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Things to Make and Do

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Agamben argues that, in the art of the twentieth century, two forms of art thematize a fracturing of the regime of production: in the case of conceptual ready-mades, the reproducible cannot take on the status of originality; in the case of pop art, that which “ought” to be unreproducible becomes just that. In these cases, Agamben contends, the “bringing forth” of art continues to take place, but what is brought forth is στέρησης [sterēsis], privation, an art which is necessarily alienated. This privation, in Agamben’s terms, must be understood through the dyad of ενεργεια [energeia] and δυναμις [dynamis] to insist that potentiality, unactualized δυναμις is the “existence of a non-Being, a presence of an absence”, which is to say that δυναμις is only what it is because of its relationship to the potential not to take place, to αδυναμία. I argue, following Katschthaler, that a similar case must be made for Cage’s 4’33” (1952), in that it represents the possibility of inaction: the performer could always have not played. I contend that, however, the bringing forth of absence is necessarily, a sort of dead end since, in an important sense, nothing has already taken place: the performer of 4’33” does not have the option not to play, without the performance ceasing to be a performance of 4’33”. It is my claim here, if only provisionally, that Cage’s turn to indeterminacy, and in particular his use of transparencies in his Variations piece from Variations I (1958) onwards, may be seen as a way out of, or a solution to, the impasse of a privative abyss, be that as found in conceptual art or as formulated in 4’33”.

Keywords: Energeia; Dynamis; Sterēsis; John Cage

Art, as such, is a comparatively modern phenomenon.¹ As Rancière rightly observes, ‘if art is to exist it is not enough for there to be painters or musicians, dancers or actors. [...] For art to exist, what is required is a specific gaze and form of thought to identify it’ (Rancière 2009 [2004], 6). What exactly art and labour might have to do with one another is far from simple, even though, perhaps especially because, at a certain point—and without any nostalgic longing for a time somehow ‘before alienation’—the idea that work and labour might be conceived of separately would have been literally unthinkable. As Agamben describes it,

[i]n the *Symposium* Plato tells us about the full original resonance of the word ποίησις [*poiēsis*]: ‘any cause that brings into existence something that was not there before is Ποίησις’. Every time that something is produced, that is, brought from concealment and nonbeing into the light of presence, there is ποίησις, production, poetry. (Agamben 1999 [1994], 59–60)

From the perspective of Socratic thought, any sort of production into presence, then, might be conceived of as ‘poetry’ in this sense: ‘[t]o the extent that in it everything brings itself spontaneously into presence, even nature, φύσις [*physis*], has the character of ποίησις’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 60). Rancière rightly stresses that readings of Plato which suggest that he ‘places art under the yoke of politics’ are, for this reason, fundamentally flawed ‘since art did not exist for [Plato] but only arts, ways of doing and making’ (Rancière 2004, 21). The distinction, then, is not between the making of art objects and non-art objects, like tools. According to Plato’s description, both fall under the general category of ποίησις and, moreover, the idea of distinguishing between such types of object would not have been recognisable in the ancient Greek world. Instead, it is precisely the question of φύσις, which is key. Those things which exist by φύσις, Aristotle observes in the second book of the *Physics*, contain their own ἀρχή [*archē*], ‘that is, the principle and origin of [their] entry into presence’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 60). It is on these grounds—where the principle and origin of the entry into presence is not contained within that which is produced—that a distinction may be drawn: such things start from *technics*, where τέχνη [*technē*] was the name that designated both the activity of the craftsman who shapes a vase and that of the activity of the artist who molds a statue or writes a poem’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 60; see, too, Stiegler 1998 [1994]). Yet, both that category of things produced by φύσις and that by τέχνη share the character of ποίησις, since they remain products of a ‘cause that brings into existence something that was not there before’. Moreover, they share the taking on of a shape (μορφή και εἶδος [*morphē kai eidos*]), it being, precisely, ‘in a shape and starting from a shape that whatever is produced enters into presence’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 60). Mittelstrass explains the necessary intertwining of these productions—where according to Aristotle one might understand that ποίησις by τέχνη is an imitation of φύσις, which is to say that art imitates nature, and, according to Plato’s *Timaeus*, φύσις, nature itself, is the result of the ποίησις of the demiurge, who imitates the forms, the ideas themselves—in his assertion, following Nicholas of Cusa, that

acting (or creating) nature (*natura naturans*) is the paradigm of all *poiēsis*; *poiēsis* consists in *imitating* (the poietic) nature. Linking the *Timaeus*-paradigm (i.e. Plato’s account of the genesis of the world) to the report on creation by describing the natural thing (φύσει ὄν [*physei on*]) in the Aristotelian sense as a created thing (τέχνη ὄν [*technē on*]), strengthens the poietic analogy: nature itself is nature brought about. Imitating nature, accordingly, is imitating a producing (or creating) activity which constitutes nature itself. (Mittelstrass 1988, 21)

In this sense, as Luft describes it, the Greeks, precisely because they did not take ‘upon themselves the originary power’ of the God of Nominalism, never faced the ‘crisis’ of ‘making’, since ‘[f]or them the privileged form of activity was contemplation of pre-given formal order’ (Luft 2003, 17). Nevertheless, as Rancière insists,

[i]f a slave understands the language of its rulers, however, he does not ‘possess’ it. Plato states that artisans cannot be put in charge of the shared or common elements of the community because they do *not have the time* to devote themselves to anything other than their work. They cannot be *somewhere else* because *work will not wait*. The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. (Rancière 2004, 12)

The intertwined couplet of *φύσις* whose ground is *ποίησις* whose ground is *φύσις*, and so on, then, is akin to the one Rancière describes as the poietic-mimetic regime of images, ‘*poetic* in the sense that it identifies the arts [...] within a classification of ways of doing and making, and it consequently defines proper ways of doing and making as well as means of assessing imitations’, while it is ‘*representative* insofar as it is the notion of representation or *mimēsis* that organizes these ways of doing, making, seeing, and judging’ (Rancière 2004, 22). By contrast, the aesthetic regime of images, which succeeds the poietic-mimetic, ‘no longer occurs via a division within ways of doing and making, but it is based on distinguishing a sensible mode of being specific to artistic products. The word aesthetics does not refer to a theory of sensibility, taste, and pleasure for art amateurs. It strictly refers to the specific mode of being of the objects of art’ (Rancière 2004, 22). It is, then, Rancière’s implicit insistence that the ‘distribution of the sensible’—that is what is visible or invisible to or within a particular (artistic) community as belonging appropriately to it—has been, perfectly sensibly, distributed in radical different configurations that is my principal interest here. This might be taken to imply, too, that a *re*-distribution of the sensible might be undertaken and, too, that the disparities between what can be, in Rancière’s terms, *perceived* may account for at least some of the disparities in aesthetic judgement. Such a redistribution may even, or especially, become tangible, I argue here, with respect to an art form which insists on and is made of its own absence or *transparency*, in ways which nonetheless engage directly with the terms of what it might be that is *pro*-duced.

Agamben, too, argues that something of great significance occurs at the point that ‘aesthetics’ arises, breaking, as Agamben sees it, the ‘unitary status of the things not coming from nature (*μὴ φύσει ὄντα* [*mi physis onta*]) as *τέχνη*’. Heidegger, at least the earlier Heidegger, makes a similar claim. In his 1924–1925 lecture course—ostensibly on Plato’s *Sophist*, but characteristically ranging far wider than his named topic—he distinguishes, in Aristotelian vein, beings of nature [*φύσει ὄντα*], which contain not only their *ἀρχή*—the condition(s) of their entry into presence—but also their *τέλος* [*telos*], their goal or final end, from made things [*τέχνη ὄντα*]. In this case, Heidegger, interpreting Aristotle, claims that the *εἶδος*—the form, the shape, the idea—

imagined in the *ψυχή* [*psyche*] of the producer should be designated the *ἀρχή* of a made thing, an *ἔργον* [*ergon*]: the *ἀρχή* of such a work does not lie within the thing itself; indeed, at the point of its making reaching completion—at the point at which the *ἔργον* has moved into the light of presence—it is sundered from its *ἀρχή*. *Τέχνη*, then, is, as Tchir puts it, ‘the know-how that guides production’, the *ἀρχή* of which is, in turn, the *εἶδος* (Tchir 2011, 59). Yet the completed work, the *ἔργον*, is necessarily besides, to the side of, *τέχνη*, because as Heidegger insists ‘inasmuch as the *telos* constitutes the *arche*, the *arche* is in a certain degree not at the disposal of *techne*’ (Radloff 2007, 354), since the final *τέλος* of the object is determined by its use: again, once the work has moved from concealment into unconcealment it is, axiomatically, no longer the object of *ποίησις* and, since the work was the goal of that poietic process, it is to the side, too, of the maker. In sum, as Tchir summarises the Aristotelian-Heideggerian position, ‘[*t*]echne possesses the *ergon* as an object of its mode of *aletheia* only insofar as the *ergon* is not finished; *techne* is only concerned with beings insofar as they are in the process of becoming’ (Tchir 2011, 60). Accordingly, the *ἀρχή* of *τέχνη* becomes unavailable, absent, once the work comes to presence. One might, not insignificantly, be reminded of the sort of absence—privation—Agamben finds in Aristotelian potentiality:

in its originary structure, *dynamis*, potentiality, maintains itself in relation to its own privation, its own *steresis*, its own non-Being. This relation constitutes the essence of potentiality. To be potential means: to be one’s own lack, *to be in relation to one’s own incapacity*. Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality *are capable of their own impotentiality*; and only in this way do they become potential. (Agamben 1999 [1986], 182)

I will return to this presently, but for the moment it is important to note that it is for this reason, Taminiaux argues, that *ποίησις* is, in Aristotle’s view, inferior to *πράξις* [*praxis*], since the *τέλος* of *ποίησις* is a made thing which is relative only to its use in achieving *other* ends:

if human activity only consisted of fabrication, life would remain imprisoned within an infinite circle of means and ends, we would merely choose something for the sake of something else, and this endless process of usefulness would render every desire futile and vain [...]. This vanity does not affect *praxis*. *Pros ti*—which translates as the ‘for-this-or-that-end’ to which *poiēsis* is bound and made subservient—is very different from *hou heneka* of *praxis*, the ‘for-the-sake-of-’ directed at life, beautiful and good, and worthy of being sought for its own sake. *Poiēsis* is subservient, while *praxis* being oriented toward living-well is free because its desire is liberated from sheer necessities and usefulness and acting on this basis makes a singular existence worthy of being commemorated or commended as exemplary. (Taminiaux 1997 [1992], 37–38)

Agamben posits a ‘doubling’, or at least a split, in the ‘mode of presence of the things produced by man’, ascribing its cause precisely to the alienated labour occasioned by

the first industrial revolution (Agamben 1999 [1994], 60). Products *sensu stricto* may well come from τέχνη, but are, by virtue of industrial alienation, always already distant from their formal ἀρχή, which is the human, ἄνθρωπος [*anthropos*]. By contrast, then, the artwork—characterised by *originality* or *authenticity*—exhibits an intimate relationship with its origin. It does not *contain* its origin, but does *derive* from it and, moreover, ‘maintains with its formal principle such a relation of proximity as excludes the possibility that its entry may be in some way reproducible, almost as though the shape produced itself into presence in the unrepeatable act of aesthetic creation’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 61).

Thus, the products of man’s production into presence may be conceived of as twofold. First, there exist infinitely, identically reproducible items (products ‘proper’), which are alienated from their origins (indeed, Agamben insists that reproducibility may be understood as the ‘*paradigmatic relationship of non-proximity with the origin*’, recalling the necessary sundering of τέχνη from its own ἀρχή). Second, though, there exist items which exhibit ‘such a relation of proximity [with their ἀρχή] as excludes the possibility that its entry may be in some way reproducible, almost as though the shape produced itself into presence in the unrepeatable act of aesthetic creation’, the ψυχή-εἶδος pair here appearing as if a shadow which the items cannot shake, a shadow which, as noted below will come to envelop the object itself. In the artwork, then, Agamben contends, it *seems* that non-alienated labour persists, ‘a condition in which manual and intellectual labor are not yet divided and in which, therefore, the productive act maintains all its integrity and uniqueness’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 61).

Just this split became thematised in the art of the twentieth century, Agamben contends, in Duchamp’s ready-mades and in pop art, in particular. That Duchamp is often held to be the founder, the formal ἀρχή, in the case of conceptual art is hardly insignificant here. Agamben’s claims for the status of the readymade are only emphasised by Kosuth’s well-known claim that ‘[a]ll art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually’ (Kosuth 1999 [1969], 164). In Duchamp’s case, an object which is produced by alienated labour is brought into proximity with the aesthetic ἀρχή, even if a formal origin which is not, in technical terms, its own. By virtue of that proximity, the readymade is, itself, alienated and ‘forced it into the sphere of art in a sort of gratuitous act’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 63). By contrast, in pop art, that which, as production into presence takes place with all the proximity to the ἀρχή guaranteed by the aesthetic regime, nevertheless takes on the form of the reproducible, ‘denuded of its aesthetic potential and that paradoxically assumes the status of the industrial product’ (Agamben 1999 [1994], 63). Something important happens to the artwork in this situation:

In both cases—except for the instant of the alienation effect—the passage from one to the other status is impossible: that which is reproducible cannot become original, and that which is irreproducible cannot be reproduced. The object cannot attain

presence and remains enveloped in shadow, suspended in a kind of disquieting limbo between being and nothing. (Agamben 1999 [1994], 63–64)

Agamben argues that, though this may remain *ποίησις*, it is a *ποίησις* where what is brought into being is privation (*στέρησις* [*sterēsis*]), which is to say absence is brought to presence, non-being is brought into being. Conceptual art (and pop art too, to be sure) constitute the extreme, alienated face (*εἶδος*) of *ποίησις* (Agamben 1999 [1994], 64). As Agamben insists, ‘privation is like a face’, which is to say that absence is, too, an (artistic) idea, but one which is brought into the light of presence without anything necessarily being *done*.

Conceptual art and pop art, then, allow one to encounter the coming to presence of privation. Yet these feel like end points: the sundering is such that, even though Agamben re-thinks Aristotle’s *ενεργεια–δυναμις* [*energeia–dynamis*] dyad to insist that potentiality, unactualised *δυναμις*, is the ‘existence of a non-Being, a presence of an absence’—which is to say that *δυναμις* is only what it is because of its relationship to the potential *not* to take place, to *αδυναμία* [*adynamia*]*—*that possibility is surely moribund in these cases, because nothing *has already taken place* (Agamben 1999 [1986], 177–184). Art would be, in a different sense from the one Taminiaux ascribes to Aristotle’s reading of *ποίησις*, trapped in another infinite circle if the situation Agamben describes were where matters were allowed to rest, indefinitely receding into the shadows. For all that, he is surely persuasive in his expansion of Aristotle’s terms:

When we do not see (that is, when our vision is potential), we nevertheless distinguish darkness from light; *we see darkness*. [...] if potentiality were, for example, only the potentiality for vision and if it existed only as such in the actuality of light, we could never experience darkness (nor hear silence, in the case of the potentiality to hear). But human beings can, instead, see shadows (*to skotos*), they can experience darkness: they have the *potential* not to see, the *possibility of privation*. (Agamben 1999 [1986], 180–181)

The potentiality of hearing must then, according to Katschthaler’s reading of this passage, and following Themistius’s commentary of *De Anima*, be the hearing of silence (Katschthaler 2016, 176). The paradigm case Katschthaler deploys, then, as an art object is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Cage’s *4’33”* (1952), taking as his guide both Aristotle’s own example of a harpist, who has the potential both to play and not to play, and Agamben’s extrapolation of that:

This means that, even though every pianist necessarily has the potential to play and the potential to not-play, Glenn Gould is, however, the only one who can not not-play, and, directing his potentiality not only to the act but to his own impotence, he plays, so to speak, with his potential to not-play. (Agamben 1993 [1990], 35)

Whether this need *only* be Glenn Gould is surely beside the point here. More significant is the analysis of Gould's playing by François Delalande which Katschthaler cites, in which

Delalande concludes that the pianist's two hands incorporate two orientations, only one of which is directed towards the production of the sound. The other, however, incarnates his reading of the score [...]. We may also conclude that these gestures therefore do not only accompany the production of the sound object, but also make perceivable Gould's potential to not-play, to read the score and incorporate his reading in gestures which do not produce sound. (Katschthaler 2016, 167)

Perhaps Gould neatly makes clear this idea, but surely such drastic performance activity only becomes visible (or, for that matter, audible) under a particular distribution of the sensible, one which is thematised, just as Katschthaler argues, in Cage's 4'33", since the pianist is, though embodied, presenting the potential of not-playing as the very substance of the piece. One might well recall, in reading Katschthaler's description of Gould reading the score and embodying that reading in silent gestures, David Tudor's description of the change of mindset for which 4'33" called, from experiencing to watching time (see Iddon 2013, 44).

Yet 4'33" is necessarily radically different from the case of the harpist or that of Glenn Gould. It makes *visible* that the pianist could always have not played, always had the option to withhold his or her labour, but does so in a context wherein the pianist must labour *not to play*. It reveals, in fact, the truth of what Aristotle said about the harpist and, to this extent, Katschthaler is precisely correct that 4'33" has something important to say about the coming to presence of absence and that the condition of this is the *δυναμις-αδυναμία* dyad. Yet, because it *represents* this *στέρ-ησις*, in representing it the pianist loses (or declines) the possibility of acting. Thought otherwise, to perform the piece the pianist must not-act: *δυναμις* and *αδυναμία* remain folded inescapably in on one another. In short, the performer of 4'33" does not have the option not to not-play, without the performance ceasing to be a performance of 4'33". For the pianist to decline to play 4'33", it would be necessary for the performer to play something else (or otherwise to engage in a non-silent way with the instrument or, as the case might be, with the audience), but the pianist's not-playing is itself a performance. It is a representation of not-doing, rather than not-doing itself and, as such, surely remains too, classically, art. 4'33" musically defines—brings to light—that *δυναμις* subsists in its relationship to *αδυναμία*, but does so in the same way that pop art and conceptual art do in the way Agamben describes them, in the form of a perpetual retreat into the shadows.

It is my contention here, if only provisionally, that Cage's turn to indeterminacy, and in particular his use of transparencies in his *Variations* piece from *Variations I* (1958) onwards, may be seen as a way out of, or a solution to, the impasse of a privative abyss, be that as found in conceptual art or as formulated in 4'33", a way, as it were, of moving *beyond* silence, beyond the poetics of privation. As Shultis describes the first in the series:

The transparencies consist of lines and dots that are then superimposed. According to the score instructions, ‘The 5 lines are: lowest frequency, simplest overtone structure, greatest amplitude, least duration, and earliest occurrence within a decided upon time. Perpendiculars from points to lines give distances to be measured or simply observed’. In other words, the distances between lines and points would determine, one assumes according to a performer’s own criteria, issues of frequency, overtones, amplitude, duration, and when sounds would begin. Cage’s final instructions are certainly among the most indeterminate he had ever written: ‘Any number of performers; any kind and number of instruments’. (Shultis 2002, 34)

In making this proposal I necessarily agree with Kim that ‘[i]t was a [...] symbolic gesture for Cage to include [...] transparencies in his scores after 1958, physically transferring to the performer the material items of his compositional process rather than presenting a final score without these working materials’, though in a way which rather expands upon her terms that ‘the outcome of *Variations I* was much less foreseeable, giving no stipulations as to instrumentation, form, or final notated score’ (Kim 2008, 68), or, better sees in this a way of organising the art object as a product which presents itself precisely as in potential through its radical incompleteness, precisely holding the *δυναμης–αδυναμία* dyad in tension at the level of the piece, but wherein the performer’s activities involve a ‘making’ which is, implicitly at least, surely directed to *οὐ ἕνεκα [hou heneka]*, the ‘for-its-own-sake’ of *πρᾶξις*, as opposed to the particular ends of *ποίησις*.

The very use of transparencies indeed points toward such a reading in multiple ways: first, of course, their literal transparency speaks of a certain sort of physical absence; second, even to begin to work on the piece, they must be overlaid, such that they insist on their incompleteness in this way as well as in the way that they require further work on behalf of the performer; third, in the world of the 1950s, transparencies would also have retained the trace of their utility, since it precisely through such diazotypes that manuscripts were reproduced by publishers, a fact surely well known to Cage through his work with Henry Cowell’s New Music Edition.

Viewed in this context, it is difficult not to see a close relationship between Duchamp’s *3 stoppages étalon* (1913–1914) and Cage’s early *Variations* pieces, most particularly the first two in the series, not least because it coincides in such timely fashion with Cage’s own contemporary description of the use of transparencies to transcribe matter from Bečvář’s *Atlas Eclipticalis* for Cage’s piece of the same name, which was, he said in his report to Wesleyan University regarding the time he spent there within their Center for Advanced Studies, ‘an attempt to introduce into music the “ready-made” of Marcel Duchamp’ (Cage [1961], quoted in Silverman 2010, 228). The clearest relationship is that the physical actions involved in the work on each comprise, simply, the dropping of lines onto a surface. In the case of Duchamp’s stoppages

[t]hree different threads, one meter in length, were dropped (or allowed to fall freely, depending on one's perspective) onto a canvas painted Prussian blue, and glued into place. The resulting impressions, capturing the curved outline of their chance configurations, were then permanently affixed to glass plate strips. These plates served as imprints for the preparation of three wood templates. (Judovitz 1995, 47)

Those templates, then, 'distort the length of the meter through curvature but in doing so [...] demonstrate [...] the recognition that the meter itself as a unit of length is generated through approximation: the straightening out, as it were, of a curved meridian' (Judovitz 1995, 48). Though it might seem as if the art object, the completed work, is or ought to be the curved wooden templates, the dropped—and mounted, preserved and fixed in glass like a Victorian butterfly—threads are no less integral. Duchamp stressed that '[t]his experiment was made in 1913 to imprison and preserve forms obtained through chance, my chance' (Duchamp, quoted in Molderings 2010 [2006], 83). If not quite yet a readymade, the energy is closed and captured in the *3 stoppages étalon*, its potential expended and its τέλος achieved. To be sure, Duchamp was hardly unaware of this, terming the three stoppages, 'canned chance' (Judovitz 1995, 48). By contrast, the notational paradigm for Cage's *Variations I, II* (1961), and to a lesser extent *III* (1962), presents what tends toward the entelechial in Duchamp—to the extent that here the εἶδος of στέρησις is the τέλος of conceptual art—in a context which insists that something be done to escape the gravity of the στέρησις that lies at the heart of the δυναμικς-αδυναμία dyad. Cage harnesses Duchamp in a way which allows him to repeat the presentation of privation but without the eternal collapse further into the abyss: Cage presents the στέρησις, but at the same time as sun-dering it from its ψυχή-ἀρχή in conventional terms, he provides the shape only of what remains to be done, presenting the unactualised δυναμικς of conceptual art in a context where the performer has the decision to make as to whether to act on absence.

Even if there is no good reason to take Duchamp at his word that this is how the three curves of the *stoppages étalon* were made—dropped thread, after all, simply does not fall in the neat, almost-but-not-quite lines of Duchamp's piece—at least one simple and likely approach to beginning to work on *Variations II* would be, precisely, to drop the requisite number of lines and points—themselves transcribed onto transparencies—onto a surface and, significantly, begin to take measurements (see Shearer and Gould 1999). Notably the *3 stoppages étalon* are redeployed in Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1915–1923)—that is, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*—in which they are used, precisely, to generate a network of lines in a flat, transparent panel (Judovitz 1995, 68). That is to say that, though there are many other elements which go to make up *The Large Glass*, within it is enclosed and encased a prototype for Cage's first two *Variations* pieces: for different reasons, but still '[b]ecause of its transparency', Branden Joseph, too, insists that *The Large Glass* might be seen as 'the Dadaist forebear of the Cageian project' (Joseph 2016, 112–113). Not only this, but only a few years later Merce Cunningham's *Walkaround Time* (1968) would

feature a set which, designed by Jasper Johns, recalled elements of *The Large Glass* before, as the dance drew to a close, bringing those elements together in a way which mimicked the original artwork, although the music for this dance was not Cage's, but rather David Behrman's ... *for nearly an hour* ... (1968) (see Franko 2000). Even though Cage seems not likely to have come to know Duchamp at all well before 1965, it may perhaps not be entirely coincidental that it was in precisely the same period that Cage was composing the *Variations* pieces, that is to say, here, in 1963, that two replicas of the original version were made—for the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena—followed by a further edition of eight replicas the following year.

Cage himself stressed the way in which what is conceived of here as the acting–not-acting relationship comes to supplant silence–not-silence in his thinking, precisely in the context of the slightly later *Variations III* and its relationship to *4'33"*:

Just as I came to see that there was no such thing as silence, and so wrote the *Silent Piece*, I was now coming to the realization that there was no such thing as non-activity. In other words the sand in which the stones in a Japanese garden lie is also something. Why that has not been evident to me before, I don't know. There isn't any non-activity. Or, as Jasper Johns says, looking at the world, 'It appears to be very busy'. And so I made *Variations III*, which leaves no space between one thing and the next and posits that we are constantly active, that these actions can be of any kind, and all I ask the performer to do is be aware as much as he can of how many actions he is performing. I ask him, in other words, to count. That's all I ask him to do. I ask him even to count passive actions, such as noticing that there is a noise in the environment. (Cage in Kirby and Schechner 1965, 64–65)

Not for nothing does Panzner also insists that it is precisely the question of the dynamic that is at stake in the idea which the materials of *Variations II* (1961) bring to presence: 'It doesn't represent the ideal event as much as it gives it a body, or a means by which the dynamic unity of an event can be made sensible' (Panzner 2015, 49). This observation might now be rephrased: the transparencies of the *Variations* series present the idea of the privation which subsists in the *δυναμικς–αδυναμία* dyad precisely as a tool kit rather than *ἔργον*, a thing the performer must, in bringing privation to presence, make and do.

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Notes on Contributor

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