

Sonatine

Bureaucratique

1917

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Off he sets / He makes his way merrily to the / office /... / He is in love with a fair and most elegant lady / and also with / his penholder /... / He reflects upon his promotion / Maybe he will have an increase / without needing promotion / ... / The piano resumes its work / Alas! He must leave his office -his dear / office / Courage: let's be off, he says /
-Erik Satie, *Sonatine Bureaucratique* (1917)

*What Conceptual Art achieved at least temporarily was to subject the last residues of artistic aspiration toward transcendence to the rigorous and relentless order of the vernacular of administration. Paradoxically, then, it would appear that Conceptual Art truly became the most significant paradigmatic change of postwar artistic production at the very moment that it mimed the operating logic of late capitalism and its positivist instrumentality in an effort to place its autocritical investigations at the service of liquidating even the last remnants of traditional aesthetic experience. - Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions**

1

Sonatine Bureaucratique, one of Erik Satie's short humoristic pieces written in 1917, is largely appropriated from Muzio Clementi's *Sonatina in C major, op. 36, no. 1* and 'narrated' with marginalia inserted between staves describing the titular Bureaucrat's day at the office--a day during which no actual work is accomplished. The bureaucrat enters the office, sits around, listens to a nearby piano playing, and leaves. He dreams a lot--of a promotion, or of an increase in pay without a promotion, and of the superior flat he has his eye on.

Structurally, *Sonatine Bureaucratique* is an 'assisted appropriation' in the sense of Marcel Duchamp's 'assisted readymades' (i.e. the bicycle wheel with its forks mounted to a stool, the sugar cubes made of marble). Its model, Clementi's piece, is disassembled, toyed with, and finally employed in a sophisticated conceptual gambit in which the musical form, in its refusal to develop thematically or to 'work,' reflects the narrative of the marginalia. The whole thing is a machine that denies work: in the annotations and in the lack of standard thematic development (the *andante* movement, usually the site of musical elaboration, merely repeats the theme on finite loop). Satie refuses to work and appears to share in this thematic repetition the bureaucrat's apathy.

The denial of classical thematic development, of musical 'work,' is in fact an important component of Satie's oeuvre and distinguishes him as a forebear of much that we con-

sider contemporary in music. His relationship to the bureaucrat and his apparent laziness is more complex than it might at first appear. The critique is playful, as if Satie sees in the bureaucrat something of the future—possibly his own future. This ambivalence toward the role and methods of the bureaucrat comes to be a defining feature of much important art throughout the following century.

A page of the score illustrates Benjamin Buchloh's essay *Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions as published in October magazine Vol. 55, Winter 1990*. Buchloh apparently perceived Satie's heavy quotation of Clementi and his narrative suggesting the apathy and craven attitude of his Bureaucrat as an early example of the 'Aesthetic of Administration' that he puts forth in his essay. Certainly boredom, repetition, quotation, and a bureaucratic anti-aesthetic play important roles in Satie's work, breaking with much the early 20th Century's conception of seriousness and quality in music.

For Buchloh, Conceptualism's conscious alignment with scientific, administrative, academic, and bureaucratic procedures against previous aesthetic qualities constituted a similar break in the continuum of visual art.

- • Note: As Buchloh points out, the Conceptualist aesthetic came about honestly. The post-post-war generation was the first generation of artists to attend higher education en masse. Buchloh suggests that this exposure to academic administration and its rigors had much to do with the foundation of the Aesthetic of Administration.

What then are the constituent parts of a bureaucratic aesthetic and what opposes it to traditional aesthetics? For Buchloh, it includes a variety of criteria modeled after Max Weber's definition of bureaucracy: an encompassing impersonality, faithful execution of a program or system, technical 'correctness,' technique and skill placed at the service of a project, program, or system, and a rules-based use of the visual, i.e. diagrams, maps, etc.

By employing Satie's score as an illustration to his essay, Buchloh points to an important paradox at the base of bureaucracy: loving the appearance of work and the reality of not getting anything done. This inner contradiction was exploited by Satie and later by the Conceptualists.

The bureaucratic aesthetic defined by Buchloh mimics or models itself on the actual bureaucracy. His Aesthetic of Administration encompassed the rationality, hierarchization and systematic execution that many conceptual artists largely adhered to albeit with lesser and greater degrees of criticality or irony.

A

...Art is part and parcel of the disenchantment of the world...It is inextricably intertwined with rationalization. What means and productive methods art has at its disposal are all derived from this nexus. - Theodor Adorno quoted by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions

Buchloh's Aesthetic of Administration has behind it a less apparent, shadow history which weaves its way through the 20th Century and comes to full blossom in the 21st: the process of intensifying rationalization.

Weber viewed rationalization as the distinctive mark of the modern era, where a logical, scientific understanding is of the highest value and processes are oriented toward rational goals programmed as a function of authoritative power. He writes:

"[The calculability of decision-making] and with it, its appropriateness for capitalism... [is] the more fully realized the more bureaucracy 'depersonalizes' itself, i.e., the more completely it succeeds in achieving the exclusion of love, hatred, and every purely personal, especially irrational and incalculable, feeling from the execution of official tasks. In the place of the old-type ruler who is moved by sympathy, favor, grace, and gratitude, modern culture requires for its sustaining external apparatus the emotionally detached, and hence rigorously 'professional' expert."

Unlike Karl Marx, who bestowed upon rationalization and positivist science a purely emancipatory potential, Weber sensed in these systems the possibility of reification, the erasure of previous social relations, a tendency toward oligarchy—political or technological—and ultimately dehumanization. Writing in Los Angeles in 1944, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer went further and reversed Marx's analysis in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*; suggesting that instrumental rationalization and technology were actually the very medium of social domination.

Giorgio Agamben suggests that the course of rationalization across the 20th and 21st Centuries and its ultimate disregard for human dignity and law has been embodied by the 'state of exception' employed regularly by powerful entities. The state of exception runs counter to human rights by suspending law. Nazi Germany, following the suspension of the Constitution after the fire at the Reichstag, was run entirely in a state of

exception. Similarly, Guantanamo Bay and other U.S. detention facilities around the world under George W. Bush and Barack Obama exist in states of exception, denying the human rights of detainees.

- • Note: The state of exception is the norm that creates a legal void, a space entirely deprived of any binding notion or law. A state of exception is an ambiguous, imbalanced no-mans land, which requires the perpetuation and promotion of a constant state of crisis.

Rationalization, as a guiding mode of thought and process, has resulted in an increase of technological sophistication and combined with the current declared state of exception, has exploded into the current condition of mass surveillance, pervasive modeling and simulation, and the ubiquity of the digital code.

2

No more incomprehensible compositions.

Subtlety within reach of anyone.

Sonatas reduced, reharmonized.

Our music comes with guaranteed playability.

-Satie, from A Mammal's Notebook

Deep down I'm enormously lazy, I like living, breathing, better than working.

-Marcel Duchamp

Besides Satie, the obvious early 20th Century harbinger of the Aesthetic of Administration is Duchamp, whose contribution to the bureaucratic aesthetic cannot be overstated. As with so many of his innovations that reverberated throughout the century, his invention here was decisive. His reproduction, in multiple form, of his working notes in *the Green box* led to his exacting reproduction—in miniature—of his oeuvre in *Boite-en-Valise* (1941), a bureaucratic gesture par excellence. By reproducing in miniature his entire body of previous work and rendering it portable in a suitcase, he anticipates the late century tendencies of institutional critique and the museological examinations of Marcel Broodthaers and Fred Wilson with an unmatched coolness. In a single gesture, he makes a claim for the work's importance and literally diminishes it.

- • Note: The *Boite-en-Valise* is a simulation or rather a collection of simulations building up a higher-level simulation (while significantly reduced in size) in the guise of an easily transportable retrospective, a miniaturized oeuvre. Duchamp's model here is his own previous work- this reflexivity approaches Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz' metaphysic behind the binary code: there is something inherently ex nihilo in it.

Duchamp's auto-reification of his oeuvre suggests a measure of self-appraisal that contains something of the cold-blooded calculation if not the small-mindedness of the bureaucrat in Satie's piece. There is a systematic, willful laziness in Duchamp that also recalls the bureaucrat. This sensibility is evidenced in his 'collaboration' with Man Ray, *Dustbreeding* (1920), a photograph of a section of the *Large Glass* covered in dust. In the case of the readymades, the 'work' was a matter of selecting the most banal object available— one which evinced neither interest nor disinterest--and designating it art.

In Duchamp as well as in Satie, we see a conflicted relationship to the bureaucrat, much as we see within the bureaucrat a conflict between his joy at the 'appearance of work'— his excitement about going to his office—and the reality of his non- work.

Duchamp's concrete if hermetic notes, produced in *The Green Box*, directly anticipate conceptual art; his foreshadowing of 'the linguistic turn' so crucial to Conceptualism was apparent in his practice from 1912 on. One particular note, with an operation worthy of a Conceptualist like Sol LeWitt, simultaneously rigorous and irrational, states:

Conditions of a language:

The search for 'prime words' ('divisible' only by themselves and by unity)

Take a Larousse dict. and copy all the so-called 'abstract' words, i.e., those which have no concrete reference.

Compose a schematic sign designating each of these words. (this sign can be composed with the standard stops) These signs must be thought of as the letters of the new alphabet.

A grouping of several signs will determine (utilize colors-in order to differentiate what would correspond in this (literature) to the substantive, verb, adverb declensions, conjugations, etc.)

Necessity for ideal continuity. i.e.: each grouping will be connected with the other groupings by a strict meaning a sort of grammar, no longer requiring a pedagogical sentence construction. But, apart from the of languages, and the “figures of speech” peculiar to each language- weighs and measures some abstractions of substantives, of negatives, of relations of subject to verb, etc, by means of standard signs (representing these new relations: conjugations, declensions, plural and singular, adjectivation inexpressible by the concrete alphabetic forms of languages living now and to come.). This alphabet very probably is only suitable for the description of this picture.

The last sentence is the punch line. This arcane and lengthy process is carried out to result in the possible description of single picture. The operation anticipates bureaucratic art containing a heavy dose of the irrational, crucial to Conceptualism’s program.

Duchamp’s *Monte Carlo Bond*, a stock certificate ‘issued’ by his ‘company’ *Roulette de Monte Carlo* (president- *Rose Sélavy*) is another example of ironized bureaucratic aesthetics—this time taken from the quasi-paradoxical twin realms of finance and games of chance. (The work in many ways initiates ‘systems’ art, a slight predecessor to orthodox Conceptualism.) By taking a standard stock certificate, altering it and aestheticizing it, Duchamp follows *Satie* in the modification a banal model, but moves beyond irony, beyond mere discursiveness, into the realm of the immanent destruction of art as previously practiced. Contrary the mildness of critique in *Satie*’s piece, Duchamp aims to strip away a history of transcendence in art through the elimination of ‘extraneous’ aesthetic conditions such as composition, beauty, veracity, etc.

Another contribution to the nascent bureaucratic aesthetic (and the foundation of Conceptual Art) was Duchamp’s early-career shift to the diagrammatic versus the ‘retinal’ in his work. Crucial to the foundation of Conceptual Art, the approach (as developed by himself and his friend *Picabia*) was derived from scientific as well as prosaic illustration (engineering drawings and explanatory diagrams). As a visual analog for his emphasis of the content lying beyond appearance, the diagrammatic approach comes to the fore with *Coffee Mill* (1911), *To Be Looked At*, and—in its ultimate form—*The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* or the *Large Glass*.

Throughout Duchamp's work, the diagrammatic resurfaces as the visual put in service of the idea: it is the visible beyond pleasure and delectation; laying claim to facticity by doing away with composition, decoration, and filigree. It aims to be concrete, rational, and verifiable. It explains, but it does not inspire. In the straightforward illustration *Coffee Mill* and the opaque operations of the *Large Glass*, a sense of diagrammatic 'deferment' comes to the fore. As always with Duchamp, there is a twist: the diagram is employed in ways simultaneously plain and obscure, obvious and hermetic.

The diagrammatic impulse as employed by Duchamp resurfaces throughout the twentieth century: Futurism and the Bauhaus embraced machine aesthetics, the Situationists used maps and employed the technique of *détournement*, members of the Fluxus movement used instructions and diagrams. We also see the diagrammatic impulse play out in Warhol's dance diagrams and Robert Morris' *Card File* (1962) or *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal* (1963). Finally, it emerges full-blown in the work of the Seth Siegelaub *stable of conceptualists* as well as in his catalogs—documents that were themselves designated exhibitions.

- • Note: In 1944 Duchamp hired a notary to authenticate his 1919 L.H.O.O.Q. The move was made by Duchamp out of necessity but also as an artistic gesture prefiguring a succession of 'certificate'-based works from later proto-conceptualists including Piero Manzoni and Yves Klein. This move gave rise to a sort of bureaucratic formalism, through which legalistic operations were put in the service of artworks and 'acts of imagination' were simultaneously fulfilled and negated.

B

Modern binary code originated in the West with Leibniz in 1679. Soon after his formulation of the code, he was introduced to the hexagrams of the ancient Chinese divination text *I Ching* (a compositional tool favored by the Duchampian American composer, John Cage), which suggested that the Chinese had prior knowledge of the binary. Leibniz was convinced that even though the Chinese had this knowledge, they misunderstood the metaphysical importance of such a discovery. His Christian beliefs led him to interpret the binary code's progression from 0 and 1 as constituting a sort of creation ex nihilo:

...unlike these pagans (the Chinese) nothing in the world can better present and demonstrate this power than the origin of numbers, as it is represented here through the simple and unadorned presentation of one and Zero or Nothing.

Leibniz' mystical Christian interpretation of the binary code is a fitting precursor to its later elaboration into a universal conveyance of representation: from the 0 and the 1

come many of our entertainments, much of our communication and knowledge of the world.

Computation and code, as we know them today, evolved out of wartime cryptography, specifically out of Turing's bombs—computerized attacks on the German Enigma code during World War II—and Max Newman's subsequent development of *Colossus*, the first programmable digital electronic computer.

Modeling and Simulation—wargaming employing computers—began after WWII when both the RAND Corporation and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology instituted early computation into their wargaming and game theory efforts.

Simulated wargaming, as opposed to real-world wargames employing troops or military exercises, goes back even further than binary coding. Chess, originating in India in the 3rd Century, is a lasting example (Duchamp, of course, was obsessed with it) and the simulated wargaming of battle scenarios is often credited with the profound military success of Prussia in the 19th Century.

Modeling and Simulation began as technological extensions of classical scientific-method-based experiments in which representations of real systems were mathematically modeled and resulting data is fed into a larger-scale simulation. The advantages of computer modeling and simulation over mere observation and real-world simulation are too numerous to mention and its integration into the positivist scientific sphere has been revolutionary. As Manuel De Landa states in *Philosophy and Simulation*, discontinuous and difficult to quantify events and situations like the physics of the interior of a hurricane's eye and the outcomes of large-scale nuclear attacks can be processed and reprocessed through billions of simulations, resulting in a detailed statistical analysis of situations and accurate approximations of possible outcomes of real-world events.

- • Note: Modeling specifically refers to the mathematical abstraction of reality while simulation is the assembling of that data into larger-scale aggregates, bouncing (various) modeled phenomena off of one another.

Every institutional entity—be it a hospital, a police department, a pharmaceutical company, or a nation-state—is seeking the same thing: greater certainty, predictability, and control over results and over the future. Modeling and Simulation increasingly provide all of these. To return to Weber, the quest for rationalization, of increasing technological certainty, has predictable results: it often seeks to delimit movement, strip away difference, and eliminate variables. Thus heterogeneity and unpredictable variables, including human subjectivity, run counter to its motives.

3

1. *Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.*
 2. *Rational judgments repeat rational judgments.*
 3. *Irrational judgments lead to new experience.*
- Sol LeWitt, *Sentences on Conceptual Art*

Against positivist science's program while adopting its aesthetic, Sol LeWitt suggested the importance of 'irrational' procedures to Conceptual Art in his 1969 *Sentences on Conceptual Art*. Douglas Huebler's then-absurd proposition put forth in *Variable Piece #70* (1971)—“to photographically document to the greatest extent possible the existence of everyone alive”— follows LeWitt's prescription by 'assigning' himself a task, that was, if not impossible (note the inclusion of “to the greatest extent possible”), then at least incredibly optimistic. This, like Huebler's other, often humorous bureaucratic gestures, introduces massive complexity into epistemology. The absurdity his project –its unrealizability- comes mostly from the program, the choice of assignment: why this assignment and not that one, why this form knowledge and not the other?

LeWitt's invocation of irrationality and simultaneous adoption of a rational aesthetic, and Huebler's careful use of humor, language, and the irrational, point to an important component of much conceptualism: a decidedly oppositional stance toward actual administration and rationalization (though, as implied by Buchloh, this positioning was not shared by all conceptualists i.e. Joseph Kosuth). Like Satie and his bureaucrat, or Duchamp and his willful, humorous self-examination, LeWitt and Huebler maintained a careful tension between affirmation and critique: employing the 'look' and techniques of administration while denying its aims. They sought to free themselves from the previous aesthetic regimes by eliminating decoration, composition, etc., yet refused to join the other side—that is, the side of scientific rationality. Instead, they created gestures and programs that served to jam it up.

Charles Gaines' self-professed 'irrational' gridding and coded representation of biological phenomena, including *Walnut Tree Orchard* and *Faces*, are part of his larger project examining identity and the incommensurability of representation. *Faces* of 1979 invokes the ideal forms of Plato, early and late mathematicians, and the long, problematic relationship between idealized systems and humanity. The faces, sublimated into grids and

numbers, eerily anticipate the surveillance culture and the ultimate assignation to everything a number or a series of numbers and the ultimate dispersion of 'all that is solid' into the 'gas' of digitalized representation.

Guy de Cointet, in *Some Drawings* (1975), absurdly employed numbers and letters as accurate representations of pictorial visual experience. Interested in code from a cryptographer's perspective (or the perspective of a spy, as he was occasionally rumored to be), he also understood the importance of the code to visual culture and art specifically. The humor in Cointet's 'drawings' comes from the insufficiency of his labyrinthine systems to effectively or legibly represent experience—whereas today, numeric codes function with terrifying efficiency. In fact, much of what we watch, read, and experience is embedded in such numeric codes.

The very 'impossible' and 'irrational' elements of these projects prefigure actual contemporary technoscience projects to such a degree as to appear to be uncanny precursors to current conditions. In a bizarrely symmetrical return of the repressed, conceptual art in its programmatic extremism becomes an unintentional model of the current absurd levels of rationalization and control. The formerly irrational, impossible elements are realized through sheer computation.

Huebler's *Variable Piece #70*, has, with the advent of NSA's massive data-storage program and the implementation of Sentient (or Multi-Agent) World Simulations, largely been realized. His *Location Pieces* have been reconstituted to a morphologically shocking degree by Google Maps and Street View.

- • Note: Huebler's work takes an interesting spin on the science fiction author Arthur C. Clark's famous Clark's Law, which states that any sufficiently advanced technology would appear as magic; suggesting that any sufficiently advanced technology would render formally (ironic) impossible proposals possible.

Gaines' *Faces* have been instrumentalized under the rubric of facial and object recognition and, like Guy de Cointet's numerical code drawings in *Some Drawings*, anticipate the complete sublimation of 'analog' representation into digitally encoded visual information.

C

What people used to call liberty and freedom, we now call privacy, and we say in the same breath that privacy is dead. -Jacob Appelbaum in *Citizenfour*

What could be more prosaic in its horror, more bureaucratic in its terror than an airplane flown into an office tower? And then another, into another tower, mirroring the effect while exponentially increasing its symbolic impact. Both airplane and office building are embodiments of the bureaucracy at its most banal and sophisticated. The psychic results of the collisions were recognized by artists and theorists at the time as massive, terrifying disruptions of the collective imagination. (Modernist composer Karlheinz Stockhausen was vilified for describing the act in aesthetic terms: “The greatest work of art in the history of the Cosmos.”) Mirroring the banality of the objects of destruction, were the ‘tools’ employed the terrorists: commercial plane tickets, box cutters, small regional flight training schools; things and places accessible to nearly anyone and were now revealed to be deadly in the hands of extremists with imagination and will.

The attack cancerized the abreactive mechanisms of the culture, resulting in a hypostatized version of fantasized events in the form of unprecedented bureaucratic control systems to counter all possible nightmarish contingencies. Actual bureaucrats soon made proposals and statements that were as far-reaching, visionary and absurd as Huebner’s *Variable Piece*. A concordance of Hollywood filmmakers and screenwriters convened at the White House in an attempt to out-fantasize the terrorists. Technologists, weapons manufacturers, intelligence operatives, and think tanks were tapped for their apocalyptic visions. Following the contours of these extremes, the engines of technoscience were set spinning: data mining, surveillance technology, and computer simulations were all employed to a degree previously unimaginable in an attempt to regain control of the now-vastly expanded imaginary realm of possible terror scenarios.

The Synthetic Environment for Analysis and Simulations or SEAS Lab, housed at Purdue University, is an innovator in Modeling and Simulation- due partially to the extremity of its program. Dr. Alok Chaturvedi, the head of the SEAS lab, also heads the independent corporation Simulex, Inc., which employs Sentient (or Multi-Agent) World Simulations in a private capacity for both the Department of Defense and major corporations. British technology site the Register reported in 2007: “The Department Of Defense is developing a parallel to Planet Earth, with billions of individual ‘nodes’ to reflect every man, woman, and child this side of the dividing line between reality and AR. Called the Sentient World Simulation (SWS), it will be a synthetic mirror of the real world with automated continuous calibration with respect to current real-world information”.

- • Note: In simulation, the term Granularity refers to the refinement of focus: 1:1 granularity means that one human being is represented by one agent in the simulation. In 2007, SEAS claimed 5:1 granularity in its simulations of Afghanistan, Iraq, and other conflict zones.

Simulex and other private companies have developed commercial versions of SWS utilized by corporations, institutions, and nation-states. According to Simulex' press release: "The SEAS-VIS model is a representation of the Institutions, Organizations, Leaders, Individuals, and Infrastructure that make up a society. The geography of the society is modeled at various levels including City, Province, Country, Region, and World in terms of Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure nodes."

The Los Angeles Police Department now employs LASER software, a next-generation version of the *Palantir* data mining platform originally developed by the CIA, that powers their Real Time Analysis and Critical Response Division: coordinating license plate readers and other forms of surveillance, data mining, and near-immediate physical response throughout Los Angeles. More than 3,500 officers currently use LASER—all LAPD cars, motorcycles, helicopters, and special vehicles are equipped with cameras that feed information into it. Many streets, highways and buildings throughout metropolitan Los Angeles are equipped with license-plate readers and other forms of surveillance that feed into the system.

Facial recognition technology is quickly becoming ubiquitous in National Security, policing, private security, retail spheres, and in social media. The FBI's Next Generation Identification (NGI) system is instantly accessible for local police and currently recognizes over 50 million faces. The database will continue to grow as additional data is collected from security cameras, arrests, and photos of suspects from family and friends. Target and Walmart have implemented facial recognition technology in their stores and Facebook's facial recognition technology now recognizes individuals in their photo postings.

Everywhere data silos are collapsing- one form of information is flowing steadily into another- creating an ever more comprehensive 'picture' of individuals, their networks, and activities. The image originates in and is comprised entirely of digital code.

4D

Since conceptualism's height and Buchloh's essay 20 years after the fact, the term 'Administration' has taken on a more sinister tone as the field has expanded and intensified. Even at the advent of Conceptualism, corresponding with the escalation of the Vietnam War and May 1968, Administration has had problematic, world-implicating repercussions, but nothing like its dominance in recent years. In the 1960's, the idea of artists aligning their practice with Administration was radical. Contestation in art had previously come from a bohemian artistic class against rationalized society. Even in the context of the Russian avant-gardes of the early 20th Century, radical artists were often aligned with governance and administration only briefly before an 'official style' was adopted and all else was marginalized.

Perhaps conceptualism's greatest contemporary legacy is the culture of 'disruption' idealized in contemporary technoscience circles. Conceptual art's programmatic use of far-reaching, often irrational systems and its radical breaks with the previous cultural paradigm ironized positivism in a way that anticipated much of the current internet and technoscience culture. (The element of sublimity in Huebler's proposal Variable Piece #70, also evident in the conceptualism of Dan Graham and Robert Smithson, could be read as a return by other means of previous aesthetic regimes' obsession with the sublime and attempts at its depiction in order to 'disrupt' conventional experience.)

The conceptualists' interventions -implicit or explicit acts of resistance against dominant culture- have been recuperated and inverted by the current 'disruption' in technoscience and administration. Conceptual artists' 'impossible' programs prefigured new intensifications of technology. The paradoxical valorization of and resistance to work embodied by Satie's bureaucrat, Duchamp's intensive self-reflexivity, and the conceptualists' resistance to Administration while assuming its aesthetics, have mutated into a form of radical disruption in the service of control.

Technoscientists are fond of quoting 'praxis-oriented' early modernists, as Ray Kurzweil's quotation of Apollinaire in *The Age of Spiritual Machines* suggests: "More than anything, artists are men who want to become inhuman." Satie's Bureaucrat meanwhile, "makes his way merrily to the office, He is pleased and wags his head...once in his armchair he is happy and shows it..."

SONATINE BUREAUCRATIQUE

Allegro

f Le voilà parti.

5 Il va gaiement à son bureau

10 en se «gavillant».

15

19 Content, il hoche la tête.

1917

AN ESSAY BY SCOTT BENZEL
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