

## **Salvador Dali: a tactical advantage of less specialization**

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*Abstract.* The Scottish economist Adam Smith recommends specialization, but Salvador Dali was not very specialized: he painted, wrote books, acted, sang, and made films. In this paper, I draw attention to a tactical advantage of not specializing for Dali, when faced with various challenges.

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*Did anyone ever write the one liner*

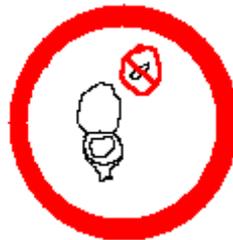
*Finer?*

A Scottish Enlightenment economist famously recommends specialization (Smith: Bk. 1, Ch. 1). You specialize in one task and I specialize in another and we put together our efforts and thereby achieve our shared goals more efficiently. But the Spanish artist Salvador Dali does not seem very specialized. Why not? I mean: why did he not specialize more? Why, in addition to painting, did he also write books and act and make films and sing and more? Well, Dali declared himself a genius, implying that being a genius, even his excrement was distinguished by genius (1966: prologue, 59). But leaving aside this remarkable claim, I can glimpse at a tactical advantage to being less specialized, for Dali.

The founder of the surrealist movement, André Breton, cuttingly made an anagram out of Dali’s name to indicate his pursuit of money above all else: avida dollars! But Dali did not respond in kind, that is to say, by making an anagram of Breton’s name. No, he made a photograph of himself with dollars! And I have this intuition that Dali’s response to a British

bright young painter's imitation of surrealism was not to paint and exhibit the painting as real surrealism. Rather the imitation prompted his unforgettable words, "When I paint the sea roars – others are just splashing in the bath." He combated verbal skill with "the visual" and the visual with verbal skill.

By specializing less, he could locate the weakness in the challenger – this man cannot use the immediate power of pictures; this man's wit is confined to his paintings – and respond there, rather than competing on what would be home territory for them. That was a tactical gain, overlooked by the great Scottish economist. People who observed these rivalries were won over to his side, by his responses.



## References

Dali, S. 1966. *Diary of a Genius*. London: Hutchinson.

Smith, A. 1904 (originally 1776). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. London: Methuen. Available at: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html>