

## WATERMELONS OR CANTALoupES; TWO EXAMPLES OF VITALISM, WILLEM SANDBERG AND MIKHAIL ZOSHCHENKO

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**I**n this lecture I want to compare the ideas of Willem Sandberg with those of Mikhail Zoshchenko. The Russian satirical author Zoshchenko was born at the end of the previous century. He had his hour of glory in the twenties, about which more later. Why those two people and no others?

1. They both have an outspoken opinion about art, its transferability and its social functionality.
2. Their ideas are clear, intelligible and practice-oriented.
3. Their ideas have a common philosophical background.

There are differences in the elaboration of their ideas, so that the final image which originates as the sum of their idea is diverse and multicolored and results in a nuanced image of the possibility or impossibility of saying something sensible about art.

The common philosophical background I just mentioned can be subsumed under the concept of Vitalism. By which I mean Vitalism as a philosophy of life, as it was partly based in Europe on the writings of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Unfortunately, I have no space here for more than buzzwords to give an idea of this philosophical current.

- Vitalists attach more importance to concepts like movement, becoming and development than to the petrified concept of being.
- Vitalists see reality as something organic. Their philosophy is irrational, without their glorifying irrationality. On the contrary: this kind of glorification, they think, is the gate behind which Fascism and National Socialism lie.
- Concepts, logical laws, aprioristic forms exist for them only as a methodical instrument, the use of which is acceptable only in limited cases. Intuition, understanding through the emotions, direct observation and living the thing are foregrounded.
- Most vitalists are pluralists. They do not accept just one fundamental principle, but two: namely "life" and one or two principles opposing it.
- And finally, to name a name that could serve as a frame of reference, a beacon, if necessary, but certainly no more than that, let us recall the name of the French philosopher Henri Bergson.

With these background ideas in mind, let us turn to Mikhail Mikhailovitch Zoshchenko. He was born in 1895, and he was a Russian with all the chauvinistic passions that entails. As a young boy he already suffers

from melancholy. In 1915 he enlists as a volunteer in the Czarist army. In 1917 he welcomes the Revolution, because it can end the misery he can see inside and around himself. Totally in accordance with Marxist principles, he hopes that his sick inner self will be cured under favorable outward circumstances. And those healthy, liberated circumstances have just been promised.

He begins to write from 1919 onwards. Short, satirical stories. Their style is the *skaz*, a genre developed by Gogol. The narrator of the story makes use of the oral style of the social setting in which the story takes place, so that characterization, atmosphere and mood are given an extra dimension. Zoshchenko's tone is light, never bitter or barbed and always without rancor. He is playfully naive, skirting the burlesque.

The content of the stories deals with the new social system and especially with the fact that people keep all their weaknesses. Opportunism, cowardice, stupidity, the pursuit of one's own interest to the detriment of the new system, all these characteristics are buried too deep in mankind to be erased just like that by a social system that calls itself different. Worse: by declaring the system holy and infallible, those in power make themselves invulnerable. This creates the ideal breeding ground for dark, destructive forces in the powerful to be brought to life and thrive. Was it Zoshchenko's old - and therefore still sick - inner self, his grave melancholy that gave him this insight? Anyway, the stories fit the time perfectly. And instantly he becomes a famous and celebrated author, a gadfly to the new social order. So much so, in fact, that when an absurd mishap occurs, the story of that mishap is likely to end with the conclusion: "That's Zoshchenko all over."

In the twenty years around the year of the Revolution, say from 1907 to 1927, Russian artistic life blossoms as never before. Literature experiments merrily with form and content. Absolutely all contemporary Western movements can be traced back to a predecessor in the Russian literary grab-bag of that time. A group whose name I should mention is the Society of Enthusiasts for the Real and Universal. Daniil Kharmis, one of its main representatives, who wrote sketches rarely more than half a page in length, can be said to be the forerunner of Western European absurdists. Yet few people have heard of him.

Maksim Gorky is better known. He is the great stimulator of the literary life of that time. Even though he himself advocated social realism, he respected talented people and encouraged literary talents, even if their artistic ideas differed from his. He sent Isaac Babel on campaign with the Red Army, after he had read Babel's pretentious and convoluted stories. And behold: *The Red Cavalry* was born.

In 1921 the nth literary group constitutes itself under Gorky's protection: the Serapion Brothers, named after E.T.A. Hoffmann's character Serapion, the model of the individualist who devotes himself to the creation of free, nonconformist art. Accordingly, the group's creed reads that everything is allowed, as long as the tone does not sound false. Therefore no political dogma should be allowed to subject a literary creation to itself. The Brothers, among them Zoshchenko, who are too different from each other in artistic temperament to constitute a current or school, are given the writer Evgeny Zamyatin for a literary instructor. Zamyatin had published his most important work in 1920: the novel *We* which describes the most extreme consequences of a conformist, totalitarian state. A horrible example, to be imitated later by both Huxley and Orwell.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Soviet leadership is not exactly charmed by the Serapion Brothers. In his well-known blunt, sweet and sour, denigrating tone, Trotsky writes about the brothers' relative youthfulness. In *Literature and Revolution* he states that they are in danger of degenerating into the nth little third rate group if they do not show their political colors soon. And there is no need for such third rate little groups.

But Zoshchenko's stories are so popular that the party bosses dare not go beyond this type of remark. Moreover, Trotsky and Stalin are too busy succeeding Lenin. And there is still Gorky, the guardian angel. The only one who can set up Zoshchenko for a fall is Zoshchenko himself. And he proceeds as follows:

Zoshchenko realizes that the new social system cannot cure his melancholy. Doctors, taking the waters, and even taking the mud are no help. The somber moods tend to come back, each one stronger than the other. Even satire, the preferred genre of melancholics, does not afford him more than temporary relief. He is in his mid-thirties, suffers from chronic depression, is fed up and decides to go cure himself.

Zoshchenko says: "I feel unhappy almost all the time. Has there been an event in my life which could be the source of this feeling of unhappiness?" He then goes on to describe events that could contain a nucleus of a traumatic experience. Walking back like a lobster he

moves from his thirtieth year to the earliest years in his recollection, but no single event appears so painful that it could serve as the source of his feelings of unhappiness. A normal, at most hypersensitive boy with a normal youth, his father dies and so does his mother, later, but that happens to all of us.

Zoshchenko is well informed about developments in psychology, both Western and Russian, specifically the developments linked with the name of Ivan P. Pavlov, whom we connect with the image: "the dog salivates when the bell rings". We are not interested here in a scientific appraisal of Pavlov's work. The question is what that work meant to Zoshchenko and the use he made of it.

In a very simplified rendering, Pavlov's theory, as used by Zoshchenko to cure himself, boils down to the following: a baby reacts with reflexes to external stimuli. When two stimuli occur one after the other, the baby is able to establish a connection between them. An example: just as the mother or the wet nurse is about to breast-feed the child there is a crack of thunder. In the child's mind a connection may be established between the thunder on the one hand, and being fed on the other. Between fear and satisfaction.

Note that Zoshchenko speaks of the mother or the wet nurse. This is important: breast-feeding is primarily connected with the primitive impulse called "eating." It has nothing to do with a botched up form of the Oedipus complex. Freud would immediately explain a double attitude towards a woman's breast as repressed sexual desire. Zoshchenko, who subscribes to Freud's discovery of sex drives, goes beyond this. He strips the event of any aprioristic context and gets to the fact that the will to life is stifled. If one wants to penetrate the nucleus of an experience, in order to neutralize its painfulness by means of analysis, one has to dismiss the retarding effect of socio-cultural and psychological norms and values. These norms and values cannot amount to more than data inside the analysis. They should never be allowed to become the object of the analysis, or its goal. In this respect Zoshchenko reveals himself as a vitalist: concepts, aprioristic norms are never more than a means to deeper understanding: intuition and the living of things are foregrounded.

Since the baby does not yet have a conscious at its disposal that creates distance and that is able to analyze, the connection between thunder and woman's breast is imposed on it. It is not able to see the lack of logic. Moreover, and just because the conscious as a filter is lacking, the connection can make such a strong emotional impression that it anchors itself in the subconscious. And yet the connection is, in principle, capable of being

disconnected: thunder and breast feeding do not always coincide. This disconnectibility shows that the connections are learned, not innate. They are conditional.

Finally, there is the dialectic aspect of it all. Once a connection has been established, it calls forth reflexes which may, in turn, call forth other external stimuli, according to the thesis - antithesis - synthesis - antithesis - synthesis etc. mechanism. During the dialectic process, therefore, the original connection can change its shape.

To sum up: the establishment of conditional connections happens involuntarily and takes place in an undeveloped mind which is not conscious of itself. The lack of logic in such a conditional connection remains unnoticed and, provisionally, unassailable. Worse: as consciousness develops, the sharp edges of the connection are blurred. So the connection can take the shape of a motive, a dark force that raises its head now in this shape and now in that, and whose origin is not perceived. Melancholy people are often heard to remark that they have no idea where their uneasiness is coming from. A somber mood may be sparked by seeing the sea, a child screaming on the street, or even blowing one's nose. The fact that blowing your nose can lead to untold catastrophes is, of course, more than faintly ridiculous to the outside observer.

Even Zoshchenko failed to understand why the sight of the sea would disturb his equilibrium for months. The remedy he applied to himself, and which he had not himself thought of, is as obvious as it is impossible to carry out: to use the conscious one has received as a crowbar and unlock the subconscious to detect sunken conditional connections and then disconnect them. This kind of detection has to solve three main problems:

1. A conditional connection exists as the sum of several components. So these components have to be traced. But not in their abstract form, such as the concept of water. They should be revealed in the form and with the intensity specific to their connection. Water is nothing. Even less than H<sub>2</sub>O. Does one mean the sea, or a babbling brook, the water that comes out of the shower or a raindrop that has almost dried? Are we talking about washing our faces or swimming?
2. A second problem is the dialectical nature of it all: is the connection the subconscious drags to the fore at a certain moment really the original, true connection, or is it a derived, ostensible connection?
3. Finally, one can imagine that looking for conditional connections which have been so deeply hidden precisely because of their painful nature, is a painful undertaking with emotional risks involved: old wounds are reopened, new wounds arise and the

question remains whether there is enough resilience left to finish the work, or whether one just breaks down during the process.

Zoshchenko carries out the analysis the way he thinks he ought to. But we have reached the year 1943 by now. The political and socio-cultural circumstances have greatly changed. The purges of the thirties have come and gone. Literature has to subject itself to socialist realism, which means there is no room left for satire - at all. It is true that Zoshchenko had already stopped writing satirical stories before all this, of his own accord. To escape from censorship he now works in the genre of the sentimental novella, just as others flee into youth literature or pedagogical poetry, not to mention translation. But he does not give himself up to the party. Nadezhda Mandelstam names him, the man with the weak heart and the oh so beautiful eyes, as one of the exceptional writers who kept pleading the case of their disappeared colleagues in print. The Serapion Brothers had ceased to exist in 1929. Either they made their careers inside the system, thus becoming His Master's Voice, as in Fedin's case, or they emigrated, as Zamyatin did, or they committed suicide, as Lountz did, the very writer who once wrote the Brothers' creed. Guardian angel Gorky died in 1936.

Zoshchenko opts for a very original form of disappearance: during World War II he publishes *Before Sunrise*, which is the description of his self-analysis. In *Keys to Happiness*, which remains provisionally unpublished, he declares that he has been cured and that he has been leading a new life for the past few years.

World War II is better known in the Soviet Union as the Great Patriotic War, a name which may be taken as a hint to the effect that this was not the best possible time to start writing about one's ego. If you called yourself a writer, it was your duty to write about the dark powers of despicable fascism, about solidarity, resistance and the struggle of the partisans under the leadership of Father Stalin, the last three preferably in a tone of utter praise. 1943: the Country in the grip of death, and Zoshchenko impassively chats about his fear of cows. He must be mad.

In *Keys to Happiness* he justifies his position by stating that the struggle waged by the Red Army against the dark forces of fascism runs parallel with the struggle waged by his reason against the dark forces in his subconscious. He goes on to point out that fascism has precisely declared reason its mortal enemy, and that it can therefore exist only by glorifying the irrational. In other words: if you allow dark forces to fester in your subconscious you may well turn into a fascist.

He is probably right, but abstract things, such as the

inner self, are not the first priority in a time in which the alarm bell is constantly ringing. Power dictates the law. And violence determines circumstances in such a way that Zoshchenko's plea for rationality loses the battle. What he says is not wrong, but it is not easy to transpose an individual case into general social relationships at the best of times, and it is impossible to do so in a time which brings the social circumstances of death and perdition home to every household. Zoshchenko's remarks seem therefore rather destined to steal a march on official criticism. *Before Sunrise* is avidly read by the public, mainly because Zoshchenko's name is linked with it. But since fascism is still in the land, the powers that be have finally found a weapon to use against Zoshchenko. The book is forbidden, Zoshchenko's name becomes a synonym for dirty stinky polecat. *Keys to Happiness* is not allowed to be published, which means that Zoshchenko's self-justification remains unread, and in 1946 he is expelled from the Writers' Union by his colleagues, which amounts to a total ban on publishing, a public ostracism. A few years later his old Serapion Brother Fedin becomes president of the Union.

The old evils return. Depression. But now in a pitiful shape: at home and on the street Zoshchenko is a trembling nervous wreck, totally alone, avoided, indifferent to his greatest passion: writing. He dies twelve years after his fall, in 1958. In 1972, fourteen years after his death and twenty-nine years after it was written, *Keys to Happiness* is allowed to be published after all, but in an adapted version and with no reference to the still banned *Before Sunrise*.

The return of the ailment cannot just be laid at the feet of the powers that be. The Revolution had not been able to cure Zoshchenko's illness, therefore the Revolution had not been able to make him ill again after he had supposedly cured himself. Nor does the reappearance of the old evils go to prove that he was wrong. For if he was, then how are we to explain his "new life?"

It is more likely, even though it sounds disrespectful, that Zoshchenko did not walk the road to the very end. He waged a fierce struggle, put his life on the line, and lived for fifteen years as a free man. Longer than many who suffer from melancholy will be able to claim. And yet the dark powers appear to have been vanquished only temporarily. Zoshchenko overestimated himself, witness the time of publication of *Before Sunrise*. That could be proof of the fact that the dark powers were still in him after he was cured, even though they were lying dormant. In the same way he himself, albeit twenty-five years earlier, perceived that the new system was overestimating itself and proceeded to satirize it. But now

things turn around diametrically and the system calls the dark powers in Zoshchenko back to life by publicly declaring him dead.

The circle is closed again. The circle of being doomed to fall, to fail to find solutions because solutions always drag themselves behind the problems from the day we are born. Or, as Pozzo tells Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, when the latter tries to comfort the crying Lucky and is rewarded for this good deed with a kick on the shins: "He's stopped crying. You have replaced him, as it were. The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else, another stops. The same is true of the laugh. Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. Let us not speak well of it either. Let us not speak of it at all. It is true the population has increased." For Beckett failure is an axiom. Solutions are little more than relocations of problems, a kind of shuffling them around.

And yet: we happen to be alive anyway. And for us to stay alive and to make life somewhat pleasant - so that it may pass before we know it - something has to happen. Zoshchenko made something happen by using his conscious to search out the dark powers in his subconscious and to strip them of their harmful character. After which the conscious can give new shape to the powers that have been set free. This twofold process should be free of the retardation that can be imposed by norms and values. One must try to take the mud away from the pathway between the conscious and the subconscious, so that one may look at the ambient world in a mobile and flexible manner.

Let us turn now to Willem Jacob Henri Berend Sandberg. Born in 1897, two years later than Zoshchenko, Sandberg wants to become a painter and enters the State Academy in 1919, leaving it five months later, for good, because the professors keep scribbling on his drawings. He makes the acquaintance of Herman Gorter, a marxist poet who is renowned for his nature-loving poems. They read *Das Kapital* together.

Sandberg moves farther and farther away from his physical and spiritual origins. He begins to drift. His journey will last for eight years. Two data are important: first his weak physical health, expressing itself in a poorly functioning pituitary gland and a nose wound that will not heal. Add to this that Sandberg suffers from stuttering. As in Zoshchenko's case both conventional and non-conventional medicine (homeopathy and vegetarianism) are of no avail, until, in Germany, Sandberg discovers a method of healing based on a cure of eating apples. Significant for the intuitive way of making decisions is one of the main reasons he lists for

taking this cure: he liked the "patients" he met.

Fasting appears to be a revelation for Sandberg: not only does the malfunctioning of the pituitary gland disappear, but the stuttering vanishes and the nose wound heals as well. The experience of fasting goes even beyond this: Sandberg realizes his mind is becoming very clear. In 1944 he writes about it:

"When you fast you suddenly lack the fixed daily routine of meals - the day seems longer and the need for sleep seems to diminish at the same time - you move away from the daily grind you have grown up with from childhood on. The body becomes passive, the passions are slumbering, but thinking becomes ever clearer and freer, obstacles disappear. A long fast may influence the direction of a man's life and the certainty that one can always go back to this state of heightened consciousness provides a busy life with a background of rest."

The features that correspond with Zoshchenko's case are obvious:

1. The self-healing (Zoshchenko through analysis, Sandberg through fasting);
2. The striving after clear-mindedness;
3. The realization of the importance of heightened consciousness;
4. The attempt to make obstacles disappear, so that heightened states of consciousness can be attained.
5. The insight that giving direction to one's own life is dependent on reaching a state of heightened consciousness.

The second important factor is Sandberg's mentality: the ability to forego (direct) satisfaction of the personal emotions. Fasting tends to bear witness to this, in a way. Sandberg's career as a painter is at least as striking. His dearest wish was to become a free creative artist. Of his years of drifting he spends one year (1923) in Paris. He works there, meets Piet Mondriaan and recognizes in him his absolute master.

He says: "I shall never be able to paint as well as Mondriaan. So I have decided not to try to live the life of a free creative artist."

Personal emotions are made subject to clear insight. And now we see the big difference from Zoshchenko. Zoshchenko looks for clarity to be able to better focus on his own fate, to discover its cause, to rediscover the direction of his life. For Sandberg clarity is not a means to look back on his life with hindsight, in perspective, but rather a requirement to give direction to his life. Sandberg appears to move on from where Zoshchenko is stuck. Clarity helps Zoshchenko to understand the tears that spring from a repressed past. Clarity helps Sandberg to look at the future through his tears, with the goal of giving shape to that future because his life is a

part of it. The difference between passive and active, between lethargic and strenuous.

Sandberg becomes a graphic designer. He is forty years old, seems to be able to realize his ideas in practice at last, but then World War II erupts. He has to go into hiding, his wife goes to jail in his place, and he loses many dear friends. After the war he will say that things will never get any worse any more. His apprenticeship has come to an end. He becomes the director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

By then he has built up a clear, distinct world of ideas concerning art and society. The construction began with the evenings spent in Gorter's company. From these evenings Sandberg kept the idea that a living society is a society that is in motion. A static society is dead. Or deadly. This feeling for dynamism stems from the lessons in dialectics.

He is further convinced that the - visual - artist is the ideal figure to sense movement in society before it happens. The visual artist, indeed, is the man who is dealing with the essence of events. That is why he is fated to be confronted with the essence of events more than anyone else in society. He will have to sense them before they happen. And the artist's task is to give shape. In short: the real artist, such as Mondriaan, gives shape to the movement he senses in society. This defines the avantgarde element in art. More than that, Sandberg writes: "Great art is always an experiment."

Moreover, there have to be places where the works of art can be seen. The museum is first and foremost a space where members of society can take cognizance of the movement their society is subject to. A kind of hatch. The museum must therefore show contemporary art, because we are living now. Moreover the museum, the hatch, must be transparent. It must be made of glass, so that you can look at society from the inside and into the museum from the street. This is how the glazed wing of the Stedelijk Museum has been built and elements of this vision can be found in the architecture of the Centre Beaubourg in Paris. Sandberg was a member of the jury who judged the projects, and later on he did all he could to see to it that the winning project was actually built.

Sandberg does not view a work of art as a goal in itself. He looks for two things in it:

1. The movement in society that has been given shape by the artist.
2. The artist's mentality. For Sandberg the work must radiate character or, to put it more precisely, vitality, so that the observer can relive this vitality and, in so doing, re-express it in actions so that society, which is the ultimate recipient of those actions, will not lose its vitality. Which closes the circle again.

Like Zoshchenko, Sandberg sees a division between the individual and his environment. Not a striving towards symbiosis. The artist undergoes the influence of his environment and he also tries to influence society in his turn, by means of his work. Yet this ideal exchange can only arise when - and here comes the big paradox - the artist does not adapt himself either to the demands of society or to the past.

The movement the artist senses in society before it happens has not yet been experienced by society as a whole. Society therefore always runs behind the artist's vision.

Society - I'm not saying the authorities - has a few means at its disposal to stop the artist who runs ahead. Money and fame in the private sector, a system of subsidies in the public sector, obligatory membership of the Writers' Union in other circumstances. The powers that be can make life difficult for an artist who uncovers a movement they do not approve of. According to Sandberg things can go wrong all of a sudden. An artist could abruptly begin to make his work prettier, succumb to the temptation of being tasteful for a change, or even begin to take the wishes of the audience into account. In that way he is sure to become a pal of the Sandman very soon, or as Sandberg said of another great love of his, the printer and chic artist H. N. Werkman: "Only when Werkman went overboard socially, was he able to develop into a great artist."

Adapting to society represents the useful aspect of things. An artist chases after the essence of things. That is the difference.

The second adaptation is to the past and the future. Sandberg could be said to have invented the word NOW. At the end of the fifties Marcel Duchamp subverted the basis of all culturally defined norm systems with his statement: "There are no solutions because there are no problems." Similarly, Sandberg wants to take living the moment itself away from both past and future. In a pamphletistic poem produced in 1959 he links the NOW inseparably with the demand for vitality. As I wrote in an article some years ago about the NOW:

"The NOW sits, fearfully, blocked between the wise lessons of the past and the test of the future. We have one leg in the last time and the other in the next and the NOW runs away in between. "Nonsense!" sober people are likely to shout. "The NOW is no more than an artificial and imaginary line between past and future." But that is - fortunately - not true.

The NOW really does exist. The NOW means not to let the last time get you down. The NOW is always the first time. The first time something is

possible that was not yet possible just now. The NOW is an attitude of receptivity towards spontaneity, vitality. Receptivity towards the unexpected. To see that the unexpected is more than just the expected. And who knows, maybe the unexpected will give you ideas for later.

To live the NOW is to have the power to let the past be stifled by the shadow it projects: prejudice, or rather, the wise lessons. And NOW also means to laugh about the demands of later and the fear of failing once again. Probably the best remedy ever against depression."

We are back with the word that named the reason for Zoshchenko's quest. It is only logical, then, to end this article with a quotation from *Keys to Happiness*. Zoshchenko writes at the end of the book:

"Lines of poetry come into my head as a farewell. Maybe I shall actually say them some time in the future, not to say farewell to this book and to eight years of my life, but to say farewell to all of life. They are the lines written by a Greek poet:

Of all I leave behind in the world this is the most beautiful:

First of all the light of the sun;

Second the imperturbable stars and the moon;

Third apples, juicy melons and pears...

Oh well, the stars and the moon don't do much for me. I'd rather exchange them for something better.

Let me quote the lines as follows:

Of all I leave behind in the world this is the most beautiful:

First of all the light of the sun;

Second, art and reason...

And in third place I could mention some fruit - juicy pears, watermelons or cantaloupes."

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Final Image and Theses Appended to  
"Watermelons or Cantaloupes."

#### *Final Image.*

The subconscious is from the beginning of man's existence.

The conscious arises during existence.

The conscious and the subconscious communicate with each other.

Daily life is characterized by the sanding up of the passageway between the two.

This sanding up occurs under the influence of socio-economic, cultural-normative and psychological demands made on man, both by himself and his environment.

The passageway between the conscious and the subconscious can be sanded up to such an extent that a blockage occurs.

Human happiness is determined by the degree to which one succeeds in taking the sand out of the passageway.

*Theses.*

1. The greatest satisfaction art, in this case literature, can claim for itself is to have taken away some of the sand for a certain person at a certain moment, so that the vitality from the subconscious is given access to the conscious and can be given shape there.
2. This demand for movement implies a rejection of all that leads to stasis or stagnation: attempts to join a school or a current, or attempts to make reality eternal. The demand for movement implies that one occupies a starting point and that one describes the movement with which this starting point is thrown out of the window. Or rather embraced.
3. Marcel Duchamp's statement: There are no solutions because there are no problems, can function as the guideline for this demand for motion, because this statement implies a disconnection of the socioculturally determined norm system and universally valid life instincts.
4. Vitality implies the courage to be blind (deaf and dumb is OK too). Writers who are on their way to illuminate the gift of all-seeing they have discovered in themselves have no eyes for the dark dead-end street they find themselves in. To want to be more clever than the reader is not a matter of merit. It is a matter of merit to the author when he has given the reader the impression that he, the reader, has become more clever after he has read the book. In which case "more clever" can be replaced by "more vital" or any adjective defining the movement between conscious and subconscious.
5. The most important difference between man and animal is man's ability to ascribe rational motivation to his aggression (whether he does so with hindsight or not). Animals kill out of instinct: man kills out of reflection. This ability is a sign, perhaps even proof, of the blockage between conscious and subconscious.

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