turn beneath the Bayonet—(X) Helps to hold the compression bar and the large scissors and the isolating plates.

First-class article.

The grinder is mounted on a Louis XV nickeled chassis.

*Principle of [Spontaneity] (which explains the gyrotory mt of the grinder without other help)
The bachelor grinds his chocolate himself—²*



simulates. Again, as in the case of perspective in the *Glass*, color can be interpreted in two ways: either as a purely optical stimulus emanating from a plane surface, or as reflected and/or parent color emanating from objects described in a painting. Duchamp goes on to say that in the transition from figurative to nonfigurative painting there is a tendency to interpret detached or free areas of color as if they were parent (local) colors affixed to illusionistic surfaces in the painting.

The second group of Bachelor mechanisms represents the conversion of specific art ideas into finished works, and includes the Nine Malic Moulds, the Sieves, and the Toboggan Slide. The description for the Nine Malic Moulds is partly derived from a critical essay by Baudelaire on modern painting, where the poet compares the clothing of the modern businessman to the uniforms of so many brainless underlings.³ While it becomes evident that Duchamp is referring to modern artists, he is also referring to the nine Spheres of the ninth Sphera *Levanah* in the ultimate World of Materialism. These define the crucial span of transition between the most abstract representational art and materialist art uninvolved with painting and

sculpture. Duchamp characterizes this state psychologically. (See No. 92)

Duchamp proposed eight moulds in 1913 and subsequently added ninth (the Stationmaster), which he self-represented himself as "one of the boys." Was Duchamp planning to omit Kether and Malkuth? Or did he think that nonobjective art belonged to the eighth Sphere, *Kokab*? There is no sure answer except that his final choice was the correct one. The term *Malic* has many connotations: "male" and "evilness" in both French and English; "painting" or "painter" in German, but more significant is one of the Hebrew words for "angel," *Malach*. Here Cabalistic meaning refers to the World of Formation's almost robotic beings, sent to Earth to fulfill prescribed task not requiring much wisdom or self-knowledge. The avant-garde artist is precisely such a creature. Using the plan view of the Bachelor Apparatus, the placement of the nine figures resembles the structure of the Tree of Life. (See Fig. 2)

In a most irreverent fashion, Duchamp replaces the Sephirothic Spheres with relatively menial occupations, conforming to the conditions of *Assiah* in *Levanah*. Since Kether is the highest fusion of self and selflessness, it rightfully belongs to the Priesthood. Binah is the lowly Department-store Delivery Boy whose main task is "changing stability" or carrying other people's goods. As Sta-

tionmaster, Duchamp becomes Chocmah, the positive male force embodying wisdom. The Supernal Triad is reflected first by Chesed, manifesting paternalism and authority. Duchamp plays off the milder role of the Policeman against the Gendarme (Geburah: Severity and Strength) who uses arms and soldierly tactics. Tiphereth, the Sphere of Beauty and Reconciliation, is given the title of Bus Boy, most likely because Tiphereth clears up the "dirty dishes" left by Chesed and Geburah. Netzah's Victory over the stabilizing forces of Tiphereth is illusionary since its role is another step towards defeat and death, making Netzah the Undertaker. The Cuirassier is outdated but brilliantly costumed for the role of horse soldier, which is in keeping with Hod's Glorious lethargy. Finally, Yesod acts as the lowly transition to absolute materialism; Yesod follows the orders of the higher Sephiroth as Flunkey. The paths of each of these Spheres lead eventually to the tenth position of Malkuth indicated by a dotted circle.

The Malic Moulds (artists) or "gas castings" are filled with culture's last vestige of "illuminating gas." While destined to hear the praises of critics and collectors, they are, as Duchamp cryptically states, never able "to pass beyond the Mask." The Mask platonically refers to the ego; as a rule few artists penetrate their own self-images into their actual selves.

No. 144

Given an object in chocolate

- 1st its appearance = retinal impression (and other sensory consequences)
- 2nd its apparition

The mould of a chocolate object is the negative apparition of the plane SURFACE (with one or several curvatures)

generating 1st (by elementary prism) the colored form of the object

- 2nd. the mass elements of light (native colors) (chocolate type elements): in the passage from the apparition (mould) to the appearance, the plane composed of the elements of chocolate type light determines the apparent chocolate mass

by PHYSICAL DYING

No. 92

Progress (improvement) of the illuminating gas up to the planes of flow Malique moulds. (Malic?)

By Eros' matrix, we understand the group of 8 uniforms or hollow liveries destined to give to the (receive the) illuminating gas (which takes) 8 malic

forms (gendarme, cuirassier, etc.)

The gas castings so obtained would hear the litanies sung in the chariot, refrain of the white celibate machine, but they will never be able to pass beyond the Mask = They would have been as if enveloped, alongside their own complexity to the point of their being hallucinated rather than objectively. (Cemetery of 8 uniforms or liveries)

In seven
artist has
Illuminati
From a n
becomes
spangles
the holes
kind of r
plied. Sin
most rare
tion woul
frozen Al
pieces, the
begins to
Like the C
of Standa
anisms. T
ego or ar
emitted b
the "gas
ings) seek
No. 100)
Most in
ing" proc
vated the
Dust-Glas
which you
cally. = T
be worked
the result
color (tra
have their
Come of t
of the low
giving us
Cone rep
lonely are
human re
are the me
alyzes his
soul-search
vidual con
Cone. Thi
kind of
World's a
balistically
Garden (C
areas of
and art. I
brings ar
ond death
terms the
Duchan
Sieves to
the mater
from A t
champ all
later Siev
logical suc
of nonobj
one in the
holes in t
a globe"
rothic Sp
In alm
champ d
"spangles
"straight

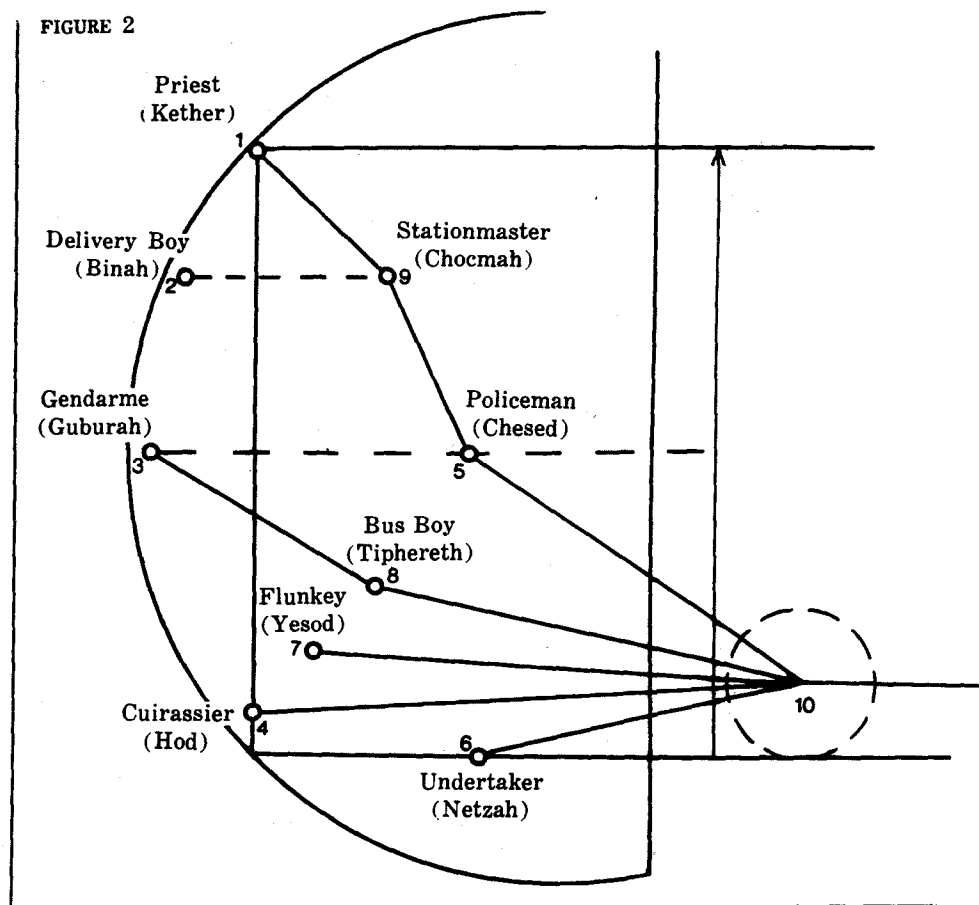
In several drawings and paintings the artist has depicted the journey of the Illuminating Gas from the Malic Mounds. From a needle-like consistency, the Gas becomes "a fog made of a thousand spangles of frosty gas" only to enter the holes of the Sieve. At this point a kind of race or "spangle by" is implied. Since the Illuminating Gas is of a most rarefied kind, a better interpretation would seem to be from or nearly frozen Alchemical WATER. It into tiny pieces, the Gas, retaining its "malic tint," begins to rise towards the Brasol Trap. Like the Grinder, the Trap "network of Standard Stops" are special mechanisms. They operate as a kind of super-ego or art history-making device. Once emitted by the Malic Mound (artists), the "gas cut in bits" (individual paintings) seeks the approval of society. (See No. 100)

Most interesting is the "dust-breed-ing" process by which Duchamp cultivated the Parasols: "To rise dust on Dust-Glasses for 4 months 6 months. which you close up afterwards hermetically. = Transparency — Differences. To be worked out." He then suggests that the resulting dust will be a kind of color (transparent pastel). The Parasols have their origin in Gnosticism's *Dark Cone of the Earth*, that heavy darkness of the lower earth conveyed metal and giving us Duchamp's last vision. The Cone represents a rather painful and lonely area of the *uroboros*, a circle of human redemption. The *Dark Cone(s)* are the means by which an individual analyzes his imperfections one by one. Such soul-searching finally results in the individual coming to terms with the *Dark Cone*. This Cone is often depicted as a kind of dunghill or *dust* of the World's astral (manifested) region. Cabalistically, "the products of Art" of the Garden (carnal gratification) are the areas of nonsacred science, philosophy and art. Passage through the last Cone brings art to the "threshold of the second death," which Duchamp reverently terms the Toboggan Slide.

Duchamp changed the number of Sieves to seven, more than likely adding the material Sphere of Malkuth. Going from A through C, D, E, F to B, Duchamp allows more dust to collect on the later Sieves, implying a kind of chronological succession in which the last stages of nonobjective art are trapped one by one in the last Sieves. The fact that the holes in the Sieves are in the "shape of a globe" simply alludes to the Sephirothic Spheres. (See Fig. 3)

In almost cinemagraphic terms, Duchamp describes the progress of the "spangles" (painterly elements). They "straighten out," "lose their sense of up

FIGURE 2



and down," and reach a point where they "can no longer retain their individuality." The artist is not referring to a single painting, but to the evolutionary sequence of pictorial changes common to nonobjective art. Ideally these crucial shifts take place in chronological succession, although historically there have been exceptions to this. The process of *straightening out* reduces the boundaries between forms and the residual horizontal and vertical elements of perspectival painting. Finally all formal elements disappear except for paint itself which flows naturally according to gravity. Duchamp's intention in allowing the first Parasol Sieve to be A (Chesed) and the last to be B (Malkuth) becomes more evident if we remember his insistence that the second (or formal) articulation is merely an illusion of truly syntactical communication, therefore an elaborately worked or highly complex nonobjective painting has as much meaning, or as little, as a drip painting.

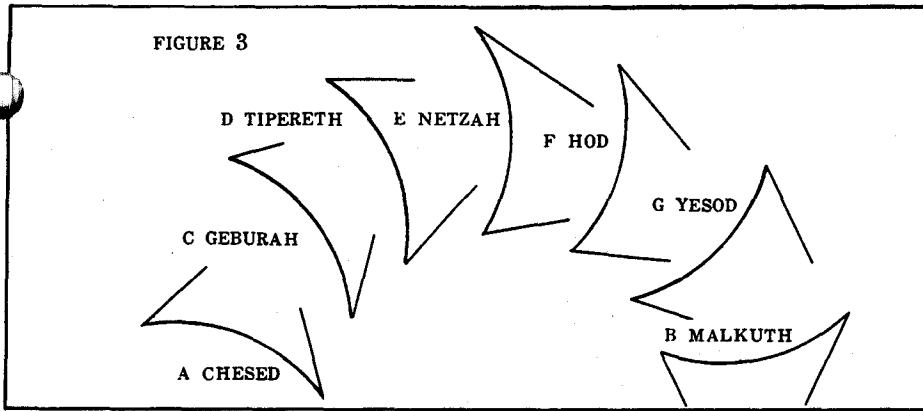
Under Kether are nine Sephiroth or nine permutations of the basic triad. Cabalistically, human existence operates on three distinct planes: the Mental Plane (incorporating spirit, concepts, and ideas), the Physical Plane (all material manifestations), and the Astral Plane (including the "soul," energy, and the forms of operation). The nature of the Astral is particularly difficult to

grasp because it represents a synthesis transcending and not typifying the Mental and Physical Planes. The essential binary relation between the Mental and Physical Planes may be neutralized by the Astral Plane, but it cannot be destroyed. Changes occurring in each of the Sephiroth are defined by a series of permutations called the "Law of Reflection."

- 1) Kether: Unknowable
- 2) Chocmah: Reflection of the Mental in the Mental
- 3) Binah: Reflection of the Astral in the Mental
- 4) Chesed: Reflection of the Physical in the Mental
- 5) Geburah: Reflection of the Mental in the Astral
- 6) Tiphereth: Reflection of the Astral in the Astral
- 7) Netzah: Reflection of the Physical in the Astral
- 8) Hod: Reflection of the Mental in the Physical
- 9) Yesod: Reflection of the Astral in the Physical
- 10) Malkuth: The Physical in itself

Duchamp's seven Parasol Sieves equal the last seven Reflections. Triadically, they reveal the following form. (See Fig. 4)

As surmised from the above diagram,



there is a direct relation between the Cabalistic Triad and the basic binary of Structural Linguistics consisting of the Paradigmatic and the Syntagmatic Planes. Added to the last we find an intermediate mode of perceptual organization—Gestalt or “formal” relations. Gestalts automatically mediate between our conceptual capabilities and our unfocused physical senses. These two neural areas divide our responses and perceptions into definite evolutionary stages. Syntagmatic associations are fundamentally instinctive, while the paradigmatic features of the brain are associated with mechanisms of higher reasoning. Structural Linguistics never developed diachronic techniques of analysis because of its dependence on a binary scheme of segregating linguistic elements. Gestalt association has to be the transitional step between the two. (See Fig. 5)

In his *Green Box* notes Duchamp simply identifies the Sieves. He does dwell upon the final liquid consistency of the material passing through the Sieves, although he offers no particular description of the stages of nonobjective painting. The permutations of the Cabalistic Triad represent a kind of cyclical logic which distinguishes each of the stages of nonobjective art—yet without actually defining their underlying semiotic properties (e.g., in what structural sense does a painting by Kandinsky differ from one

by Malevich or de Kooning?). The Sieves symbolize the seven conceptual attitudes possible for any artist to adopt in making nonobjective art. In a sense these mirror the levels of consciousness encountered by a child learning to speak its first complete sentences.

Chocmah and Binah are not an active part of the declination of the nine Spheres. In terms of the evolution or involution of semiotic systems, the *Mental*, or the Paradigmatic Plane, cannot be described by itself; neither, as in the case of Binah, can the *Astral*, or Gestalt relations, define conscious ideas—except at the highest level of the Sephirothic Worlds. There we see them as the relations between point, line, triangle, square, circle and the more complex configurations of hermeticism. As for the other seven, they assume a cyclical pattern common to all Spheres according to given conditions and analogies.

Chesed: ruled by JUPITER; generates Wisdom, paternal authority, a desire for knowledge, and mercy; reflects the Physical in the Mental; Chesed deals with emotions given a quasi-programmatic format in nonobjective art; in terms of technique and implied perspective this structure contains all the attributes of recognizable content.

Geburah: ruled by MARS; generates Severity, intelligence, impulsiveness,

strength, punishment and mental limitations; reflects the Mental in the Astral; Geburah defines those artists inspired by specific concepts from various disciplines (e.g., scientific, technological, geographic, architectural, etc.); such concepts are tied to Gestalt thinking; the forms used by these artists are condensed into clearly defined geometrical configurations.

Tiphereth: ruled by the SUN; generates Beauty, harmony, eternal truth, and virtue; reflects the Astral in the Astral; such artists assemble eidetic constructions of the real world and apply these to art through a profound understanding of Gestalt principles; in every cycle, Tiphereth represents the highest degree of artistic synthesis.

Netzah: ruled by VENUS; generates Victory, powerful desire, vitality, and activity over passivity; reflects the Physical in the Astral; this art stems from the origins of human behavior and adapts itself to the basic perceptual Gestalts; the physicality of the painter's techniques reflects his emotional impulse.

Hod: ruled by MERCURY; generates Glory, splendor, peace, praise, ecstasy, and life without movement; reflects the Mental in the Physical; this art depends upon the most elementary perceptual laws; its painting is supported by eloquent assertions of abstract ideals.

Yesod: ruled by the MOON; generates Form, foundation, entry into the material world, and stability in change; reflects the Astral in the Physical; semiotically such art conceals a double structure: the first points to it as an object, while the second insists upon the object's formal manifestation; Yesod signifies the last legitimate stage of any art movement.

Malkuth: ruled by the ELEMENTS; generates materiality in all of its manifestations; reflects the Physical in itself; Malkuth represents both the last step in the involuntary sequence of the Tree of Life and the final level after nonobjective art; Duchamp's many references to liquid at the end of the Sieves may be identified with various fluid techniques in painting, expressing pure materiality.

After the Sieves, Duchamp supplies three short notes which are worth studying. The first simply indicates: “AFTER THE 3 CRASHES = *Splash*, and not vertical channeling of the encounter at the bottom of the slopes.”⁵ The next note is accompanied by a small sketch of the curving slopes which ends with a suspended object, entitled *mobile*, directly above the point of termination. It reads: “Study the 3 falls: After the center one, the *mobile* will splash the gas which has be-

SYNTAGMATIC	GESTALT	PARADIGMATIC
Continuous time	Related events organized periodically	Concepts of time in cyclical progressions
Emotional associations	Eidetic associations	Meanings and abstract thought
Ground	Figure-Ground	Figure
All elements as they are found in nature, a continuum with only minimal differentiation	Unconscious perception of Gestalt relations	Conscious classification of elements into conceptually useful systems
Unexamined contrasts and random groupings	Contrasts hierarchically determined according to dominant attributes	Distinctive oppositions divided into sets and sub-sets according to selected criteria
Perceived whole	Unconscious parts-to-whole perception	Conscious analysis of parts as a whole

FIGURE 5

come liquid and arrived at the bottom of the slopes."⁶ Circumstances indicate that the three "crashes" or "falls" represent the three types of perception: Paradigmatic relations, Gestalt relations, and Syntagmatic relations. By the final permutation and the "fall" (elimination) of the Astral or "center one," painting is destined to assume the various types of free-forming liquid application that have become so prevalent in the past twenty years.

Malkuth, or the final reign of materialism in art, maintains its own quadruple inversion in three dimensions. While painting shows the effects of less and less control through dripping, dyeing, spraying, and staining, art completes a parallel involution in the areas of *neural, animal-physical, vegetable and mineral* existence. These also pass through the seven reflected Spheres of the fortieth Sphere, *Cholom Yosodoth*, to a hypothetical point of zero vibration. Affected only by the forces of gravity, this is referred to as the *Primum Mobile*—the mobile in Duchamp's drawing. What follows is a third note on the *Planes of flow*. . . (See No. 118)

Descending into the lower regions of the World of Assiah, the Cabalist reaches that nadir containing the *shells*, denoting purely materialistic attitudes in a World unleavened by love, ideals, or aesthetic beliefs. Eventually extreme materialism provides the crisis necessary for a radical reevaluation of all culture. When Cabalists insist that Malkuth and Kether resemble one another, they are implying that the highest consciousness depends upon the relation between human spiritual comprehension and the material basis for existence. In a society aspiring to Kether, cycles of normal growth and decay become the basis for all ritual and natural law. This explains Duchamp's remark about "the model uncorking." The complete involution of art is a "model" or prototype for realizations signifying a gravitation towards Kether at the level above the Atziluthic World. "Uncorking" is a portmanteau word coined by Duchamp to indicate the double meaning of the Hebrew word *Sod* (mystery) whose letters in Gematria add up to 70, as do the letters in the word for wine. So the "wine of the Torah" refers to secret mysteries of the Law. The "uncorking" allows for that delirious aroma characteristic of good wines, just as recognition of Kether provides its own spiritual intoxication. As we comprehend that society's substance is based on interlocking mythic structures, the bachelor operations (in the form of avant-garde art) cease to function. Gradually the illuminating gas forcefully returns in the form of intellectual comprehension.

No. 100 (parasol TRAP)
The spangles are stopped in their ascent by the 1st parasol (sieve.)

The sieves (6 probably) are semi-spherical parasols, with holes. The holes of the sieves parasols should give in the shape of a globe the figure of the 8 malic moulds, given schematic, by the 8 summits (polygon concave plane). by subsidized symmetry.

Orientation of the parasols:

The 1st is horizontal, and receives the spangles as they leave the tubes.

If one joins the centers of the parasols with a line one obtains a half circumference from A to B.

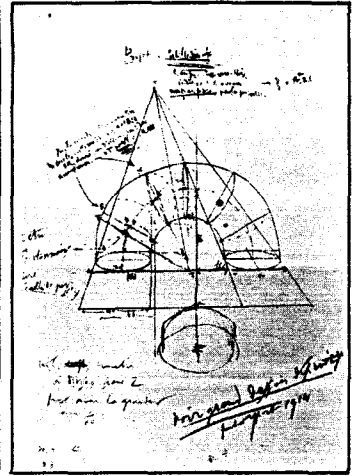
As in a Derby, the spangles pass through the parasols A, CD, EF . . . B. and as they gradually arrive at D, E, F . . . etc. they are *straightened out* i.e. they lose their sense of up and down ([more precise term]).—The group

of these parasols forms a sort of labyrinth of the 3 directions.—The spangles dazed by this progressive turning imperceptibly lose provisionally they will find it again later their designation of left, right, up, down etc, lose their awareness of Position

in the form of a toboggan but more of a corkscrew. and the splash at A is an uncorking the group may be described in the sense of model-uncorking.

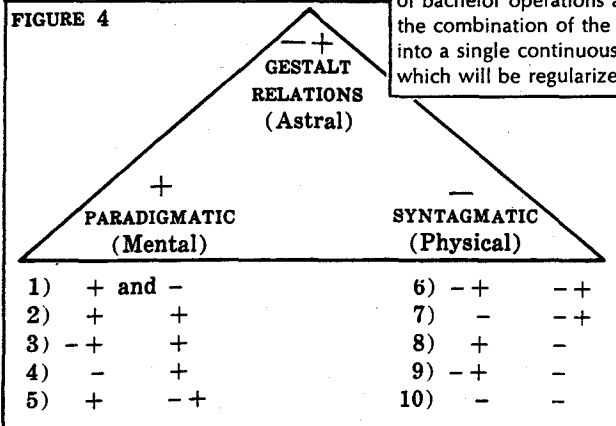
The fall to A of the three-crashes helps the uncorking—

The splash (nothing in common with champagne) ends the series of bachelor operations and transforms the combination of the illuminating gas and the scissors into a single continuous support, support which will be regularized by the 9 holes.⁷



No. 118

FIGURE 4



Top right: Scale drawing for the "Parasol Sieves" (Spring 1914, Paris). Reprinted from the *Notes and Projects for the Large Glass* (edited by Arturo Schwarz) Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York: 1969. Note 103, p. 160.

- Duchamp, Marcel, *Notes and Projects for the Large Glass*, (edited by Arturo Schwarz) Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1969, No. 129. (All of the following notes are taken from the same source.)
- Duchamp, op. cit., No. 140. The Chocolate Grinder is also made to resemble classical descriptions of the Delphian oracle's tripod. This consists of a frame with three feet, a bowl set in a frame, a flat table on which the oracle sits, and a cone-shaped cover. Duchamp has patterned his Parasol Sieves after this last component.
- Burnham, Jack, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, George Braziller, Inc., New York, 1968, pp. 215-217.
- Duchamp, op. cit., No. 105.
- Duchamp, op. cit., No. 115.
- Duchamp, op. cit., No. 116.
- Duchamp, op. cit., No. 118. This note culminates Duchamp's seven stages of nonobjective painting and sculpture. These are defined by the layers of perceptual structure or Gestalt complexity existing below the level of representational art. Such perceptual steps are concerned with formal simplification in which the painter's mark gradually becomes one with its material support. Historically all nonobjective art evolves towards the three-dimensional object and away from the painted image.
The structure of Chesed dominates the early spiritual abstractions of Wassily Kandinsky (1912-1915). Kandinsky's compositions retain all the elements of representational art, except in his hands they are disassembled to form various programmatic themes. The Sphere of Geburah appears in the painting of Kasimir Malevich (1914-1920's). Suprematism and Constructivism

are dominated by the metalanguages of engineering, perceptual psychology, and scientific theory. Here formal elements are reduced to precise geometric components; the separation between figure and ground remains vivid, as the illusion of spatial depth is sustained. Piet Mondrian's painting after 1920 most clearly reveals the ideal structure of Tiphereth. Here horizontal-vertical relations and a picture plane bound by continuous lines appear to be essential. The illusion of depth is considerably lessened. Tachism and American Abstract Expressionism (1947-1960) signal the emergence of Netzah. Netzah defines the simplest forms of asymmetrical balance. Color-field painting dominates Hod. Just as a direct emotional appeal is necessary to sustain art in Netzah, complex historical rationalizations are essential to Hod. The important feature of this painting is its reliance on at least one axis of symmetry. Paintings with the structure of Yesod always retain a double reading. One interpretation at this level involves the painting qua object rather than as painted image. The other interpretation provides for a composition and handling which reflects the material character of the painting support. Works by Ad Reinhardt and Frank Stella refer to Hod. In Malkuth we find the pure material improvisations of Jackson Pollock and later Morris Louis. Here gravity and fluidity define the parameters of composition; color, as in Hod and Yesod, takes any form the artist chooses, since color becomes an arbitrary parameter. Precise laws for these relationships will be the subject of another essay.

(To be concluded next month.)

Jack Burnham

Left: The World, last key to the Major Arcana of the Tarot. From the Rider Deck by Arthur Edward Waite and drawn by Pamela Coleman Smith. The dancer above is the cabalistic "Bride" or Shekinah.



Right: Marcel Duchamp, *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes*, May 1912. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Here the artist portrays the state of the Sephirothic Crown (King) and his Bride in Malkuth (Queen) before their reunion. The "Swift Nudes" separating the two figures signify these artists (forces of Mercury) who will be responsible for their eventual merger.



DUCHAMP'S BRIDE STRIPPED BARE: The Meaning of the Large Glass—Part III

The Bride

Remembering the Hermetic axiom that "what is below is similar (NOT EQUAL) to what is above, and what is above is similar to what is below . . ." it seems probable that the Bride, or upper section of the *Large Glass*, will be involved with the same activities as The Bachelor Mechanisms. Marcel Duchamp has cleverly distributed the details for decoding the progression of nonobjective art between both the upper and lower sections, so in fact one must piece the notes of both together in order to learn the means and the effects of the "stripping process."

The major portion of the Bride takes the form of the "Pendule Femelle" or Female Hanged Body. In a sense this "hanged bitch," as she is called by Duchamp, is the female equivalent of the twelfth Major Arcanum of the Tarot, the Hanged Man. This card signifies the adept's or hero's initial period of crisis. Identified with the Hebrew letter MEM (relating to Woman and the Alchemical WATER), the Hanged Man begins the psychological transformation towards egotism, but on another level it exemplifies nonobjective art. WATER is the element of mental illusion, the revealer of images *upside-down*.

Significantly, the painting of the Bride is nearly monochrome with pastel tints

of shading; thus she reflects *Kether* (white), *Chocmah* (gray), and *Binah* (black), these begin the Macroprozopos of the Tree of Life. For all her fine details and consummate draftsmanship, it remains doubtful that the Bride contains imagery of any kind. She represents the concrete World of Manifestations as opposed to the World of Illusions. Duchamp's notes for the Bride have a kind of spurious air. Decked out in cubist forms, the Bride radiates "ignorant desire"—she is, in essence, the stuff that all nonobjective art is made of: colors, forms, technique with an added Metalanguage. Visually and iconographically, she has no meaning.

The notes for the Bride inform us intellectually and deceive us visually. Duchamp begins by describing the Bride in automotive terms: "a reservoir of love gasoline" distributed to the "motor with quite feeble cylinders." Combustion in the Bride's motor takes the form of a double explosion. (See note No. 66.)

This "immobile arbor-type" is undoubtedly the Cabalistic Tree. The "sparks of the desire-magneto" correspond to the Cabalistic "sparks," that is, the attributes or letters that fall by the wayside as art reaches Malkuth. "Electrical stripping" alludes to the mental process by

which further stages of nonobjective art are eventually perceived and accepted by the public. This last controls the illusion of temporal change, "the throbbing jerk. . ."

Knowing what we do, it is easy to understand the artist's description of the Bride as "a sort of apotheosis of virginity." The "cinematic blossoming" refers to the necessary optical-formal changes, like a time-lapse motion picture, that will bring nonobjective art to its completion. (See note No. 1, first part.)

In order for the *mirrorical return* to Kether to happen, two events have to take place. Art itself must descend to the complete materialism of Malkuth and, second, the spiritual implications of this fact must be gradually generally understood.

The notes then describe a triple blossoming. First the "electrical stripping," next that "voluntarily imagined by the Bride desiring." Duchamp here touches on one of the profound Mysteries of Cabalistic theory, that is, the role of Shekinah in the return journey to the Crown or Godhead. As Daughter of the King, then Betrothed, and then Bride and Mother, Shekinah ascends the Tree towards mystical fusion as Elohim with

Jehova
Shekinah
lying p
for the
commu
ludes to
carried
the ar
arbor-t
pathwa
Tarot.
longing
ing: "t
motor
(The c
the top
as if ex
car tur
roars t
second
The
the Bri
the cen
mecha
Bachelo
Bride's
there is
mains u
kind of
turning
the Cho
wards o
alistic li
(Seph
of a cyl
is mean
artist h
This
hypothe
champ,
ther aw
picture
the "fil
degree
ceived
the AIR
domina
"rain"
lower b
and fin
the diff
ist, tha
tions, i
male, o
champ
lationsh
ness of
artist a
the sub
cision-r
ball of
(female
mental
basis f
Tree is
amende
By f
of the

Jehovah. Mistress of the Celestial School, Shekinah in part represents the underlying psychological impulses responsible for the constant need for transcendent communion through art. Duchamp alludes to this impulse as the "blossoming" carried on the "refined development of the arbor-type." The "boughs on this arbor-type" represent the twenty-two pathways of the major Arcana of the Tarot. Duchamp sees Shekinah, or the workings of humanity, as a slow blossoming: "this blossoming is the image of a motor car climbing a slope in low gear. The car wants more and more to reach the top, and while slowly accelerating, if exhausted by hope, the motor of the car turns over faster and faster, until it appears triumphantly." (See note No. 1, second part.)

The whole of this note recapitulates the Bride's (or Shekinah's) ascent upon the central pillar of the Tree. The more mechanical functions described as The Bachelor Mechanisms below become the Bride's Sex Cylinder or Wasp. Although there is a drawing for the Wasp, it remains unidentified in the painting. This kind of cone-shaped carburator has a turning function analogous to that of the Chocolate Grinder. One must look towards one of the oldest treatises in Cabalistic literature, *The Book of Formation Sopher Yetzirah*, to find a description of a cylindrical or circular device which is meant to unlock the secrets that the artist has in mind. (See note No. 72.)

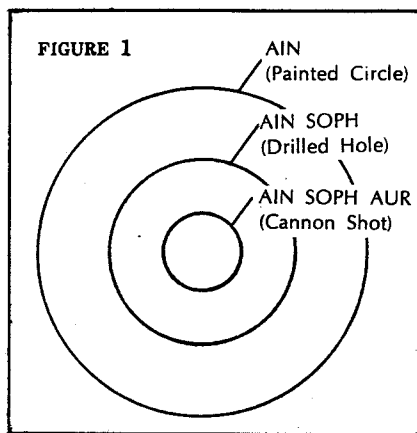
This "filament substance" is a kind of hypothetical thread, invented by Duchamp, which pulls the eye closer or further away from an inverted image of the picture plane. Lengthening or shortening the "filament substance" alludes to the degree of illusion and sense of depth perceived in a nonobjective schema. Since the AIR of art semiotics is increasingly dominated by WATER, any impending "rain" (Alchemical WATER) tends to lower barometric pressure. "The storms and fine weathers of the wasp" refer to the difference in choices made by an artist, that is the psychological implications, in choosing either the male, female, or neutral pillars of the Tree. Duchamp implies that there is a causal relationship between the strength or weakness of the gestalts determined by the artist and the emotional consistency of the sublimations controlling artistic decision-making. The phrase, "It licks the ball of the handler . . ." refers to Binah's (female) psycho-sexual effect upon the mental drive of Chocmah (male). The basis for illusion at one point on the Tree is destroyed by being subtracted or amended at a lower sphere.

By far one of the richest components of the Bride (in cross-references and

No. 66

Hence, this motor with quite feeble cylinders has 2 strokes. The 1st stroke (sparks of the desire-magneto) controls the immobile arbor-type. This arbor-type is a kind of spinal column and should be the support for the blossoming into the bride's voluntary stripping. The 2nd stroke (artificial sparks of the electrical stripping) controls the clockwork machinery, graphic translation of the blossoming into stripping by the bachelors. (expressing the throbbing jerk of the minute hand on electrical clocks.)¹

FIGURE 1



No. 1 [first part]

Grafting itself on the arbor-type — the cinematic blossoming . . . is, in general, the halo of the Bride, the sum total of her splendid vibrations: . . . The Bride reveals herself nude in 2 appearances: the first, that of the stripping by the bachelors, the second appearance that voluntary-imaginative one of the Bride. On the coupling of these 2 appearances of pure virginity — On their collision, depends the whole blossoming, the upper part and crown of the picture.

No. 1 [second part]

3rd Blossoming-crown (Composed of the 2 preceding).
 the 1st blossoming is attached to the motor with quite feeble cylinders.
 The 2nd to the arbor-type, of which it is the cinematic development.
 The arbor-type has its roots in the desire-gear, a constituent, skeletal part of the Bride.
 The motor with quite feeble cylinders is a superficial organ of the Bride; it is activated by the love gasoline, a secretion of the Brides sexual glands and by the electric sparks of the stripping.

No. 82

Kind of milky way flesh color surrounding unevenly densely the 3 Pistons (i.e. there will be a transparent layer on the glass then the 3 Pistons then another layer of milky way)
 This flesh-like milky way to be used as a support for the inscription which is concerned with the cannon shots (at A)

No. 72

In the Pendu femelle — and the blossoming Barometer.

The filament substance might lengthen or shorten itself in response to an atmospheric pressure organized by the wasp. (Filament substance extremely sensitive to differences of artificial atmospheric pressure controlled by the wasp).

[This is followed by a small diagram and brief note that reads:]
Isolated cage—Containing the filament substance in which would take place — the storms and the fine weathers of the wasp.

the filament substance in its meteorological extension
 (part relating the pendu to the handler)
 resembles a solid flame, i.e. having a solid force. It licks the ball of the handler displacing it as it pleases

double meanings) is the milky cloud extending across the top of the *Glass*. It is referred to variously as the Halo of the Bride, Cinematic Blossoming, Top Inscription, and Milky Way. (See note No. 82.)

Ulf Linde observes that the Milky Way (*Voie Lactée*) may also be pronounced *voile acté* (acted veil).² As we shall see with the Draft Pistons in the Top Inscription, this curious cloud acts as a background for the real veils. Since a cloud is a mixture of water and gas, Arturo Schwartz is correct in attributing an androgynous character to it. But this is only a small part of the Milky Way's significance.

The "uncorking" at the bottom of the Sieves is related to the Milky Way through one of the mysteries of the Cabala. One must understand that the Milky Way refers to the canopy above the Charioteer in the seventh Arcanum of the Tarot and to the underlying universal laws determined by the heavens. Four posts support the canopy above the chariot. These provide the mental laws making physical change possible. The canopy is dark blue, containing twelve gold stars signifying the celestial forces. In effect, the canopy defines destiny at its highest plane, the influence of the suns and planets on earthly life. Being a female component, this milky cloud corresponds to the guise of Shekinah in the world above the earthly holy place. As A. E. Waite describes this relation, "The latter [Shekinah] was also that cloud which abode on the tent of the congregation while the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Alternatively it was a cloud that rose up to veil her presence, and dissolved when she went forth."³ The ascent of Shekinah tears away these purely conceptual veils.

The Milky Way is penetrated by three rectangular forms variously referred to as the Draft Pistons, the Triple Cipher, or the Nets. Three gauze squares were held up to the breeze, photographed, and the resulting outlines were then transferred to the *Glass*. Several writers have made lengthy descriptions of the process. On one level the three Nets designate the Three Veils of the Tree of Life. The Veils are distorted by the wind because it is the spiritual aspect of intellect (AIR or Ruarch) that penetrates each of the Veils or Nets in turn. In the struggle towards the Supernal Consciousness of Kether, *materiality* is torn aside, then *form*, and finally the illusion of *beauty*.

Draft Pistons are the negation of Milky Way, Duchamp has depicted them as squares of clear glass. Through the Nets one can easily see into the actual space in back of the *Glass*. (See note No. 81.)

Again, one must refer to the highly arcane directions of the *Sepher Yetzirah* to know that Duchamp has broken the code to that key to the *Zohar* and to the formation of the Cabalistic Tree itself.

In his introduction to the *Green Box* the author notes an "Algebraic comparison" in which the ratio $\frac{a}{b}$ is equal to c .

Since he insists that the equation is without "numerical value," it seems to refer to Duchamp's guarded interest in Ferdinand de Saussure's theories of structural linguistics. The $\frac{a}{b} = c$ equation

is Saussure's classical designation for a sign: $\frac{a \text{ (signified)}}{b \text{ (signifier)}} = c \text{ (Referent)}$ which

in cabalistic terms reads

$\frac{A \text{ (Mental)}}{B \text{ (Mental)}} = C \text{ (Physical)}$.

This A B C motif appears with another note accompanied by a diagram. The drawing indicates two vertical pendular units, one swinging within a horizontal circle. (See note No. 78.)

We may read this diagram on several levels. Figure A, the circle, represents the vagina; figure B, the stick-like pendulum, is the penis; while figure C is the testes or the seed. Cabalistic teachings sometimes compare the Sephiroth to the masculine and feminine sexual organs. Unifications of the Sephiroth strive for *Zivvug*, the Hebrew word for complete sexual coupling. Every occult tradition stresses the resemblance between art and male-female copulation resulting in birth. Unification and transference of the seed are the essence of the Life Plan. Duchamp is making an allusion to the plan of the *Glass*. We find C, the *Physical Plane*, above in the Bride's section, representing the natural elements of sound, color, texture, value, and feeling. B below defines the assertive *Astral Plane* which, through the Bachelors, gives us the illusions of art and change. And finally A represents the central area of the *Glass*. On the passive *Mental Plane* are located cognition and understanding of the total scheme of things.

Remembrance of Kether

A final note completes the *Large Glass*. The Nine Shots or Pulls involves the use of a toy cannon pointed at an undisclosed target point on the *Glass* and fired nine times. Duchamp repeated the firing operation three times from three positions "not in a plane." Matches tipped with wet paint were used as missiles to mark the spots surrounding the target. Duchamp then had small holes drilled in

the *Glass* at the nine points of impact. There were circled so that the nearest to the target was painted white while the rest were painted in values of gray towards the farthest hole designated by a black circle. We must perceive in this process the most crucial phase of his cabalistic activities, for it signifies the return to Kether, the reintegration of culture gradually turned upside down over more than two thousand years.

It is important to realize that the inscriptions from the Draft Pistons and the Bachelor's Gas end in the region of the Nine Shots. Both emanations, which are variations of the same force, pass through the Veils of negative existence towards the origins of the First Cause or Kether. It is well to remind the reader that the Tree is not knowledge or facts themselves, but rather a method for retracing the cognitive mechanisms of the mind. In theory the Tree covers the gamut from the highest forms of consciousness to inanimate matter. Using the structural order of binary opposition, it follows the principle of hierarchical organization to an undefined First Principle, Kether. Rather than being a position in space, it is called "the point within a circle" or even less clearly, "the circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere,"⁴ and also the Concealed of the Concealed, or the Inscrutable Height—each definition implying that the Universe is logical and knowable *providing* we do not push our ontological queries past a given point. At most, we could see Kether as the source of primal energy in the condition of pure becoming. Duchamp's Nine Shots attempt to depict our final leap across the Sephirothic Abyss towards the Supernal Triad. The Supernal state above the Atziluthic World is, in reality, a new and ultimate sense of conscious realization, one defined as the highest degree of awareness concerning the reoccurring structure of human culture perceived through countless customs and modes. The Cabala proclaims itself through a single idea, namely that our social customs, arts, legal structures, economic policies, religions, sciences, architectural modes, and languages are themselves mythic structures. These conventions receive stability through the strength of social consensus. Although ideally it is possible to formulate a culture on the basis of perfect knowing or *Gnosis*, such a culture only becomes possible through a degree of love, natural intelligence, and egolessness very much absent at present.

According to Cabalistic doctrine, the devolution of culture (and art) occurs through the Lightning Flash or path of descent down the Tree of Life. On each

ing the final stage in Malkuth, a more conscious and painful evolutionary ascent begins. Here the division of Malkuth is separated into four darkened or impure colors: citrine (AIR), olive green (WATER), russet brown (FIRE), and black (EARTH). Within the duration of the first three Sephirothic Worlds Malkuth is not actually manifested except as the Supernal Triad of the following world. Only by reaching the fourth World of Assiah does Malkuth reveal itself as the Bride of Microprozopos. A decade ago art arrived at this stage of total materialization. Hence by using the principles of classification devised by the Cabalists, we find the Bride divided into various "living substances."

FIRE: The Mental in some Conceptual Art, Pop Art

AIR: The Physical in Body Art and Ecological Art

WATER: The Vegetable in Ecological Art

EARTH: The Mineral in fluid painting techniques, Process Art, and Earth Art

The four final elements are called the "shells" or evil spirit and are further subdivided into their own sephirothic declinations. The "shells" or "husks" represents art totally veiled from the divine Light, that is, simply physical objects conceptually organized as art. The first three shells are reputed to be evil and destructive, although their corrosion can be relatively helpful to those possessing the necessary insight. However, the fourth element, Earth, has the means of converting evil to good. These final Qlippoth or purely material manifestations instigate the ascendance of Shekinah. Duchamp reminds us that the return to the Supernal Triad demands "skill," meaning human effort and insight.

Symbolically, the return to the plan of divine activity takes the form of three concentric parts: AIN, the vacuum of pure spirit, circumscribes the area of a circle; AIN SOPH, the Limitless and Boundless, focuses in upon itself thus defining AIN; and AIN SOPH AUR, the Limitless Light, is the central point of impact, the primary thrust of existence. Duchamp has translated the creative force, AIN SOPH AUR, as the point of the cannon shot. This is manifested as the objective Universe through the drilled hole, AIN SOPH. Finally, the boundary line of divine existence, AIN, is defined by a painted circle. (See Figure 1.)

The Supreme Creator in Kether consists of three parts, including the feminine polarity, Shekinah. Since constant variation of the triadic principle is the essence of the Cabalistic method, it is obvious why the triple motif appears so

No. 81

Top inscription.

obtained with the draft pistons. (indicate the way to "prepare" these pistons.). Then "place" them for (2 to 3 months) a certain time, and let them leave their imprint as 3 nets through which pass the commands of the Pendu femelle (commands having their alphabet and terms governed by the orientation of the 3 nets [a sort of triple "cipher" through which the milky way supports and guides the said commands])

No 84

Shots.

From more or less far; on a target. This target in short corresponds to the vanishing point (in perspective.)

The figure thus obtained will be the projection (through skill) of the principal points of a 3 dimensional body.—With maximum skill, this projection would be reduced to a point (the target).

With ordinary skill this projection will be a demultiplication of the target. (Each of the new points [images of the target] will have a coefficient of displacement. This coefficient is nothing but a souvenir and can be noted conventionally (The different shots tinted from black to white according to their distance) —

In general, the figure obtained is the visible flattening (a stop on the way) of the demultiplied body

Duchamp's drawing for an unnamed sexual apparatus used in the letter decisions which run across the draft pistons. In this instance A represents AIR, B represents WATER, and C represents FIRE, or Aleph, Mem, and Shin, the three mother letters of the Hebrew alphabet. (From Arturo Schwarz's edition of the Notes and Projects for the Large Glass.)

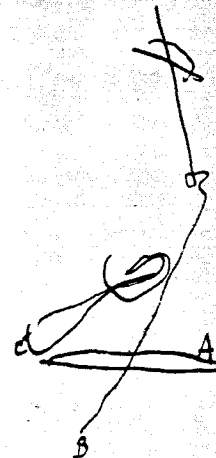
often in the construction of the Glass. In effect, the Nine Shots are the nine Sephirothic Spheres emanating from Kether and recreating the rectified Tree of Life, the Tree turned around and substituting Death for Malkuth under the Supernal Triad. Being undefinable, Kether remains a target point in back of the Glass, undisclosed by the artist.

Even given some concrete knowledge of the Bride and the Bachelors, Duchamp, it seems, has left us on a higher plane of metaphysical speculation. In philosophy cabalistic doctrine is referred to as "degenerate monotheism." Yet Duchamp compels us to give serious attention to occult disciplines long discredited by scientific skepticism. So in a sense we are asked to see Alchemy not as a muddled prelude to chemistry, but as a very sophisticated psychology of the human mind. Rather than a fortune-telling parlor game, the Tarot seems to be a semi-otic description of human spiritual evolution and involution.

Yet in interpreting Duchamp's intentions, it would be the greatest mistake

No. 78

B and C (as they sway.) just, strike the circle A. B below, C above—The above and the below should be used in the decisions or inscriptions transmitted through the draft pistons.



to infer that he prophesied the "death of art." Far from that, he anticipates the inevitable demise of art which takes scientific rationalism and post-rationalist methodology for its model, and this includes nearly all the successful art of the present century. The Cosmic Wheel or Duchamp's Mill Wheel proclaims that all human change is cyclical; art cannot die, but human illusion and the nature of "aesthetic" values do. Ultimately, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, Even can only act as a signpost reintroducing the sacred and "lived ritual" into the realm of everyday existence, thus abolishing art as a separate facet of life.

NOTES

1. Duchamp, Marcel, *Notes and Projects of the Large Glass*, (edited by Arturo Schwarz) Harry N. Abrams: New York, 1969, No. 66. (All of the following notes are taken from the same source.)
2. Schwarz, Arturo, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.: New York, 1969, p. 155.
3. Waite, A. E., *The Holy Kabbalah* (republished in 1960) University Books: New Hyde Park, New York, seventh printing, 1971, pp. 356-357.
4. Fortune, Dion, *The Mystical Oabala*, Ernest Benn Ltd.: London, 1935, p. 38.