

# Dada and the Nature of Art: A Discourse on Art in Revolt

BY PHILLIP W. SROKA

*...in this supreme jeopardy of the will, art, that sorceress expert in healing, approaches him; only she can turn his fits of nausea into imaginations with which it is possible to live.*

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*<sup>1</sup>

As a people we often consider only those works done by well known and respected artists that are willingly displayed in public as Art to be *real* art; that it is up to the initiated elite who are certified in diagnosing a work as such and in whom we put our faith as experts. Yet this distinction between what is often referred to as “high” and “low” art can be misleading as to its nature since it is difficult to define. In making such demarcations, we run the risk of castrating art proper by holding it as somehow distinct from the more “plebian” pursuits of the average person. Such conceptual delimitations thus often lead to the nature of art as being confined within the realm of an Ideal, with art being that which comes closest to expressing what is held in the highest regard to whosoever happens to be in charge at the time. Conceiving of art in this manner, however, leads us to ask not so much what art is, but as Nelson Goodman points out, “what is good art?”<sup>2</sup> and therefore presuppose a nature before the question is even raised.

Nonetheless, few people would argue with the importance that art has played in human history and arguably every person at one time or another engages in creative activities that,

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy & The Genealogy of Morals*, tran. Francis Golffing (New York: Anchor Books, 1956), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson Goodman, “When is Art?” in *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, edited by Thomas Wartenberg (Belmont: Thomson Higher Education, 2007), 202.

although not always pursued seriously, seemingly derive from the same source. It comes as little surprise then that many of the biggest names in the history of philosophy have attempted to come to terms with just what the nature of art really is. From the ancients up until late modern developments, such inquiries have primarily dealt with identifying a quality—something inherent to the work of art itself—in order to reveal its metaphysical essence and discover what makes it of such importance to those who both create and consume it. As honorable as these attempts have been, such presuppositions have often neglected in their conception of art the one element which could be able to unite these works together and which constitutes that vital source from which they all derive.

The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to find the emergence of a revolt in the arts that often goes overlooked in considerations of art: Dada. The name alone is enough to instill fear and trembling in the hearts of many a connoisseur of fine art. Originating at a time when the world was being thrown into its biggest crisis to date, the Dadaists set out to take back what had been separated from its source—the work of art—and reclaim it in the name of life from those who had abused it as a safe haven for the illusions and ideals that would ultimately lead to the death of millions of men.<sup>3</sup> Just as Nietzsche before them appealed back to pre-Socratic art to seek out its nature in relation to human existence, so too the Dadaists would plum the primitive and infantile recesses of human nature so as to discover new modes of expression in order that they might come to terms with a world in which meaning had been burst open to the mechanical drum of World War I.

<sup>3</sup> Leah Dickerman, ed., *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2008), 7.

Although it is still a topic of dispute as to just who, where, and when it was that Dada

**Fig. 1**



Hugo Ball in cubist costume reciting his poem "Karawane" at the Cabaret Voltaire, 23 June, 1916. Collection Foundation Arp, Clamart, France. All rights reserved.

first began, the fact remains that one of its clearest and earliest manifestations came about in the Swiss city of Zurich, which served as a safe haven for those fleeing the war. Any attempt at finding a single artist as prefiguring Dada as a whole inevitably ends in disappointment, for Dada was less of a style of art than it was a collective state of mind, a movement of artists who consciously set out to not confine art within a code, be it moral or method. Nevertheless, having found freedom in neutral Switzerland, Hugo Ball, the undisputed father of Zurich Dada, established the

Cabaret Voltaire on February 1, 1916<sup>4</sup> so that artists may come together in mutual freedom from the war, "not only to enjoy their independence but also to document it."<sup>5</sup> With all walks of artist being welcome, the Cabaret Voltaire quickly erupted into a scene of artistic experimentation and rebellion that would ultimately come to challenge the very notion of art itself.

The biggest difficulty towards understanding what exactly went on in Dada is that the very movement defies definition. The name itself, typically taken to mean "hobby-horse," was chosen for its cultural ambiguity and a degree of playfulness that always allowed it to evade the

<sup>4</sup> Hans Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, tran. David Britt (New York, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965/6), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Dawn Ades, ed., *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 20.

critical eye and thus be left open to interpretation.<sup>6</sup> If anything can be said for sure though about what the Dadaists were up to, it is that they desired to free art and creativity from the authority of reason. Tristan Tzara, in his 1918 Dada manifesto, expresses their core contempt towards societies faith in the conjunction of reason with art in these words: “Married to logic, art would live in incest, swallowing, engulfing its own tail, still part of its own body, and fornicating with itself, and passion would become a nightmare tarred with Protestantism, a monument, a heap of ponderous grey entrails.”<sup>7</sup> Yet it is important to shy away from the typical characterizations of Dada as being fundamentally irrational or pessimistic. Although there is often a chaotic and negative tone within much Dada artwork, it would be wrong to conclude that they extolled the illogical over the rational. Rather, the Zurich Dadaists reveled in contradiction—the simultaneous existence of polarities in which Yes-*and*-No took the place of the traditional Yes-or-No dictum in contemporary thought which for them always carried with it the erroneous supposition of right and wrong.<sup>8</sup>

The Dada artists were not alone in this attempt to liberate man from a world dominated by the sciences and what they saw as its mundane vision of the world.<sup>9</sup> The Expressionists too shared in this idea, and in fact, many of those involved in Dada (including Richard Huelsenbeck and Hugo Ball<sup>10</sup>) found their beginnings as artists within this movement. As such, we find that many of the techniques that the Dadaists became notorious for were already in use by the

<sup>6</sup> Dickerman, *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ades, *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 189.

<sup>9</sup> Manuel Grossman, *Dada; Paradox, Mystification and Ambiguity in European Literature* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), 19.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Pegrum, *Challenging Modernity: Dada between Modern and Postmodern* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 287.

Expressionist artists. From ecstatic breaks of rationality in structure to experimentation with primitive techniques, the parallels between the two movements are as pronounced as they are deceiving,<sup>11</sup> for despite these similarities in style there exists a marked difference between the two on a fundamental level. Whereas the Expressionists held a bleak view of the world resulting from its industrialization and projected towards a utopian triumph of man against an impending apocalyptic future, the Dadaists rejected such notions as yet another idealized anthropomorphism of the world—which they claimed was the basis of humankind’s strife to begin with—and instead asserted the aforementioned paradoxical existence which did away with such romantic notions of both the future and the past for the irony of the present.<sup>12</sup>

In this way, the early Dada artists of the Cabaret Voltaire possessed some definite affinities to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and were not at all unaware of the fact. Long before the eruption of WWI, Hugo Ball was already familiarizing himself with the works of that mutually notorious thinker and very much shared in his conviction that the only way to regenerate society was through a return to the forces of instinct, emotion, and a repudiation of Socratic rationalism.<sup>13</sup> It would be yet another mistake though to take their activities as lying solely within the realm of the Dionysian, for in the Dadaists’ efforts to create a balance between polarities through art, they endeavored to combine chaos with order, chance with structure, so as to create a pure and uncorrupted work.

Richard Huelsenbeck was one of the more notorious of the Dada artists toward this end in his use of primitive techniques. With a characteristic “Umba Umba” repeated throughout his

<sup>11</sup> Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism*, 246.

<sup>12</sup> Pegrum, *Challenging Modernity: Dada between Modern and Postmodern*, 288.

<sup>13</sup> Grossman, *Dada; Paradox, Mystification and Ambiguity in European Literature*, 50.

poems, he would combine abrasive metaphors with penetrating chants in order to confront the romantic self deception and hypocrisy of traditional methods with a “phantasmagoria of terrifying truths about the human animal.”<sup>14</sup> This is dramatically portrayed in his collection of poems entitled *Fantastic Prayers*, in which he eschews traditional forms of syntax and style for the sake of producing an emotive effect from the audience:

. . . a calamity has befallen the world  
the breasts of the giant lady went up in flames and an Indian rubber man  
gave birth to rat’s tail  
Umba Umba the negroes tumble out of the chicken hutches and the froth  
of your breath skims their toes  
a great battle passed over you and over the sleep of your lips  
a great carnage filled you up full<sup>15</sup>

This example demonstrates Huelsenbeck’s own method of utilizing the here and now by pulling the listener into each reading. Rather than creating works that conformed to pre-established techniques, his poems brutalize expectations so as to incite the audience to respond, which in turn would become a part of each performance. For Huelsenbeck and other members of the Cabaret Voltaire, there were no topics that were off limits and any idealizations were fodder with which to expose the underbelly of the prevailing prejudices of the time:

. . . yes he sings more powerfully than the priest’s litanies  
sending up steam and trumpet’s call  
nations burst apart little grumblers children yes hopeless pleading  
God God God he flings the cloak round his loins  
breathes into the cities where lying weeping inconsolable on beds  
we are forced to comprehend the incomprehensible  
he descends on shoulders and necks before we realize  
strokes soft cheeks and mouth hound  
Almighty killer revolutionary

<sup>14</sup> Richard Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, tran. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), xxxiii.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Huelsenbeck, “Rivers,” in *Blago Bung Blago Bung Bosso Fataka!* ed. and tran. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 61.

we are respect and simultaneously disrespect  
which we humans form in your likeness<sup>16</sup>

As can be seen by these examples, Huelsenbeck's poems are able to both empower and enrage.

The audience becomes a part of the poem itself,  
and thereby reinvigorates the individual's place  
as the one who must account for the condition of  
the world, thus giving art an active role through  
its ability to incite. By combining these modern  
images with visceral forms, the recitations by  
Huelsenbeck became the primary cause for much  
of the public unrest and rioting that resulted from  
the Dada performances.

Likewise, Tristan Tzara found in the use  
of randomness a means to break away from the  
constraints of language in an attempt to remove the burden of meaning in words for practical  
use through his method of cutting up words from newspapers, shuffling them in a bag and  
letting them flutter down of their own volition so as to form the basis of an uncorrupted poem.<sup>17</sup>  
Such methods were likewise liberating to the everyday individual who also aspired to create.  
Tzara, in his *Dada Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love*, offers a recipe for just such a person to  
make their own cut-up poem from which he concludes: "And there you are—an infinitely

**Fig. 2**



Manifestation Dada à Saint-Julien le Pauvre, 14 April, 1920. From left to right: Jean Crotti, Jean d'Esparbès, André Breton, Jacques Rigaut, Paul Eluard, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Benjamin Péret, Fraenkel, Louis Aragon, Tzara, Philippe Soupault. Centre Pompidou – MnamCci-Bibliothèque Kandinsky – Fonds André Breton. All rights reserved.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Huelsenbeck, "Death," in *Blago Bung Blago Bung Bosso Fataka!* ed. and tran. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>17</sup> Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, 54.

original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd.”<sup>18</sup> These examples of both Heulsenbeck and Tzara demonstrate the Dadaists commitment toward the balancing of opposites, which for them were fundamentally inseparable. Just as with Nietzsche, the Dionysian needed the Apollonian to keep from consuming itself which in turn compensated the Apollonian for its insufficiency to quell the human condition alone, the Dadaists allowed chaos to be tempered by self-originating forms in order to complete the work from its source that would otherwise remain unfulfilled while providing each structure with a novelty untainted by any predisposition towards utility.

With such an assault on the traditional conventions of art, it is no small wonder that we find few people able to fully account for their actions in art history. The dissolution of structure, form, and any unifying technique puts the Dada artist seemingly beyond the grasp of critique. What then are we to make of their movement in art? Martin Heidegger, writing some twenty years after the establishment of the Cabaret Voltaire, offers us some unique insights into the origin of art that seem particularly relevant in the case of Dada. First of all, it is important to always keep in mind Dada’s historical place, for they were working in a time where the old ideas of art had ultimately served to isolate the work as an object unique unto itself and where the world had dissolved into a chaos of inter-dominating justifications that could no longer coexist with this classic conception. Heidegger, writing about this very misrepresentation of the nature of art, provides us with a passage worth quoting in length:

Perhaps however what we call feeling or mood, here and in similar instances, is more reasonable – that is, more intelligently perceptive – because more open to Being than all that reason which, having meanwhile become *ratio*, was

<sup>18</sup> Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, tran. Barbara Wright (Flemington: Riverrun Press Inc., 1992), 39.

misinterpreted as being rational. The hankering after the irrational, as abortive offspring of the un-thought rational, therewith performed a curious service. To be sure, the current thing-concept always fits each thing. Nevertheless it does not lay hold of the things as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it.<sup>19</sup>

It is this very assault by previous theorizers of art that Heidegger refers to that the Dadaists attempted to counter with their own work. As such, the primary goal of Dada was to liberate the being of art from the ratiocinations that were in their eyes no more objectively valid than

**Fig. 3**



Man Ray, "Tristan Tzara," 1921. © 2011 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ADAGP/Telimage, Paris.

any other and which for them further served to stifle the creative right of the artist.

Keeping with Heidegger's conception of art, for Dada, the work was not something that existed on its own, created by some isolated genius. The work of art was a contextual being, a composite of artists, work, and preserver which together gave rise to the truth that is art. Although the Dadaists were working before Heidegger's theory, they offer us a

poignant example of this nature bursting forth against constraint. In everything from public

performances to false news reports,<sup>20</sup> the Dada artist strove to immerse art back into the society from which it was created as an expression of those who created it. Such a revolt could only be imagined as being possible in the time from which they worked, for only the artist of yore was

<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, edited by Thomas Wartenberg (Belmont: Thomson Higher Education, 2007), 154.

<sup>20</sup> Grossman., *Dada; Paradox, Mystification and Ambiguity in European Literature*, 59.

able to maintain the illusion of the ideal so long as reason served as a beacon of hope in society. Yet with the idea of absolute truth no longer remaining unchallenged, as promulgated by such influences as Nietzsche, and where at any moment technology could wipe out entire cities at a whim, reality was no longer seen as harmoniously organized but as “a cataract of uncertainty and collapse. . . . [a] disorderly, conflicting totality of mainly illogical actions which stand in a strikingly antithetical relationship with one another.”<sup>21</sup> As such the Dadaists refused to allow the current events of the world to be manipulated so as to serve reason by preserving it in its happening within their work. Thus what had originally started as an organization of artists to escape the horrors of the war turned into one in which the truth of the world was put to work through the joint effort of these exiled artists. As Leah Dickerman comments in her essay on the group, “They demanded an art that put the shocks and scars sustained, the ironies and absurdities and hypocrisies witnessed on display.”<sup>22</sup>

A further element that is most often stressed about Dada is their position of anti-art. Although this is a relevant objection to their pertinence in considerations of art, it is often misrepresented as meaning that the Dada artists were against art as a whole and are thus guilty of possessing an internal contradiction by being artists themselves. A closer approximation to the reality of the statement is that the Dada artists were against art with a capital “A.” For them, this institutional distinction between “high” and “low” art was erroneous and only served to keep the work of art forever separated from its existence as something which happened amongst artists and those who received it. Not only that, but they detested how such distinctions elevated the artist as “genius” above that of the ordinary person who was

<sup>21</sup> Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism*, 175.

<sup>22</sup> Dickerman, *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne*, 7.

consequentially subjugated into the false belief that they were incapable of creative activity of their own and so stifled their capacity for growth.<sup>23</sup> In a world such as theirs, art simply could no longer exist as something which possessed objective authority and stood outside and above the individual, and as Hugo Ball is reported to say, “we . . . lost too many of our illusions for that.”<sup>24</sup> For Zurich Dada, anti-art was a means toward contradicting the traditional conceptions of art, a storming of the museums, so as to once again make art a meaningful instrument of life and for life by leveling the playing field to a base from which further achievements in art could be made relevant once again.<sup>25</sup>

Walter Benjamin, in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, speaks specifically in regards to the Dada group as providing a concrete example of this modern transformation of art’s role in society. Since the time in which art existed as a unique entity, it forever existed as a cult item in which the work of art had to remain hidden so as to preserve its aura and, consequentially, its authority.<sup>26</sup> The advent of such technological practices as film and photography were drastically altering art though, for it was no longer something that was preserved behind cloak and cloth, but could be accessed and perceived through any number of means without ever coming into contact with the “original” work in question. Any attempt towards preserving the authority of the original ultimately ended in what Benjamin refers to as a negative theology of art, or “l’art pour l’art,” which for him culminates in the fascist “fiat ars – pereat mundus.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, idealized art could only serve to allow

<sup>23</sup> Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism*, 205.

<sup>24</sup> Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, 48.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, tran. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 225.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 242.

society to hold itself up in relation to its art/ideal and in there find an illusory justification for negating the very life that it purported to represent in the name of that ideal.

In this way, Benjamin argues that the nature of art in the modern age is to be found, not in the now outdated auratic concept, but in its new identity, that of the exhibitional.

Embodying this new-found role, the Dada artists took full advantage of the modern techniques of reproduction so as to demonstrate the vacuity not just of the position of high art, but social authority as well by satirizing these older, auratic methods and consequentially undercutting the ways in which authority sought to legitimize itself.<sup>28</sup> Benjamin characterizes Dada art as an instrument of ballistics, an event which happens to the spectator by hitting him like a bullet and constitutes a physical shock effect that gives the work of art a tactile quality not able to be found by the mere contemplation of the object alone.<sup>29</sup> This image is reflective of how the Dada movement itself saw what it was doing and echoes Richard Huelsenbeck's own words when he states that "my dream had been to make literature with a gun in my pocket."<sup>30</sup>

Yet, given the characteristically paradoxical stance of the Dada movement, it would be premature to conclude that they would aim for the total abolition of what Arthur Danto terms the "artworld." It is this very world (existing as a society of critics, curators, collectors, and established artists) that is able to put forward new works for artistic assessment in relation to theory and the historical context of their creation.<sup>31</sup> In so far as art exists within a community that receives and preserves the work, as recognized by Heidegger, we would not want to underestimate the importance of having such an artworld. As Danto remarks, "to see

<sup>28</sup> Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism*, 201.

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 238.

<sup>30</sup> Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, xiii.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Danto, *The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1998), 169.

something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.”<sup>32</sup> Only by virtue of art theory are we able to distinguish objects in the world as part of another—one that provides us with the very ability to experience works as art as opposed to mere things.<sup>33</sup> **Fig. 4**

Moreover, without such an established community, Dada itself would appear as little more than childish pranks put forth to shock and awe without any deeper significance. Without a grounded understanding of their motivations, Hugo Ball’s “Karawane” would be just noise and Duchamp’s *L.H.O.O.Q.* little more than a vandalized reproduction of a portrait.



Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q. Mona Lisa*, 1919. Retouched ready-made (reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* with added moustache and beard). AM2005-DEP2. Photo: Philippe Migeat. Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France. CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/Succession Marcel Duchamp.

Despite the aforementioned virtues of the artworld, the Dada artists did have cause to distrust the artworld of their time. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, idealizations of what constituted art (as exemplified by such aesthetic trends as the Edwardian and La Belle Époque with their penchants for Art Nouveau and Impressionism) turned into critical perspectives with a negative heuristic as to artistic qualification. The art world as such, in attempting a definition of what art should be, becomes forced to indemnify itself against any revolution that threatens the

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Danto, “The Artworld,” in *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, edited by Thomas Wartenberg (Belmont: Thomson Higher Education, 2007), 214.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 139.

currently prevailing theory.<sup>34</sup> But when art becomes a function of institutionalized theory in this way, the art itself becomes depreciated, for works then only become “art” by virtue of their having been designated so by “the effete snobs.”<sup>35</sup> These criticisms thus impose a normative philosophy on artworks that divorce them from their historical expression and so determine art merely by convention.<sup>36</sup> For the Dada artists, this unattenuated conservatism of the artworld smothers the work of art, and so, in their position as anti-artists, they waged their revolt against these mandated ideals rather than the artworld as a whole.

Danto further observes that the greater the variety of artistically relevant practices, the more complex the individual members of the artworld become, for each prior artwork itself grows in relation to the new, and thus, the entire community is enriched.<sup>37</sup> In this respect, by opening the doors concerning artistic “definition,” Dada is able to reinvigorate artistic creation as a whole. Dada is not a movement in a bubble, nor does it try to be, for it is just as much a part of the artworld as it is the actual one. What they desired was to break past the walls of the institutional purists who could only recognize preexistent forms and so breathe life back into the artworld and release it from the fetters that could no longer accommodate the radical changes going on in the world. It is thanks to such rebellions as Dada that we are no longer confronted by such an artistic environment, for no longer do we have a strict standard that can be applied as a template or checklist against artistic expression. The importance of theory still remains, for theory is not simply a matter of discriminating art from not art, but rather it is the

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>36</sup> Danto, *Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Danto, “The Artworld,” 217.

very thing that makes progressive art as such possible.<sup>38</sup> Artistic theory also becomes enriched by these new methods of creation (provided that we are able to understand the conventions under which their status as expression is able to be explained)<sup>39</sup> by our assimilation of them into our understanding of not just what art is, but what it can be as well.

The Cabaret Voltaire closed in early July of 1916, only having been open for a few months,<sup>40</sup> yet their influence was to spread like wildfire throughout Europe and beyond—ultimately changing the artistic landscape for future generations. As expressed through their joint efforts, humankind had reached a point of no return with the older ideals having died along with the war. Dada, as put forth by Mark Pegrum and Richard Sheppard, thus serves as a bridge between modern and postmodern, a return of art to the humanity which it had lost touch with, and the start of a new dynamic to be picked up by later theorizers and philosophers such as Danto and Lyotard. Richard Huelsenbeck, reflecting back on the movement likewise makes the claim that, “I am firmly convinced that all art will become Dadaistic in the course of time, because from Dada proceeds the perpetual urge for its renovation.”<sup>41</sup> It is this very renovation that constitutes art’s role as forever existing as an expression of humankind’s search for redemption within whatever world we so happen to find ourselves thrown.

What then, can be said of the nature of art? Not surprisingly, Dada does not leave us with so much an answer as it does an example. Rather than define a parameter for art, Dada represents the explosive potential that looms behind all artistic creation, a reminder that human creativity and the drive toward ever greater expression respects no boundaries. In the end,

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>39</sup> Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 65.

<sup>40</sup> Dickerman, *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne*, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Motherwell, ed. *The Dada Painters and Poets* (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1951), 281.

Dada serves not so much as a movement in and of itself, but as an artistic state of mind, one which denies everything but the right of the artist: the right to create unbiased, un-dictated representations of the truth that is our world. Dada's overall significance thus lies as a revitalization to the zero point of creativity, that wellspring of artistic ambition, and those infantile eyes of the Dada artists themselves where, "the source towards which we strive will prove to be the natural paradise."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, xxix.

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*Voltaire*, 23 June 1916. Collection Foundation Arp, Clamart, France. All rights reserved.

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(ARS), NY/ ADAGP/Telimage, Paris.

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Moderne, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France. CNAC/ MNAM/Dist. Réunion des

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