

Before Zen

The Nothing of American Dada

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One of the challenges confronting our modern era has been how to resolve the subject-object dichotomy proposed by Descartes and refined by Newton—the belief that reality consists of matter and motion, and that all questions can be answered by means of the scientific method of objective observation and measurement. This egocentric perspective has been cast into doubt by evidence from quantum mechanics that matter and motion are interdependent forms of energy and that the observer is always in an experiential relationship with the observed.¹ To understand ourselves as interconnected beings who experience time and space rather than being subject to them takes a radical shift of perspective, and artists have been at the leading edge of this exploration. From Marcel Duchamp and Dada to John Cage and Fluxus, to William T. Wiley and his West Coast colleagues, to the recent international explosion of participatory artwork, artists have been trying to get us to change how we see. Nor should it be surprising that in our global era Asian perspectives regarding the nature of reality have been a crucial factor in effecting this shift.²

The 2009 Guggenheim exhibition *The Third Mind* emphasized the importance of Asian philosophical and spiritual texts in the development of American modernism.³ Zen Buddhism especially was of great interest to artists and writers in the United States following World War II. The histories of modernism traced by the exhibition reflected the well-documented influence of Zen, but did not include another, earlier link—that of Daoism and American Dada.

For my part, I confess that when I wrote my 2005 book about manifestations of Asian philosophy within Western art, I did not really understand

Daoism.⁴ The blending of Daoism and Buddhism over the centuries has made it difficult to separate these two philosophical and religious systems when looking for their putative influence within Western art. Indeed, the full range of resources drawn upon by Marcel Duchamp and his colleagues in the United States is so varied that any new understanding of the relevance of particular Asian traditions to their work provides only fragmentary evidence of these artists' interests and intentions. The evidence of their attraction to Daoism has been largely overlooked until recently and is still regarded in some quarters as insufficiently intellectual or theoretical.⁵ Yet it was precisely the anti-intellectual and anti-theoretical nature of American Dada that Daoism helped to nourish. Drawing on the dynamic concept of reality contained in the *Dao de jing* and the anti-authoritarianism and ironic humor of Zhuangzi, American Dada developed a framework for deconstructing traditional Western understandings of the nature of knowledge—a framework that was at once deeply serious and emphatically humorous.

Daoism has assumed many forms in response to changing conditions. The primary text is the *Dao de jing*, a collection of verses traditionally attributed to Laozi. *Dao de jing* can be translated as “The Classic of This Focus and Its Field,” and one of its central assumptions is that “each particular element in our experience is holographic in the sense that it has implicated within it the entire field of experience.” Access to this double view of reality is achieved by recognizing the unifying energy—*qi* (“chi”)—that flows to us from the world and back into it. Once realized, this skill is put into service for humanity in an effective yet diffuse and inconspicuous manner, in keeping with the elusive principles of the *Dao*.⁶

In contrast with the poetic *Dao de jing*, the anecdotal accounts of Zhuangzi and his followers are laced with emphatic anti-authoritarianism. *Zhuangzi's* anecdotes came to stand for the opposite of Confucianism's ethos of self-sacrifice: specifically, escape from societal pressure to an individual path of freedom, often through the liberating power of humor. According to Burton Watson, Zhuangzi “appears to have known that one good laugh would do more than ten pages of harangue to shake the reader's confidence in the validity of his past assumptions.”⁷

“DADA MEANS NOTHING,” reads the first heading of Tristan Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* 1918. The following year, Raoul Hausmann similarly characterized Dada as “nothing, *i.e.*, everything,” and Francis Picabia, in his own “Dada Manifesto” of 1920 wrote, “[I]t's doing something so that the public can say: ‘We understand nothing, nothing, nothing,’” signing his manifesto, “Francis Picabia / who knows nothing, nothing, nothing.” In 1921 Marcel Duchamp told a reporter, “Dada is nothing. For instance

the Dadaists say that everything is nothing; nothing is good, nothing is interesting, nothing is important.” And in 1922 Tzara asserted, “Dada applies itself to everything, and yet it is nothing. It is the point where the yes and the no and all the opposites meet, not solemnly in the castles of human philosophies, but very simply at street corners, like dogs.”⁸

Where did this anti-intellectual ideal of “nothing” come from? According to those most directly involved, an important source was Daoism, specifically the Daoist notion of “inner-alchemy,” the goal of which, according to Thomas Cleary, is “autonomy, the freedom to be or not to be, to do or not do, according to the needs of the situation at hand. . . . The adept is said to transcend yin and yang [male and female], reaching an undefinable state in which one ‘does nothing yet does anything.’”⁹ Acknowledging the debt to Daoism, Tzara claimed, “Chouang-Dsi [Zhuangzi] was just as Dada as we are. You are mistaken if you take Dada for a modern school, or even for a reaction against the schools of today.” He went on to characterize Dada in terms usually applied to Daoism: “Dada is a state of mind. That is why it transforms itself according to races and events.” Hans Arp similarly stressed the Daoist taproot of Dada: “Dada objects are made of found or manufactured elements, simple or incongruous. The Chinese several millenniums ago, Duchamp and Picabia in the United States, and Schwitters and myself during World War I, were the first to invent and spread these games of wisdom and acumen that were meant to cure human beings of the sheer madness of genius and to lead them back more modestly to their proper place in nature.”¹⁰

Like Arp, who specified Duchamp and Picabia’s work “in the United States,” Richard Huelsenbeck emphasized the American context in his introduction to the 1920 *Dada Almanac*: “One cannot understand Dada; one must experience it. . . . Dada is the neutral point between content and form, male and female, matter and spirit. . . . Dada is the American aspect of Buddhism; it blusters because it knows how to be quiet; it agitates because it is at peace.” Huelsenbeck cites Buddhism, but his language is Daoist. This may suggest a certain lack of clarity—perhaps not surprising from artists interested in Asian philosophies primarily as resources for their own work—but should not be confused with a naïve “Orientalism.” As the poet Walter Mehring observed in “Unveilings,” also published in the *Dada Almanac*: “The East Asian Society protests at the way Dada is wrecking Asiatic culture.”¹¹

Buddhism absorbed key Daoist concepts when it reached China, where Chan (in Japanese: Zen) Buddhism was one result. And Daoism returned the favor, generating hybrid practices that might be labeled “DABU.” *Tao* is the Wade-Giles system of romanization, *Dao* the more recent pinyin. TABU—a contraction of the first two letters of the words “Tao” and “Buddha”—was, in fact, what Marcel Duchamp’s brother-in-law, Jean Crotti, called the version of Dada that he and Suzanne Duchamp



1. Morton Livingston Schamberg and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *God*, ca. 1917. Wood miter box and cast iron plumbing trap, height: 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.; base: 3 \times 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

practiced in Paris during the early 1920s.¹² Significantly, Crotti dated his “second birth” to 1915, the year he moved into a New York studio with Marcel Duchamp.¹³

What was it about Daoism that might have offered a resource for artists around the time of the First World War? Several things, including Daoism’s sexually charged view of the cosmos as a continuously self-balancing system; its emphases on perception and perspective; and perhaps most important, its assumption

of the self-transforming power of the individual and rejection of social conventions and definitions.¹⁴ There is yet another aspect of Daoism that would have appealed to these artists: the Daoist view of creativity. In their philosophical analysis of the *Dao de jing*, Roger Ames and David Hall point out that in the Judeo-Christian worldview, with its omnipotent “maker,” “all subsequent acts of ‘creativity’ are in fact secondary and derivative exercises of power.” In contrast, real creativity “can make sense only in a [Daoist] processual world that admits of ontological parity among its constitutive events and of the spontaneous emergence of novelty. . . . Creativity is always reflexive and is exercised over and with respect to ‘self.’ And since self in a processive world is always communal, creativity is contextual, transactional, and multidimensional.”¹⁵ This analysis reads like a recipe for Dada artworks, which, as Arp wrote, tend to be “made of found or manufactured elements, simple or incongruous.”

It also challenges the art-historical impulse to establish precise authorship for Dada objects and events. Consider *God* (Figure 1), an upside-down plumbing trap affixed to a wooden miter box by the German-born Dada artist and poet Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and the Philadelphia painter Morton Livingston Schamberg, a piece that combines Schamberg’s rigor with von Freytag-Loringhoven’s talent for shock.¹⁶ The title, *God*, might be interpreted humorously, or at least ironically. Indeed, attached to

an unglamorous, usually hidden portion of a plumbing fixture, the title has been read as both, but this does not fully address the artists' intent. How might someone versed in both Daoism and modern plumbing experience this piece, along with its title?

A plumbing trap is a low point in the evacuation of waste, creating a water seal that prevents sewer gas from passing into occupied space. It thus “traps” the free flow of air and, thanks to gravity, it tends to trap other things as well—traps are notorious villains in backed-up plumbing scenarios. Daoism emphasizes the importance of open, uncomplicated, free flow. In fact, the earliest appearance of the word *dao* in the ancient Chinese *Book of Documents* has to do with cutting a channel to prevent the overflowing of riverbanks.¹⁷ From a Daoist perspective, then, *God* evokes the ironic and—yes—funny concept of a constipated omnipotent supreme being, along with the serious thought that there might be other possibilities for conceiving the workings of the universe.

There is another reason *God* is a quintessential example of Dada's Daoist perspective—its existence as embodied metaphor. Because the concepts of Daoism are so abstract, the language of Daoism is the language of metaphor. Nature is a primary source of metaphorical meaning, but so is technology, which is fundamentally the harnessing and channeling of natural forces. The wheel, for example, becomes a metaphor for the fecundity of nothingness in chapter 11 of the *Dao de jing*:

*The thirty spokes converge at one hub,
But the utility of the cart is a function of the nothingness inside the hub. . . .
Thus, it might be something that provides the value,
But it is nothing that provides the utility.*¹⁸

“Cart” might be any vehicle; substitute “art” and we have, “Thirty spokes converge at one hub, but the utility of the art is a function of the nothingness inside”—an image that suggests Duchamp's first readymade, *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), and his concept of the “art coefficient” or “gap.” Duchamp believed that, “What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links which exist. It's not what you see that is art, art is the gap.”¹⁹

Machine technology became American Dada's metaphor, and Daoist inner alchemical descriptions of the rotational circulation of *qi*-energy throughout the body as a hydraulic process, and the intensification of *qi* through a kind of shifting of gears, seems to have provided a model. As early as 1911, Marcel Duchamp integrated the mechanical draftsman's dotted line and directional arrow into his otherwise painterly *Coffee Mill*. Duchamp described this coffee grinder as something “which I made to explode; the grounds are tumbling down beside it; the gear wheels are above, and the knob is seen simultaneously at several points in its circuit, with an arrow to indicate



2. Francis Picabia, *Comic Wedlock*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 5 ³/₈ in. x 6 ft. 6 ³/₄ in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Collection, Given by their family © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York.

movement. Without knowing it, I had opened a window onto something else.” When pressed about whether *Coffee Mill* had any “symbolic significance,” Duchamp replied: “None at all,” adding: “It was a sort of escape hatch. You know, I’ve always felt this need to escape myself.” As a “window” or “escape hatch,” *Coffee Mill* seems to have served not as a symbol of, but a metaphor for escape from habits of perceiving and experiencing reality.²⁰

Another catalyst for American artists was Duchamp’s close friend, Francis Picabia, who arrived in New York at the beginning of June 1915, two weeks before Duchamp. The preceding year, in Paris, Picabia had incorporated a Daoist *yin-yang* symbol into *Comic Wedlock* (Figure 2), a painting whose theme was likely influenced by Duchamp’s 1912–13 plans for *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–23). At this time, Duchamp’s influence on Picabia’s work was evident more in terms of content than style. Still resolutely wrestling with abstraction, Picabia’s use of the yin-yang form was anomalous in both its specificity and its symbolic intent.

Marius de Zayas, in Paris in 1914 on a scouting mission on behalf of Alfred Stieglitz’s gallery 291, suggested a show of Picabia’s recent paintings to follow a planned Picasso show. “Picasso represents in his work the . . . action of matter on the senses,” de Zayas wrote Stieglitz, “while Picabia’s work is the expression of pure thought. Picasso could never work without dealing with objectivity while Picabia forgets matter to express only, maybe the memory of something that has happened.”²¹ The “maybe” suggests hesitation on de Zayas’s part. One thing seems clear: “the memory of something that has happened” was a mental something that—at least in the case of *Comic Wedlock*—had to do with copulation that was not sensual. Other titles of Picabia paintings from this time likewise suggest an experiential mental realm—*Udnie*, a scrambling and contraction of “Uni-dimensionnel”; and *Edtaonisl*, derived from “Etoile danseuse,” or “Star Dancer” (note the *tao* in *Edtaonisl*).²² Picabia was struggling to give sensual form to mental experience in Paris. It is paradoxically perfect

that the door to representation of the “uni-dimensional” or immaterial would finally open to him in the context of the resolutely material culture of the United States.

Upon his arrival, Picabia immersed himself in the goings-on surrounding Stieglitz’s gallery. The July-August 1915 issue of the large-format journal *291*, a successor to Stieglitz’s *Camera Work* edited by de Zayas, featured six powerful Picabia portrait-drawings of *291* associates for which machines and technology provided the metaphors and American advertising the model. Picabia’s “portrait” of Stieglitz appeared on the cover (Figure 3).

That Picabia intended to portray Stieglitz as an apostle of American modernism seems clear from the inscription: “Here, here is Stieglitz, faith, and love”—surely an affectionate riff on the apostle Paul’s assurance to the Corinthians, “So abide faith, hope, and love.” Here, Stieglitz is the hope. Picabia’s icon for Stieglitz is made up of two mechanical elements: a camera with its bellows detached, preventing recording of exterior images on the photographic plate; and a similarly disengaged brake and gearshift—controls for starting and stopping.²³ Only the lens at the top of the camera seems to be in active mode, stretched heavenward, as if anticipating Stieglitz’s future cloud-portrait “equivalents,” and focused on the word, “IDEAL.”

The detached bellows has elicited a wide range of comments about its possible meaning, from implications regarding Stieglitz’s sexual potency to Picabia’s supposed opinion of the success of gallery *291*.²⁴ From the Daoist perspective, however, the bellows may suggest something quite different. A bellows is the expandable part of a camera, but it is also a device for generating a strong current of air. In chapter five of the *Dao de jing*, the bellows becomes a technological metaphor for the indeterminate source of spontaneous and inexhaustible phenomena: “What is between the heavens and the earth resembles a bellows that is empty yet never



3. Francis Picabia, *Ici, C'est Ici Stieglitz Foi et Amour*, 1915. Relief print on paper, 14 15/16 × 9 in. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Katharine Graham © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo © 2011 National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.



4. Alfred Stieglitz, *Songs of the Sky in Five Pictures (No. 3)*, 1923. Gelatin silver print, 4 3/8 × 3 1/2 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Alfred Stieglitz © 2011 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo © 2011 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

exhausted; put into motion, it yields more and more.”²⁵

In Daoism, the earth is conceived as *yin*—female/receptive/dark—and the heavens as *yang*—male/aggressive/light. They are opposites whose union generates constantly morphing phenomena. What Picabia’s detached bellows implies is that Stieglitz is a catalyst for change, but his “camera work” cannot be portrayed only in terms of the mechanically recordable visible world. Stieglitz called this his “‘anti-photographic’ search—the vision of both the inner and the outer eye”²⁶—a double view of reality conveyed in the famous first chapter of the *Dao de jing*:

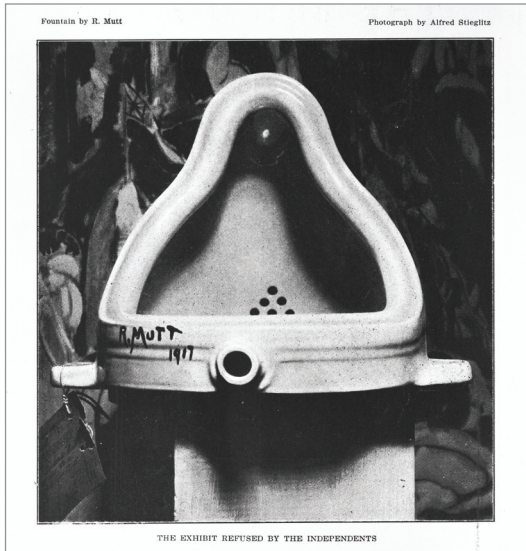
*Nameless is the source of heaven and earth; named, it is the mother of all things. This is why when one is steadily free of the passions, one sees one’s spiritual essence; immersed in the sensual, one sees bounded form. These two things have a single origin and are called by different names. One calls them both profound. They are profound, doubly deep. This is the portal to all things.*²⁷

Picabia’s brake and gearshift may refer to what is required in order to achieve this complete vision of reality. Having both your gearshift and brake disengaged just might be the perfect modern metaphor for being “steadily free of the passions.”

Picabia’s “ideal” is printed in German gothic type—perhaps a reference to Stieglitz’s German background and education. Jay Bochner has written insightfully about how often the word “ideal” appears in Picabia’s work, “in exactly the same position on the page as here”: hovering at the top.²⁸ But it is also helpful to look at what Stieglitz had to say about his cloud-portraits (Figure 4):

*Are the sky and water not one, if one truly sees them? Are they not, after all, to be seen as interchangeable? In fact, I feel that all experiences in life are one, if truly seen. . . . How is it possible to conceive of black without white? Why reject either the one or the other, since both exist? I feel the duality of world forces forever at work. But it is when conflict hovers about a point—a focal point—and light is in the ascendancy, that I am moved.*²⁹

Stieglitz's *yin-yang* “focal point” found an earlier manifestation as a point of light in Duchamp's *Fountain*, surely the exemplar of how Dada artworks served as “contextual, transactional, and multidimensional” objects of public art practice. A photograph of *Fountain* (Figure 5) taken at 291 by Alfred Stieglitz (and the only surviving visual record of the piece) appeared in the same issue of *The Blind Man* as Louise Norton's apologia “Buddha of the Bathroom.” According to Beatrice Wood, the artist who apparently made the first contact with Stieglitz about taking the picture, Stieglitz and Duchamp had a long discussion about how to photograph the piece. Stieglitz, Wood wrote, “took great pains with the lighting.”³⁰



5. Alfred Stieglitz, photograph of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, as published in Beatrice Wood, *The Blind Man*, No. 2, May 1917. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

Duchamp had signed the urinal “R. Mutt,” purportedly after Mott ironworks, a plumbing supply company. Mutt, pronounced with a French accent, sounds like the English word “moot,” which can mean “meeting” (evoking Tzara's two dogs, or mutts, meeting); or “mute”—“silent”; but also perhaps shorthand for “mutable” (the same word in both French and English), meaning “changeable.”³¹ “A female friend of mine,” Duchamp wrote his sister Suzanne, “using a male pseudonym, . . . submitted a porcelain urinal as a sculpture.” In a letter to Georgia O'Keeffe, Stieglitz indicated that he, too, was under the impression that a young woman had submitted the urinal.³² It is possible Duchamp was simply acknowledging the participation of one of his many women friends in this caper, but it seems at least as likely that the ambisexual authorship of *Fountain* reflected how Duchamp, shortly to become Rose Sélavy (his female alter-ego), understood *himself*.

Daoism emphasizes the vital role of *yin*, the female aspect of the world. Chapter six of the *Dao de jing* expands upon the portal or gateway metaphor we encountered in chapter one, and the generative, self-replenishing bellows-energy of chapter five:

*The life-force of the valley never dies; this is called the mysterious female.
The gateway of the mysterious female is called the root of heaven and of earth.
It is endless and only seems to be there.
Using it, one never tires.*³³

“In this chapter and pervasively in the text,” Ames and Hall write, “the image of the dark, moist, and accommodatingly vacant interior of the vagina is used as an analogy for [the fecundity of emptiness].” The *Dao de jing* presents the female aspect as something to be cultivated. In chapter 28, we read:

*Know the male
Yet safeguard the female
And be a river gorge to the world.
As a river gorge to the world,
You will not lose your real potency,
And not losing your real potency,
You return to the state of the newborn babe.³⁴*

The return of the mind to its original, pre-conditioned state—the mind of a “newborn babe”—is the goal of Daoist practice in general, and Daoist inner alchemical practice in particular. Lydie Fischer Sarazin-Levassor, who was briefly married to Duchamp in 1927, quoted his advice to her: “Find yourself, the pure self, like a child newborn. . . . An equilibrium is maintained, as in chess. You have to try to see everything as if for the first time, all the time.”³⁵ A Daoist metaphor for this mental equilibrium is a pearl of light between and behind the eyes—the “center of spirit” in Daoist meditation practice. This “focal point,” to use Stieglitz’s term, is clearly visible, thanks to his careful lighting, in the “head” of the Buddha into which Stieglitz and Duchamp transformed a urinal.³⁶

Another notable feature of this photograph of *Fountain* is the moist darkness of the protruding hole where the genitals would be, a feature that emphasizes its womb-like aspect, and which would surface again over 50 years later in Duchamp’s *Étant donnés*. To truly comprehend what strikes the American mind (still!) as Duchamp’s shocking exploitation of sexuality, is to understand why *Fountain* was not a cynical gesture of “pissing on” the establishment, but an affectionate, humorous, and tough-minded *koan*-like Daoist challenge to both the American art community and the American public.

“Behind [Duchamp’s] works, another world *really* exists,” his friend Robert Lebel asserted. About the unintelligibility of these works, Lebel wrote: “because of what he calls his ‘delay in glass,’ [Duchamp] seems to have had in mind the anonymity of future archaeological excavations, after the final collapse of our own civilization.”³⁷ As we approach the hundredth anniversary of the start of the *Large Glass* and the fiftieth anniversary of the completion of *Étant donnés*, could we be witnessing the “final

collapse” of the walls that frame our Western civilization and its materialist view of reality? Can we be archaeologists enough to recognize the reality contained within Duchamp’s “delay in glass”? Dada artworks were not intended to inspire disinterested contemplation or intellectual cognition; they are metaphors for reality, nothings intended to open the world’s mind to new somethings. “Dada never preached,” Tristan Tzara wrote in 1953, in a statement translated by Duchamp; “having no theory to defend, it showed truths in action and it is as action that what is commonly called art will henceforth have to be considered.”³⁸

Notes

1. For some implications, see Robert Lanza with Bob Berman, *Biocentrism: How Life and Consciousness are the Keys to Understanding the True Nature of the Universe* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2009).
2. As Edward Carpenter wrote early in the last century, “Forty or fifty years ago the materialistic view of the world was much in evidence. . . . Since then, however, partly through a natural reaction and partly through the influx of Eastern ideas, there has been a great swing of the pendulum”; Carpenter, *The Art of Creation: Essays on the Self and Its Powers* (1904; London: G. Allen, 1907), 10.
3. Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009).
4. Jacquelynn Baas, *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
5. An important factor has been the post-war intellectual tendency to define Daoist/Buddhist perspectives as “spiritual” rather than as theories of mind, to be dismissed along with theosophy and other forms of Western occultism and “new age” philosophy. This may change, thanks to the investigations of neuroscientists like Jill Bolte Taylor; see, for example, Taylor’s *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist’s Personal Journey* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006).
6. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 2003), 13, 60, 18. Thomas Cleary, *The Taoist Classics*, vol. 1 (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 3–4.
7. Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 5.
8. For the Tzara quotes, see Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Boston: G. K. Hall, [1951] 1981), 77, 251. Raoul Hausmann, “Was ist dada?” [text collage], *Der Dada*, no. 2, ed. Hausmann (Berlin 1919); reprinted Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, 1972, 8; trans. and quoted by Dorothee Brill, *Shock and the Senseless in Dada and Fluxus* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 72. Francis Picabia, “Dada Manifesto,” trans. Margaret I. Lippard from 391, no. 12 (Paris, March 1920), published in Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Dadas on Art: Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and Others* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 166. For the Duchamp quote, see Margery Rex, “‘Dada’ Will Get You if You Don’t Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here,” *New York Evening Journal*, 29 January 1921; quoted by Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), 140.
9. Early western translations of *Dao de jing* and *Zhuangzi* include, Stanislas Julien, *Le Livre de la voie et de la vertu par le philosophe Lao-Tseu* (Paris: L’Imprimerie Royale, 1842) and John Chalmers, *The Speculations on Metaphysics, Polity, and Morality of “The Old Philosopher,” Lau-Tse* (London: Trubner, 1868). Also important were James Legge’s “The Texts of Taoism,” vols. 39 and 40 of F. Max Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891); Paul Carus, *Lao-Tze’s Tao-The-King* (Chicago: Open Court, 1898), *Chinese Philosophy* (1902), and *Chinese Thought* (1907); and Léon Wieger, *Taoïsme*, 2 vols. (Xian Xian: Imp. de Xian Xian, 1911–13). For the quote, see Thomas Cleary, *Understanding Reality: A Taoist Alchemical Classic by Chang Po-tuan with a Concise Commentary by Liu I-ming* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 5.
10. For the Tzara quote, see Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, 250, 251. Jean (Hans) Arp, “Dadaland” (1948), in *Collected French Writings: Poems, Essays, Memories*, ed. Marcel Jean, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974), 235.

11. Richard Huelsenbeck, *The Dada Almanac* (Berlin, 1920), ed. and trans. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas, 1993), 9–10, 75.
12. A similar interpretation, minus Daoism, was offered by Jean-Hubert Martin, who pointed out that inverting the syllables of TABU yields BUTA, a pun on “Buddha” (“TABU: Artistic Movement or Religion?” in *TABU DADA: Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp, 1915–1922*, ed. William A. Camfield and Jean-Hubert Martin [Kunsthalle Bern, 1983], 88). Buddhist as well as Daoist concepts abound in Crotti’s art and writings, which warrant further study.
13. See Crotti’s autobiographical statement regarding his “second birth . . . without umbilical cord” reproduced in Camfield and Martin, *TABU DADA*, 82; “Chronology,” 129.
14. For a period discussion of Daoism’s radical anti-authoritarianism, see Charles F. Horne, *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, vol. 12, Medieval China (New York: Parke, Austin, and Lipscomb, 1917), 2.
15. Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 17.
16. On the authorship of this work, see Michael R. Taylor, “New York,” in *Dada*, ed. Leah Dickerson (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2006), 289.
17. Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 57.
18. *Ibid.*, 91.
19. Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (1969; New York: Abrams, 1970), 197.
20. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Rod Padgett (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 31. I have modified the translations, substituting “grounds” for “coffee” (*poudre* in the French) and changing “loophole” to “escape hatch” (*une sorte d’échappatoire*). For more on *Coffee Mill*, see *Smile of the Buddha*, 83, 85.
21. From a letter of 30 June 1914, in the Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Yale University, quoted in William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 68.
22. On these titles see Roger I. Rothman, “Between Music and the Machine,” *Toutfait*, vol. 2, issue 4, 2002, note 14 (www.toutfait.com). On the intersection of Stieglitz, Picabia, and a “machine aesthetic” see Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 77ff.
23. See Jay Bochner, *An American Lens* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 144.
24. Pepe Karmel cogently observes that the bellows appears to have collapsed because it has torn loose from the lens, which is unnaturally extended in its pursuit of the ideal; see Karmel, “Francis Picabia, 1915: The Sex of a New Machine,” in *Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries*, ed. Sarah Greenough (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 216–17.
25. Julien, *Le Livre de la voie*, 18 (texts from Julien are the author’s translation).
26. Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: Introduction to an American Seer* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1960), 20.
27. Julien, *Le Livre de la voie*, 2.
28. Bochner, *American Lens*, 145.
29. Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 36.
30. Beatrice Wood, *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985), 30. See also William A. Camfield, “Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*: Its History and Aesthetics in the Context of 1917,” in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 74.
31. Duchamp’s homosexual friend Charles Demuth spelled Mutt “Mutte” in a letter to an art critic from mid-April 1917. (Camfield, “Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*,” 72 and 90 n. 28, where Camfield speculates that “the ‘e’ added to Mutt in this letter may have been intended to suggest a female identity.”)
32. Duchamp letter of April 11, 1917, in Francis E. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affectionately Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (Ghent: Ludion Press, 2000), 47. Stieglitz’s letter is summarized by Camfield in Kuenzli and Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 91 n. 39. Duchamp

may have asked Beatrice Wood to make the first contact with Stieglitz precisely to give him this impression; but she recorded that it was Duchamp who worked with Stieglitz on the actual photography of the piece.

33. Julien, *Le Livre de la voie*, 21.

34. Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 86, 120.

35. Lydie Fischer Sarazin-Levassor, *A Marriage in Check: The Heart of the Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelor, Even*, trans. Paul Edwards (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2007), 48.

36. Lu K'uan yü (Charles Luk), *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy & Immortality* (San Francisco: Weiser Books, 1973), xvi ("prenatal vitality [is] transmuted into a bright pearl that illuminates the brain"). Stieglitz himself described the form as that of a Buddha; see Camfield in Kuenzli and Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 75–76.

37. Robert Lebel, "Portrait of Marcel Duchamp as a Dropout," in *Étant donné*, no. 7, 2006, 74. Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959), 69.

38. From the broadside "catalogue" to the exhibition, "DADA 1916–1923," Sidney Janis Gallery, April 15 to May 9, 1953.