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What's at Play in Ethics?

By

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What's at Play in Ethics?

By

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B.A., Creighton University, 2007
M.A., Emory University, 2011

Advisor: Rudolf A. Makkreel, PhD

An abstract of
a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

What's at Play in Ethics?

By

Catherine Anne Homan

This project seeks to understand the ethical self and ethical life articulated in the works of Martin Heidegger, Eugen Fink, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Concerned that traditional philosophical ethics suggests a division between theory and practice, subject and object, human and animal, self and world, they call instead for an ethics that would be more original than any of these divisions, although none provides a definite account of such an original ethics. Despite this, I argue that from their writings on play we gain insight into what this original ethics would be. This dissertation focuses on two primary questions, namely how to understand an original ethics and how using play as a model provides a better understanding of both play and ethics.

In Chapter One, I address a reconsideration of ethics as *êthos*, suggesting that ethical life demands an active openness toward and preservation of alterity. This reconsideration comes into better focus when seen in relation to Heidegger's, Gadamer's, and Fink's accounts of play. Not only does play help give rise to an ethical subject, as is evidenced in childhood development, but play also best characterizes the superabundance and relationality of ethical subjects and communities. In Chapters Two and Three, I examine the particular places, the playspaces, that enable ethical life and dynamic engagement with others. I suggest that we see language not merely as a tool employed by rational agents, but as providing the basis of community and responsibility in which one's own being is at stake and at play. In Chapter Four, I turn toward concrete practices by suggesting that in place of aesthetic education, Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer point toward poetic education as a mode of cultivation of the self and ethical life. I suggest that what the works of Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer demonstrate is that an understanding of ethical life must account for the multi-dimensionality of human life and experience, characterized by being in the world, engaged in rich and meaningful relationships, such that ethical comportment is a matter of attunement and creative openness toward the world and others.

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Abbreviations

Fink

EC	*Existenz und Coexistenz: Grundprobleme der Menschilchen Gemeinschaft*. Ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1987).
G	*Grundphänomene des menschlichen Daseins*. Ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz. (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1979).
NFW	*Natur, Freiheit, Welt: Philosophie der Erziehung*. Ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992).
S	S*piel als Weltsymbol*. Ed. Cathrin Nielsen and Hans Reiner Sepp.(Freiburg: K. Alber, 2010).
WE	*Welt und Endlichkeit*. Ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990).

Gadamer

GPMT	"Greek Philosophy and Modern Thinking." In *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings*. Ed. Richard E. Palmer, 266-73. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007).
PA	"The Play of Art." In *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, edited by Robert Bernasconi, 123-30. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
PPE	"On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics." In *The Gadamer Reader*. Ed. Richard E. Palmer, 277-89. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007).
RB	"The Relevance of the Beautiful." Translated by Nicholas Walker. In *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, edited by Robert Bernasconi. 1-53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
TM	*Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer.(New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2004).

Heidegger

BT	*Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh.)Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).
EHP	*Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. Trans. Keith Hoeller. (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000).
GA 2/SZ 9	*Sein und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosermann, 1976).
GA 27	*Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1996).
GA 39	*Hölderlins Hymnen „Germanien" und „Der Rhein"* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosermann, 1980).
LH	"Letter on 'Humanism'." Translated by Frank A. Capuzzi. In *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill. 239-76. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Introduction: Original Ethics as Play

In response to Jean-Paul Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism" and Jean Beaufret's question of when he would write an ethics, Martin Heidegger begins his "Letter on Humanism" with the definitive statement that "We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough" (LH 239).[1] How could one ask what the correct or moral action would be if one does not understand action? To ask about action or conduct requires one to ask about being, for it is being that is at stake in action. Humanism, however, fails to ask the question of being. It relies on a conception of the human as *animal rationale*, as the Cartesian "I think", and conflates being with beings. Heidegger argues that by failing to think of being as more originary than beings, humanism retains the metaphysical problem of thinking of humans as subjects over against objects. By prizing the *rationale* half of humans, it moreover views theory as separate from practice. Metaphysics relies on "an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole" (LH 245), and so fixes sense and meaning in place. The movement of being is rendered static and its fundamental groundlessness, the abyss of being, is forgotten. For Heidegger, however, there can be no freedom without this abyssal dimension. Thus while humanism—especially Sartre's existentialism—claims to overcome the metaphysical insistence on essence by instead defining humans by action, Heidegger argues that this is merely a reversal of a metaphysical claim and thus remains itself fundamentally metaphysical.

We might read this response as very much a non-response, and indeed much of Heidegger's answer to Beaufret's question appears to be a disavowal of ethics. However, what is rather at stake in Heidegger's discussion is a rejection of ethics or understanding of action that would place either outside time, space, or history. To ask about action one must

[1] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

also ask about being, and one cannot think being separately from being's historical unfolding in the world. Because being always already has itself as an issue, as Heidegger describes in *Being and Time* (BT 10/SZ 12), being's theoretical interests cannot be separate from its practical interests. Jean-Luc Nancy explains that for Heidegger, thinking is neither the opposite of action nor a particular kind of action. Rather, thinking "is what, in all action, brings into play the sense (of Being) without which there would be no action."[2] Because, says Nancy, Dasein has Being as an issue, as Heidegger claims in *Being and Time*, then Dasein's response to, its openness toward, Being is one of making sense. Thus what is at stake is meaning, for, as Heidegger writes, "How Being *is* is to be understood chiefly from its 'meaning'" (LH 257). To make sense is not to create in the sense of producing, but to comport oneself, to think in a particular meaningful way. Thinking is, Heidegger claims, the original activity of conduct, and thus what makes action at all possible. Thinking is not separate from, but is rather itself a practice. The truth of being is thus also in play, and the task for beings is to stand within it. Because this is an event of meaning, it is also an event of language, of letting truth speak.

Behind Heidegger's rejection of traditional ethics is the call for a more original ethics, that is, ethics that does not rely on something like a "subject" or "essence." We gain better insight into what Heidegger means by an original ethics when he connects dwelling in the truth of being with *êthos*. Heidegger suggests that *êthos* is to be understood as abode, as a dwelling place. In dwelling, human beings stand within and oriented toward this truth. With a degree of poetic license, Heidegger translates Heraclitus' Fragment 119, *êthos anthropoid daimon*, as "The (familiar) abode for man is the open region of the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)" (LH 271). He continues, "If the name 'ethics,' in keeping with the basic

[2] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics'," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 68.

meaning of the word *êthos*, should now say that 'ethics' ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who ek-sists, is in itself originary ethics" (LH 271). To be clear, this thinking of dwelling is in no way a merely theoretical, objective, or transcendent task. Heidegger's point in his rejection of humanism is precisely that such thinking is not thinking at all. Thinking, as allowing the truth of being to speak, is not separate from action, but is itself action: "Thinking acts insofar as it thinks" (LH 239). In this way, original ethics must be concerned with meaning, with understanding. Nancy explains, "Thinking, in its sense of 'original ethics,' is the experience of this absolute responsibility for sense."[3] As a letting speak, original ethics would thus be a form of hearing (*hören*), listening to that which we belong (*gehören*), namely being. What the original action of Dasein as making sense demonstrates is that there is no absolute foundation that would anchor this original ethics. In the very language of origin, *Ursprung*, we find a sense of springing forth.[4] There is nothing, no thing, that grounds being save being. Thinking is in this way original responsibility, that is, the possibility of responding to what lays claim on us.

Heidegger's students, Eugen Fink[5] and Hans-Georg Gadamer, had complicated relationships with their teacher, and it is sometimes unclear where debt ends and critique begins,[6] but each shares Heidegger's call for an understanding of ethics that is characterized

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[3] Ibid., 80.

[4] Heidegger treats this at great length in "The Origin of the Work of Art," where he speaks of the origin as founding as bestowing, grounding, and beginning. What is key for each of these modes is that they cannot be prefigured or prescripted. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 73-75.

[5] Eugen Fink (1905-1975) is not particularly well known in the English speaking world as most of his works remain untranslated. He wrote his dissertation under Husserl and Heidegger at Freiburg and remained Husserl's research assistant until Husserl's death in 1938. In 1946 he habilitated under Heidegger at Freiburg, and his line of philosophical inquiry began following Heidegger more closely than Husserl, although his thinking cannot be reduced to either.

[6] Dennis Schmidt, "On the Incalculable: Language and Freedom from a Hermeneutic Point of View," *Research in Phenomenology* 2004(2004): 33.

by this sense of *êthos*. Gadamer, for his part, writes against the background of the "Letter on Humanism" that if there is to be a philosophical ethics, it will itself be fundamentally conditioned and groundless. He suggests that a better approach is to be found in the Greek sense of *êthos*, that is, "the socially formed thing" that is "placed alongside the *factum* of reason."[7] By this, Gadamer means that the Greeks did not separate reason from its social and cultural roots. Similarly, Fink suggests that any ethics that relies on a conception of the human as *animal rationale* renders the human a centaur, half human and half animal, rather than accounting for the way in which reason cannot be separate from practice and action (NFW 62). For each of these thinkers, this turn to *êthos* is thus also a rehabilitation of *praxis*, of thinking that is itself a practice, of practical understanding that preserves the incalculability of ethical life rather than striving to conquer or impose order on it.

The question at hand is how to understand what an original ethics would be. What would it mean for there to be a fundamental groundlessness to ethics? How are we to understand incalculability? What would be at stake? Dennis Schmidt[8] suggests that there are ample resources to be found in Gadamer's hermeneutics and understanding of language that allow us to see that for an original ethics, the ethical subject must be a hermeneutic subject. Expanding on Schmidt's work, I argue that looking to Gadamer, as well as Heidegger and Fink, not only on language but also on play brings possible answers into even greater relief. My project responds to two main questions: 1) How are we to understand original ethics as fundamentally playful? and 2) How are we to understand who and what is at play in original ethics? Play provides, I argue, a significant way of understanding the incalculable and relational nature of ethical life as well as the groundlessness and spontaneity of original

[7] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," in *The Gadamer Reader*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 271.

[8] Schmidt, "On the Incalculable: Language and Freedom from a Hermeneutic Point of View," 34.

ethics. Furthermore, play allows us to see that original ethics neither requires universal principles nor dissolves into relativism or solipsism. Play, as Gadamer explains in *Truth and Method*, is a model for practical understanding and dialogue. Because original ethics is a matter of speaking and listening, of conversation, and because conversation is a form of play, then we might say that original ethics is also a form of play. What is at play in ethics, I will argue, is a response to abyssal freedom, where freedom is not something that a subject possesses, but a letting be. As such, original ethics is characterized by incalculability and superabundance.

Why play? In Gadamer's autobiographical reflections, he remarks, "So I sought in my hermeneutics to overcome the primacy of self-consciousness, and especially the prejudices of an idealism rooted in consciousness, by describing it in the mode of 'game or play' [*Spiel*]. For when one plays a *game*, the game itself is never a mere object; rather, it exists in and for those who play it, even if one is only participating as a 'spectator'."[9] And, he continues, the concepts of subject and object are inadequate for thinking understanding. To play is to engage in that play in a way responsive to the to and fro movement of the play. The self is at stake in a participatory way, not in the mode of self-consciousness. A more complete discussion of play follows in Chapter One, but I will make here a few prefatory remarks about the nature of play. The notion of play is ambiguous[10], and it is sometimes unclear, for example, how it differs from things like games and sports, yet play theorists largely agree with that play is an activity that is spontaneous and intentional but not instrumental, meaning that we seek play its own sake. Play is distinguished from other activities particularly by its "as if" character. When we play, we play as if we are something.

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[9] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Autobiographical Reflections," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 23.

[10] Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

In so doing, we take the matter at hand seriously. Thus whereas many thinkers, such as Schiller, place seriousness against play's frivolity, Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer alike remind us that play is actually serious. The opposite of play is not seriousness, but not taking part, not taking play seriously. Through play we are transformed as we engage in possibilities that we could not otherwise access.

What is particularly important about play is its groundlessness. What this means is that while there are definite contours and particular playspaces, the event of playing cannot be determined prior to its being played. In play, there is always a leeway (*Spielraum*) in place for the player to respond. Because play cannot be predetermined, the player must be open and responsive to the other players and the play as it happens. The game cannot happen if one strives to master it. Instead, play is a matter of spontaneity and creativity. Even when one plays by herself, one must respond in concrete ways to the development of the play. However, because play has these particular contours and is situated in a particular place, it is certainly not the case that anything goes. One cannot play in any generalizable or abstractable way and play is not solipsistic. Play, then, is fundamentally concerned with difference, insofar as the play can never be merely a projection of the self, but this is not a generalizable difference. One must respond to *this* play or *these* players. Lastly, in part because of its fundamental ambiguity, play resists conceptualization, yet it is not devoid of knowledge or content. Rather, this knowledge involves understanding, but no concept can render intelligible everything that is to be said and understood.

We return to the question posed above, namely of how to understand how an original ethics could remain meaningful while also remaining groundless. That is, we must understand ethics in a way that neither relies on abstracted rules nor would be seen as merely relative to individual experiences. I suggest that turning our attention to the play of the

ethical helps us better conceive an answer to this task. There is, as thinkers such as Monica Vilhauer,[11] Dennis Schmidt,[12] Günter Figal,[13] and Nicholas Davey[14] argue, something fundamentally ethical in Gadamer's account of hermeneutic experience insofar as there is a responsibility toward the matter at hand and to preserving the integrity and alterity of one's conversation partner. Vilhauer, in her careful book *Gadamer's Ethics of Play* argues that the heart of hermeneutic experience as play is characterized by a shared commitment with one's dialogue partner to mutual respect and behavior that allows the conversation to flourish. Furthermore, because dialogue and these mutual relations allow for the growth and development of the discussion partners, the conversation is oriented toward common human good.[15] Similarly, as Schmidt explains, "the very structure of hermeneutics is ethically significant and that for this reason as Gadamer has outlined it is responsive to the original ethical demand, namely the demand for freedom."[16] For Schmidt, because the structure of hermeneutics is what allows for an interpretive responsiveness to our being in the world and with others, such being is always already at stake. That is to say, because understanding for Gadamer is not merely cognitive but lived and transformative, one's very way of being is at play in understanding. This orientation toward and action in response to one's situation is the movement of freedom.

While these scholars make important contributions in shedding light on the ethics of play, I aim to highlight how this relationship between play and ethics is not unidirectional.

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[11] Monica Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010).

[12] Dennis J. Schmidt, "Hermeneutics as Original Ethics," in *Difficulties of Ethical Life*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt and Shannon Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). Schmidt, "On the Incalculable: Language and Freedom from a Hermeneutic Point of View."

[13] Günter Figal, *For a Philosophy of Freedom and Strife: Politics, Aesthetics, Metaphysics*, trans. Wayne Klein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

[14] Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

[15] Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play*: 76.

[16] Schmidt, "Hermeneutics as Original Ethics," 38. Emphasis removed.

Not only is there something ethical about play, but there is also something playful about ethics. This is suggested by Jean Greisch in his essay, "The 'Play of Transcendence' and the Question of Ethics."[17] Taking up Heidegger's discussion of play in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (GA 27), Greisch describes the play of Dasein as allowing the possibility of self-responsibility and being with others. As put into play, Dasein cannot be master, but rather must be responsive to its situation. Greisch writes, "It become clear that the transcendental concept of play simultaneously and in an original sense constitutes the play space of ethics, that is, the space of freedom, without an oblivion of its limits."[18] Greisch emphasizes that because Dasein can look for no ground but its own origin, the task of Dasein is to develop its bearing in its fundamental bearinglessness, thus always against the background of the darkness of its origin.

Günter Figal identifies a similar connection between play and freedom when he writes, "Rather freedom is the openness, the play-space (*Spielraum*), which every activity requires to be carried out at all….[E]very activity, every comportment, can be understood correctly only when one understands them within their play-space."[19] If original ethics is to think action differently, it must thus also think action in its playspace. This speaks to another point I argue, namely that traditional ethics has forgotten the space of ethics. In an effort to resist relativism and subjectivism, thinkers have sought to establish universal principles and norms. Yet so long as ethics is a matter of universal principles, there is a widening gap between those principles and the concrete place of activity they are meant to govern. Furthermore, by understanding ethics as playful, we preserve the movement that belongs to it. Forgetting the space of ethics thus makes ethics static. I will argue that the particular place

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[17] Jean Greisch, "The 'Play of Transcendence' and the Question of Ethics," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

[18] Ibid., 113.

[19] Figal, *For a Philosophy of Freedom and Strife: Politics, Aesthetics, Metaphysics*: vii-viii.

of ethics does not render ethics relative, but is what makes it possible at all. If *êthos* is a form of dwelling and relation to the world, then this space of dwelling must be thought.

Against this very concern of relativism, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink emphasize the shared meaning and understanding in language that undergirds our being in the world. Thus being in the world is being with others in a robust, shared way. Heidegger claims just this when he says that we are conversation (EHP 58). We do not encounter the world in a neutral or objective way, but from a particular position colored by tradition, culture, and meaning. For Gadamer, all understanding begins with particular prejudices, but these prejudices do not imperil understanding. Rather, they are what enable us to encounter the world as meaningful, to see something *as* something. Understanding always takes place within a particular horizon of meaning. Through interpretation, understanding, and engaging the other, these prejudices are challenged and developed and the horizons of meaning join as the fusion of horizons [*Horizontverschmelzung*] (TM 305). Gadamer has been widely criticized for seeing this as a kind of fusion, as it makes it sound like the particular parts are fused or melted together, thus obfuscating or obliterating any difference. However, what Gadamer means by this term is rather that a shared, joint horizon develops. For example, a joint may be fused together. This doesn't mean the separate pieces of the joint are melted together. Rather, they are held together through the fusion and form a joint. So, while forming a whole, the parts are still discernible from one another. On Gadamer's account, then, our encounters with others develop shared meaning and understanding, but this shared understanding is dynamic. Meaning develops in the play between foreign and familiar. Tradition is always something that is lived and living.

One of the primary objections to Gadamer's hermeneutics is that his insistence on the fusion of horizons and the priority of tradition precludes the possibility of difference.

Habermas famously charges Gadamer with merging hermeneutics and tradition into a single point, thus sacrificing the potential critical dimension of hermeneutics to the authority of tradition.[20] John Caputo recognizes against Habermas that Gadamer provides us with "mobile, flexible tradition"[21] Tradition is thus not monolithic, but mobile, especially expressed in the German *Überlieferung*, handing over. The problem, though, is that Gadamer's account of tradition is overly conciliatory. He attempts to smooth over differences and fails to treat tradition with an eye of suspicion. Caputo writes, '[Gadamer] never asks to what extent the play of tradition is a power play and its unity forced by the powers that be."[22] Similarly, Robert Bernasconi, drawing on Derrida, worries that because Gadamer's understanding of the other always already presupposes a possible agreement, Gadamer cannot account for radical alterity or a sense of misunderstanding that is more than accidental. For Bernasconi, there must be a possibility for the oppressed to insist that the oppressor cannot understand her and still remain who he is, but it seems that Gadamer cannot provide this as a possibility.[23] Feminist interpreters of Gadamer also question how to take up this language of "we" and tradition when their own voices have been systemically marginalized by that tradition.[24] In some ways Heidegger's account of otherness fairs no better, for some critics, with Levinas perhaps the most notable, have accused Heidegger of not thinking being with others concretely enough.

We are faced with the problem, then, that even if original ethics succeeds in not succumbing to subject/object and theory/practice divisions or in not positing false

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[20] Jürgen Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*," in *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: Suny Press, 1990), 236.

[21] John Caputo, *Radical Hermenutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). 108.

[22] Ibid., 112.

[23] Robert Bernasconi, "'You Don't Know What I'm Talking About': Alterity and the Hermeneutic Ideal," in *The Specter of Relativism*, ed. Lawrence Schmidt (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 192.

[24] Lorraine Code, "Introduction: Why Feminists Do Not Read Gadamer," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lorraine Code (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 5.

foundations, we might be left with something that instead delivers us into hegemony. I argue, however, that original ethics as play and as conversation has the critical resources necessary to respond to these criticisms, and I will develop these more in the subsequent chapters. Here I would like to make a few remarks about the philosophical underpinnings of this project. At bottom I suggest that not only does philosophical hermeneutics describe a comportment toward practice, but because hermeneutics is itself a practice, and not a method, hermeneutics cannot ever have the last word about itself. It remains fundamentally open to its own questionability. So, as hermeneutics can account for the play and incalculability of ethical life, so, too, can it account for—and indeed demand—its own comportment and conditionedness.

In his autobiographical reflections, Gadamer writes that what motivated him to compose his magnum opus *Truth and Method* was the desire to his see studies and teaching supported in a philosophically responsible way and to see that theoretical constructions were actually borne out in experience, thus to see philosophizing as inseparable from practice and as itself a historically conditioned practice. He explains,

> Indeed, I began asking myself whether philosophy could still be placed under the rubric of such a synthetic task at all. Indeed, for the continuation of hermeneutical experiences, must not philosophy hold itself radically open, captivated by what remains always evident to it, and use its powers to oppose all redarkening of what it has seen? Philosophy is enlightenment, but precisely also enlightenment with regard to its own dogmatism.[25]

If philosophy is to avoid dogmatism, it must question its own practices. Pursuing philosophy in general guarantees neither truth nor certainty, and indeed, quests for these things often yield dogmatism.[26] Gadamer's project consistently resists the positivism and scientism

[25] Gadamer, "Autobiographical Reflections," 20.

[26] Indeed, so much is said by Kant: "[Criticism] is opposed only to dogmatism, i.e., to the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts according to principles, which reason has been using for a long time without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has

popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that were modeled on erroneous conceptions of the natural sciences. Instead, for Gadamer, as well as for Heidegger and Fink, philosophy must be carried out with an orientation of understanding, that is, as a concern for meaning that allows the matter at hand to present itself rather than be chipped away at like a geode.

This commitment to philosophical openness, to the very questionability of philosophic practice, is central to all of Gadamer's work. In the spirit of philosophy, then, we find a commitment to the other, an openness to other positions. Indeed, as Gadamer continues,

> Over the years, what I tried to teach, above all, was hermeneutic praxis. Hermeneutics is primarily a practice, the art of understanding and of making something understood to someone else. It is the heart of all education that wants to teach how to philosophize. In it, what one has to exercise above all is the ear, the sensitivity for perceiving prior determinations, anticipations, and imprints that reside in concepts.[27]

Philosophy, at the very least as Gadamer conceives it, is itself a mode of interpretation: meaning is anticipated, determinations are perceived, and concepts are understood through dialogue against the backdrop of historically effected concepts. To philosophize is to engage in conversation and to develop a comportment and sensitivity to what is other. Whereas Gadamer is criticized by Bernasconi for prefiguring every conversation as one of shared meaning and thus of making the other more familiar before she could even speak on her own terms, Gadamer's point is that we could not even recognize the other as other except against the background of a shared horizon. Still, we must always beware that we are hearing and heeding the other. Hermeneutics sets itself an educative task as it is always a learning to

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obtained them. Dogmatism is therefore the dogmatic procedure of pure reason, **without an antecedent critique of its own capacity**." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). BXXXV.

[27] Gadamer, "Autobiographical Reflections," 21.

listen. At the very least, so long as the other is approached through an openness in listening, then all prejudices we have remain subject to change.

This connection between hermeneutic praxis, philosophical openness, and ethics comes into better relief in Gadamer's 1961 paper "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," written against the backdrop of Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism." In this piece Gadamer questions whether a philosophical ethics in our time is possible and, if so, what would comprise it. In response, he suggests that there are two lines a contemporary philosophical ethics could take. The first line, which he identifies with Aristotle's ethics, accounts for particular conditioned experiences, as if evidenced by the emphasis on concrete moral action and *hexis*. Furthermore, philosophical ethics is itself conditioned as it is guided by practical reason and does not seek to anchor itself in universal principles or ultimate foundations. This stands in contrast with the second line, which Gadamer identifies with Kant's moral philosophy, characterized by formalism and appeals to a transcendental subject. While Kant does emphasize concrete moral action, because his ethics relies on the universal quality of the moral law, his system is unconditioned. Kant does temper what Gadamer deems the Enlightenment's "blind pride in reason"[28] and so cannot be equated with any kind of dogmatic formalism, but Gadamer, ever wary of positivism, is concerned that such appeals to universal principles preclude the very questionability required to guard against dogmatism. For example, while Nicolai Hartmann and Max Scheler strive to correct Kantian formalism by arguing for a material or non-formal a priori arising from concrete ethical experience, their theory reintroduces an indissoluble gap between concrete life and moral philosophy by inserting an infinite subject. Ultimately Gadamer argues that while neither Aristotle nor Kant is absolutely (in)correct, the line of Aristotle is more likely to

[2828] ———, "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," 288.

provide the resources for a philosophical ethics that can account fully for the richness, diversity, and conditionedness of human life.

It would be misguided to think that we could simply return to or reappropriate Aristotelian or Greek ethics as they were, essentially because such a reappropriation would fail to recognize the conditionedness and the historicity of our own time. We cannot simply get back into the mindset of the Greeks. We cannot conceive of our own, or Gadamer's or Heidegger's or Fink's own, reception of the Greeks without also understanding it or seeing it through the tradition of Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and so on. Again, tradition is something handed over, not something set and static. What the turn to Aristotle shows, however, is that there is something true about the Greek sense of *êthos* that continues to speak today. In his essay, "Greek Philosophy and Modern Thinking," Gadamer says just this: "But the Greeks were right when they saw that self-consciousness is a secondary phenomenon when compared to the giving in to the world and being open to the world that we call consciousness, knowledge, or openness to experience."[29] Rather than seeing our contemporary position as being subsumed by the Greek tradition, we find just that there is something to be said about and by the Greeks, namely that there is something more primary that self-consciousness. Even in his criticisms of Kant, for example, Gadamer makes clear that a position can never be rejected out of hand. The task is to think along with, and at times, beyond one's partner. The conversation has not drawn to a close. No conversation ever fully draws to a close.

Nicholas Davey highlights this aspect of hermeneutics, describing it as unquiet understanding. Because hermeneutics is characterized by openness, it is fundamentally characterized by distance and difference. There can be no movement, no play, where there is

[29] ———, "Greek Philosophy and Modern Thinking," 272.

no difference. Davey argues against the criticism that hermeneutics appropriates the other into the self by demonstrating how, according to hermeneutics, there is no self except through experiencing the difference of the other. To have a self is to recognize one's self also as other, as rooted in interdependence through language.[30] When I encounter another, my own self is at stake and at risk. I remain vulnerable in the face of the other. Rather than covering over difference, hermeneutics retains distance and openness to difference, at times in an agonistic way. Because hermeneutic experience is never finished, there remains a constant play of distance and difference, of familiar and unfamiliar. For Gadamer, there is always something more than we could say or conceptualize, and yet this dimension remains meaningful. Vilhauer makes a similar point in speaking about Gadamer's sense of intelligible difference. To recognize something as different requires that it is intelligible as different.[31] Indeed, if the very meaning of otherness is something that cannot be made intelligible, then the other's alterity is reduced to a formal, contentless difference.[32] Seeing hermeneutics in its playfulness allows us, she argues, to gain better insight into the play and preservation of difference. She writes, "The very notion of play requires move and countermove, question and answer…We don't learn anything unless there is something *other* confronting us and challenging our expectations and prejudices."[33] To enter into play we must remain open to what is other. This requires, too, that we listen for what might have been excluded or missed or silenced, but this listening and investigation into difference still happens in the play of language and dialogue.

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[30] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 241.

[31] As many scholars have illustrated, there is here a parallel with Donald Davidson's rejection of radical incommensurability. Davidson argues in "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" that I cannot know that someone disagrees with me unless there is something in common we can point to as the basis of disagreement. If something exists in her world that does not exist in mine, I have no way of knowing. Despite their apparent closeness, both Davidson and Gadamer strive to separate themselves from one another in ways that I will discuss in Chapter Three.

[32] Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play*: 93.

[33] Ibid., 92.

One might argue that while Gadamer's analysis of play does allow for the otherness of the other, this play still remains not radical enough. It does not have the same rupturing quality as Nietzsche's or Derrida's, for example. Mihai Spariosu, for example, contrasts Nietzsche's pre-rational play to Gadamer's or Derrida's. Gadamer's play certainly does seem more collaborative than agonistic. In order to emphasize more the role of difference, I will argue that we look especially to Eugen Fink for two reasons. First, Fink receives very little treatment in the English speaking world. My aim then is to open further conversations about his genuine philosophical contributions. Second, and more central to this project, Fink, like Gadamer and Heidegger, believes that our fundamental mode of being in the world is one of understanding and interpretation. However, Fink believes Heidegger overemphasizes unconcealment and light at the cost of the negative, radical moments of difference. Fink states that humans are characterized by their ability to participate in the play of the world and the earth. The earth is what makes being possible, but it is abyssal. The earth conceals itself at every turn and resists any penetration. There is something essentially turbulent and disruptive about the earth. In participating in the play of the earth, the human being thus must orient herself toward this abyssal origin and also allow the earth to remain itself in its incomprehensibility. It requires that she attune ourselves to what surpasses her, to what is incalculable. This is not to say that the earth is meaningless, but that we can recognize it as fundamentally different precisely because it has meaning for us in play. Schmidt suggests that that while Gadamer's philosophical ethics goes far in understanding the task of an original ethics, what remains unthought is the realm of the nonhuman and nature that comes to us unbidden.[34] Thus I argue that in his earth analysis, Fink allows us to see better what this relationship between ethical life and the unbidden would be. For Fink, comportment toward

[34] Schmidt, "On the Incalculable: Language and Freedom from a Hermeneutic Point of View," 44.

the earth is ultimately an orientation toward finitude. As such, it requires us to recognize our own vulnerability and to see ourselves at risk and at stake. The world, though characterized by its comprehensibility, still resists any attempt to conceptualize it, thus requiring as well comportment toward the incalculable. Thus, I will argue that Fink allows us to think play more radically without abandoning the commitments of philosophical hermeneutics.

Based on these observations, I argue that original ethics must account for the particular abyssal ground and the inherent otherness that belong to human existence. The self is fundamentally conditioned, but this is not to say that the self is in any sense hindered or constrained by this conditionedness. Rather, it is only on the basis of this concrete life and situatedness within language, tradition, ritual, and social practices that there can be anything like a self. To be clear, in speaking of an ethical subject or a hermeneutic subject, I do not mean anything like the subject traditionally understood in philosophy, that is, as a subject against objects. Indeed, Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer seek to do away with the language of subjects in general. In most instances, I choose to speak of the ethical or hermeneutic self rather than man, as in man's dwelling in the abode of truth, for example. I avoid the terms of "man", "men", and "mankind" not only to avoid gendered language, but also to guard against the tendency to see humans in opposition to animals and to thus cover over the animality of humans. In other places I will speak of persons, which is also not a neutral term. By person, I mean neither merely one who has certain properties, such as reason or self-consciousness, although a person likely will have capacities for such things, nor one who belongs to the category of human beings. Indeed, it may be possible to speak of nonhuman animals as persons. What I mean by "person", and I think this is precisely what is at stake in the sense of a hermeneutic subject, is simply one who is able to create and understand shared meaning in relation with others, and that this needn't be at the same level

or in the same mode for all beings we would consider persons.[35] This may suggest that to be a person requires one to be a language user, but for me this remains an open question, particularly if language is here meant only as a prescribed mode of communication. If by language we mean instead linguisticality, which Jean Grondin characterizes as "the quite general capacity to mean something by something and to communicate it,"[36] then I agree that a person is one who participates in the play of linguisticality. Thus, following Nancy following Heidegger, if the task of original ethics is that of making sense, then we must understand those responding to the task as participants, as *Mitspieler* in this meaning making. Some may object that this term then becomes too broad to be meaningful, but I think it rather preserves the possibility of incalculability and difference, and still must always be cashed out in concrete ways.

We might ask the question that Gadamer himself asks, namely, whether this sort of project has any currency. He writes, "When [*Truth and Method*] finally appeared, I was really not sure whether it had not come too late and might really be superfluous. I could already foresee that a new generation was arising that was in the grip partly of technological expectations and partly captive to views associated with the critique of ideology."[37] If it is the case that few philosophers identify themselves as logical positivists any longer and that more people have recognized that questions of meaning and language cannot be asked

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[35] I am also wary of using the term person in a normative sense to indicate those who warrant certain kinds of considerations, for this would narrow the scope of considerations too greatly. For example, an anencephalic infant could not create shared meaning herself, but she would be, to borrow the language of Nel Noddings and Eva Feder Kittay, one who was cared for, one who has meaning for those caring for her and who belongs to a relation with them. We might say similar things about nonhuman animals or the environment. Cf. Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed. (**Berkeley:** University of California Press, 2003). Eva Feder Kittay, "At the Margins of Moral Personhood," *Ethics* 116, no. 1 (2005). My aim here is not to establish any sort of criteria to determine what obligations we would have to others, but to point to how a conception of personhood is at stake in original ethics.

[36] Gadamer, "A Look Back over the Collected Works and Their Effective History: Concluding Dialogue with Jean Grondin," 422.

[37] ———, "Autobiographical Reflections," 20.

independent of one another, then do we have to worry about these things quite as much? In the plenary address to the Eleventh Inter-American Congress in 1985,[38] Richard Rorty traces the development from logic to language to play in both analytic and Continental philosophy. Whereas philosophers in the early twentieth century wanted to created sharp divisions between philosophy and other subject areas, philosophers of the mid- and late twentieth century worked to blur the dividing lines. This development is characterized, he argues, primarily in a shift in attitude that moved away from the reductionism of logic toward the creativity of play. The task of philosophy is now one of play, he suggests quoting Schiller, for humans are human only insofar as they play. Furthermore, what the philosophers of play demonstrate is that there is nothing to ground our practices save those practices. This is what hermeneutics tells us, and this task of understanding practices—and life itself—in groundlessness still remains. Hermeneutics has not had the final word, and I suggest we still have good reason to hear it speak. My aim in the following chapters is to think with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink, both through their own engagement of the history of philosophy and through contemporary reception of their work, what an original ethics would be. I begin with a closer look at the question of original ethics and how it may be informed by play before turning to a discussion of the place, the playspace, of the ethical. Next I focus

[38] Richard Rorty, "From Logic to Language to Play," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 59, no. 5 (1986): 752. Rorty points us, I think, in an interesting direction and while he adopts much of Heidegger and Gadamer, there are important points of difference between his project and theirs. For example, he appeals to Schiller specifically because he sees this orientation toward life as self-creation as an *aesthetic* one, but as we will find for Heidegger and Gadamer, such an orientation cannot be merely aesthetic. This hinges, I would suggest, on a key difference in understanding language. Rorty sees language as the possibility for this creation, but in so doing, sees it instrumentally as a tool for therapy. As Richard Bernstein explains, "Rorty's own vision of the 'good society' is one where we will play, a type of *jouissance* where there is a nonviolent tolerant celebration of our capacities for making and self-creation, where we would abandon the 'spirit of seriousness' and no longer think it is important to hold positions about 'Truth,' 'Objectivity,' 'Rationality,' and so on. It is a vision where we all become poets who have learned to live with contingency, preferably 'strong poets'."Richard J. Bernstein, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward: Richard Rorty on Liberal Democracy and Philosophy," *Political Theory* 15, no. 4 (1987): 541. So while I think we might do well to follow Rorty's suggestion about the task of philosophy as play, I would not be as inclined to follow the implications he sees stemming from this task.

on the role of language as providing the possibility for ethical responsibility. I conclude by looking at the relationship between ethics and education, particularly in the sense of *Bildung*.

In Chapter One: "Out of Your Hand Steps the Meteor": Ethics and Play, I turn to Gadamer's essay, "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," where he suggests that a philosophical ethics must ultimately be one that is not an appeal to rules, but to a way of being in the world. Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink locate this being in the world in the Greek understanding of ethics as *êthos*. I explore their contemporary accounts of ethical life as *êthos* as responses to the philosophical ethics of Aristotle and Immanuel Kant. Based on their understanding of *êthos*, I suggest that ethical life demands an active openness and comportment toward, as well as a preservation of, alterity. This reconsideration of ethical life better comes into better focus, I argue, when seen in relation to Heidegger's, Gadamer's, and Fink's accounts of play. By maintaining the significance of play, we are better able to see how meaning has its own ground. Play also shows that ethical life should not be viewed as a linear progression of moral development toward an absolute achievement, but as a continuous process of expansion and deepening of relationships. I argue that not only is play at stake in original ethics, but also doing serious work in the theories of Aristotle and Kant. Following Julia Annas,[39] I locate play in the flow that accompanies practical understanding and virtuous life. In Kant we find play in the "as if" structure of the categorical imperative. For example, according to the categorical imperative, we must act "as if" we could universalize the maxim of our actions. Even if the maxim were not universal, we must act as if it were. We find play as well as in what he describes as the "playspace" [*Spielraum*] or

[39] Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

latitudo for the free choice of action in following the moral law.[40] Thus I suggest that rather than reason alone, play has a central role in ethical life.

In Chapter Two: The Playspace of the Ethical, I examine the ways in which Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer understand conditionedness in ethical life by looking primarily at what it means to be in the world. No longer is the world thought of as an objective entity over against subjects or as the result of subjective experience. I will argue that in order to understand ethical life, we must also understand place, in the sense of *topos*, such that the situatedness or particularity of place does not reduce ethical life to subjectivism, but makes ethical life possible at all. Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink each connects *êthos* to *physis* to discuss how ethical life develops in and through the world. As we will see, Fink defines humans as *ens cosmologicum*, world beings, who participate in the totality of the world through play. Fink identifies this play with the world as the origin of alterity and thus of ethics. Furthermore, thinking the topological dimensions of ethical life brings to light better the role of ground(lessness) and dwelling.

This emphasis on alterity is carried over into Chapter Three: *Mitspieler*: The Conversation that We Are. As Heidegger claims, we are conversation; our being is linguistic. We are in the world not as isolated individuals, but as members of communities and relationships. While many thinkers in the twentieth century, such as Brandom, Davidson, and Habermas, gave greater prominence to language and intersubjectivity, I suggest that these thinkers still rely on a conception of language as a tool of communication and think of recognition primarily in first- and third-person relationships rather than first- and second-person. Looking to play helps provide an account of recognition, interdependence, and responsibility that is more robustly first- and second-person and that does not require an

[40] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 390.

appeal to merely formal relations. I suggest that we see language not as a tool employed by rational agents, but rather as providing the basis of community and responsibility in which one's own being is at stake and at play.

Lastly, in Chapter Four: Poetic Education, I turn toward concrete practices to examine how the accounts given in the previous two chapters are borne out by looking at the role of education. It is not accidental that Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer each introduces discussions of ethics within larger discussions of education, for each insists the ethical self is something constantly developing rather that something achieved. Each also emphasizes the role of art and poetry in education. I contrast this with other accounts of aesthetic education, paying particular attention to Kant and Schiller. Drawing especially on Hölderlin's gesture toward a new aesthetic education, what Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink call for is not aesthetic education, for this would be merely the cultivation of taste. Instead they call for what I identify as *poetic* education. Poetic education is a mode of cultivation, but of a comportment toward the world and ultimately, I will argue, of ethical life. Rather than taste, *Bildung*, is concerned with tact. Play is at stake in both aesthetic education and poetic education both, but we in aesthetic education, play is supplanted by reason. I suggest that in poetic education, in contrast, play is preserved as that which goes beyond reason. Experiences of art, like play, give rise to development by affording the possibility of self-recognition and relations to the world, others, and ourselves in new ways. Poetic education is thus a mode of freedom, wherein freedom marks the creative self-formation of the ethical self. I suggest that play equips us with capacities of ethical reflection, namely the freedom to imagine someone else's situation, the freedom to imagine oneself as belonging to something greater, and the freedom to call current practices, traditions, and beliefs into question. This analysis leads us to an education that is a learning to hear and an ethics of conversation.

Chapter One: "Out of Your Hand Steps the Meteor": Ethics and Play

The question facing Martin Heidegger, Eugen Fink, and Hans-Georg Gadamer alike is how to understand the human being in light of her development in the world and with others. The understandings they develop differ from that presented by what they consider western metaphysics. On their accounts, western metaphysics conceives of the human merely as rational animal and champions both scientistic knowledge and theory over practice. This results in the subject divorced from nature, morality as an individual's formal mastery of herself and the world, and knowledge divorced from action. Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer instead call for an alternative to a picture of moral life that yields such a subject bifurcated as rational animal. Such an alternative would account for the richness and relationality that belong to being human, as well as the fundamental ambiguity and incalculability of life. While each offers little direct systematic treatment of ethics, and Gadamer, I suggest that considerations of ethics permeate nearly the entirety of their works. Looking primarily to Aristotle, all three suggest this alternative consists in a rehabilitation of ethics understood as *êthos*, that is, ethics concerned more with being with others in the world through understanding than with establishing universal grounds or principles. Wary of formalism and abstractions, they call for understanding personhood as fundamentally situated, communal, and conditioned.

In this chapter, I aim to articulate more fully what a contemporary account of ethical life as *êthos* entails. I argue that rather than conceiving of the ethical subject as a rational being in the abstract, and judging it in terms of its response to merely hypothetical moral situations, we should see her instead in terms of her rich and meaningful relationships, with both others and the world. The outcome of this alternative conception of ethical selfhood is a recovery of a dimension of life that surpasses any attempt to be conceptualized or codified.

Despite its non-conceptual nature, this superabundance does still have a particular logic or order and is meaningful. Thus in place of the self-mastery or self-legislation that risks precluding this superabundance, I suggest we instead understand the ethical subject and ethical life in terms of vulnerability and openness toward that which surpasses the person. If ethical life is going to be more than mastery or calculation, it demands an active openness and comportment toward, as well as a preservation of, what is other. Such openness involves a fundamental vulnerability, which is further imperiled in an era that prizes verifiability and mastery.

By attending more to vulnerability and relationality than exercises of reason, we are able to account for the richness and incalculability that belongs to ethics. Furthermore, by insisting on the central role of play, we are also better able to understand the dynamic, participatory, communal, and developmental nature of ethics. This development, however, should not be viewed as a linear progression of moral development toward an absolute achievement, such as rational autonomy, but rather as a continuous process of expansion and deepening of relationships. I suggest that such an alternative picture of ethical persons and ethical life can be found implicit in the thought of Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer, and that such a picture comes into better relief when we examine their theories of play. First, play has been identified since antiquity as a significant locus of moral development. In play knowledge and understanding are developed and practiced. Second, I argue that play best expresses the superabundant, communal, and creative dimension of ethical life. Play, as itself groundless, helps demonstrate the way in which something substantive and transformative arises out of this groundless development. There belongs to play a superabundant dimension that resists conceptualization or totalization. Play, by its very ambiguity and own superabundance, as well as its imaginative and transformative nature, thus provides a way to

understand the logic of superabundance in ethical life as involving a dimension of experience and knowledge that cannot be fully grasped by reason or fixed in place by concepts. I aim to make clear that ethics should not be thought of as the product of the subject, or of ethical life or the ethical subject prior to the other. Rather, I take the ethical subject and ethical life to be mutually constitutive through this superabundance and being in the world. In the first section, I provide an account of play and suggest how play enables us to understand the contours of ethical life. This element of play is, moreover, present in the ethics of both Aristotle and Kant. In the second section, I present a more detailed picture of what original ethics characterized by play would look like. In the third section, I examine how incalculability or superabundance does not imperil considerations of ethical life, but instead points to what makes ethical life possible at all. I suggest we understand the ethical personhood and life appearing only through playful being in the world, can be understood only in light of being with others, and whose ethical comportment is a matter of attunement and creative openness toward the superabundance of the world and others.

I. The Playspace of the Ethical

In his essay, "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," Gadamer expresses the concern that a philosophical ethics that sees itself as providing abstracted rules or principles would in effect be empty and a practical ethics without consideration of the role of thought would be blind. Thus if there is to be a philosophical ethics, it must account both for the ways that thinking is itself a kind of practice and that knowledge and action are integrated in our experiences. Gadamer's essay draws on Heidegger's argument in the "Letter on Humanism." There he claims that every humanism is either metaphysics or else makes itself the ground of some metaphysics. This is the case because humanism raises similar concerns,

suggesting that the account of ethics given by humanism is inadequate. Humanism, like the tradition of western metaphysics, thinks being from the side of humans and beings rather than asking what being as such is. According to Heidegger, any assertion of the essence of humans that does not ask the question of being is metaphysics. Indeed, humanism does not, he claims, even consider the relation of being to such an essence. Such thinking fails to consider being as prior to or more originary than beings but has instead either presupposed being without giving it real consideration or thought of being in terms of substance and essence. As substance, essence, or actuality, being in this sense is understood as foundational and static. This forecloses any possible movement of being and presupposes being as a foundation or ground without attending to being's activity of grounding. If we thus understand being as the way metaphysics describes, then we are unable to understand fully either the role of being for beings or, if being is thought, of the role of development.

Heidegger argues that it is not the case that some ground that could serve as an ultimate foundation exists somewhere. First, if there were, we would be caught in a ceaseless attempt to determine that first or most ultimate ground. What ground would we have for assuming that ground to be absolute? Second, the idea of an absolute ground is seriously mistaken about what it is to be a ground. For Heidegger, it is only in active grounding that there is ground. Earlier in 1929, Heidegger explains in "On the Essence of Ground" that grounding means to establish something or set forth possibilities, to provide a basis for something, and to provide an account for something (P 120).[41] Here we see that grounding is always an activity, an event. Since there is no absolute fixed foundation or ground, this activity has nothing outside of its active grounding to which it could appeal. Grounding provides possibilities and bases, yet it is also in a sense for its own sake. Because grounding

[41] Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

is groundless, Heidegger understands being as fundamentally abyssal. As abyss (*Ab-grund*), the ground consistently moves away or resists any attempt to pin it down. Simply because there is no fixed foundation or ground, however, this does not mean that anything goes. Rather, this abyssal dimension of grounding demonstrates that being, as grounding, is always the grounding of something. Meaning is always and fundamentally at stake and in this way avoids a kind of nihilism.

Here a practical example might help. Let's consider the way an activity, such as a conversation, grounds itself. When I talk with my sister, for example, there are certain expectations we have. First, we both expect the other to say something meaningful, not in the sense of saying something deep or provocative, but simply that she would say something that I would understand. This is the second expectation, then, namely that when she speaks, she expects to be understood. This understanding, however, does not map itself onto a foundation of understanding. Neither is any sort of method applied. Rather, the understanding is anchored in language, tradition, and customs, but also arises through the very happening of the conversation. There are particular contours or boundaries that belong to the conversation that we navigate as we talk with one another. Furthermore, the conversation we have does not exist prior to our having it, but it also is not something magically conjured from nowhere. Even if I have imagined the conversation ahead of time or imagined the points I want to make, this is not the same as the conversation that I then do have with my sister. I have to be open to what she has to say and also where the conversation takes us. Thus it is only through our conversing that anything like a conversation arises. We could talk meaningfully about the conversation at a later time, too, so there is something substantive that belongs to it as a conversation. We could not abstract it from its happening as a kind of conversation. In this way the conversation grows out of

and grounds itself. There is no other foundation for it to which we could appeal, yet we still could provide an account of the conversation, just as the conversation might also be able to provide an account for something else, such as the relationship my sister and I share. Indeed, although our very relationship is grounded by over twenty years' worth of conversations, such that those conversations provide a basis for our relationship, none of those conversations or our relationship itself could dictate precisely how our current conversation comes to be. Instead, the conversation grounds itself in a quite concrete way. It is a basis of meaning, not only in the brief exchange when she informs me of her flight time, for example, but also in that it furthers and gives meaning to our relationship.

Following Gadamer and Heidegger, I argue that an alternative picture of the ethical human must account for the particular abyssal ground that belongs to human existence as well as the inherent otherness that belongs to it. Historical attempts to ground ethics in universal laws and reason or freedom as human agency have failed to attend to that abyssal dimension. The ground of ethics, too, must be thought from out of being, and therefore, too, must be attended to in its groundlessness. One way in which we might conceive of how ethics as groundless could remain meaningful and would not rely either on abstracted rules or be seen merely relative to individual experiences is by turning our attention to the playspace of the ethical.

Play, as an activity that is simultaneously free and bound by rules, creative, open, and a site of knowledge, development, and understanding, helps demonstrate both the way in which something substantive and transformative arises from self-development and the way in which something dynamic, rather than static, provides a basis for understanding.

Toward a Definition of Play

Before turning to the different ways of taking up play in ethics, we should first clarify what play indeed is. This, however, is no simple task. As the play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith remarks, "Play is difficult to understand because it is ambiguous."[42] Play is at once lighthearted and serious, real and non-real, human and non-human, free and bound, rational and irrational. Play, moreover, is ubiquitous. We talk of child's play, of language games, of the play of light on the water, of the play of chance, as chaos, as game theory, and of the play of faculties. Similarly, the behaviors and objects engaged and experienced in play are always also engaged and experienced in non-play. We all experience play, yet are unable to point to exactly what it is we are experiencing. We seem to be able either to employ play as a metaphor for other activities or to define play only metaphorically. It is fundamentally groundless, but grounds itself in this groundlessness. By its very groundlessness, play does indeed taunt us in its inaccessibility.

The anthropologist Robert Fagen expresses frustration regarding the evasiveness of play. He agrees that play is abyssal as it has no ground, but he suggests that it is the resistance to conceptualization, not the groundlessness, that evades. "The most irritating feature of play is not the abyss, not perceptual incoherence as such but rather that play taunts us with its inaccessibility. We feel that something is behind it all, but we do not know, or have forgotten how to see it."[43] Whereas Fagen seems to suggest that there is actually something behind play that we have forgotten, I believe it would be better to understand play as groundless, although we often forget this dimension of play by assuming some sort of ground or by trying to look behind things for one. Still, by its very groundlessness, play does indeed taunt us in its inaccessibility. Any attempt to pin play down, especially

[42] Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*: 214.
[43] Robert M. Fagen, *Animal Play Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). 493.

conceptually, obscures whatever play is. Instead, we understand play by playing along with it. Yet despite its fundamental ambiguity and conceptual inaccessibility, play remains incredibly rich and meaningful. It is not ambiguous because it has too little to say, but rather too much.

Fink identifies play as a basic phenomenon of human existence in addition to work, death, love, and political power. Play is not any more fundamental than any of these. Play is different, however, insofar as it alone can express the totality of the world symbolically. Fink draws our attention to symbol as two halves of a coin: each half is its own but also points to the totality of the coin. Play, for Fink, is ultimately a mode of understanding in which the play of finite and the infinite is realized. The finite human activity of play mirrors the infinite activity of the cosmos and thus is a symbol:

> Human play is a particularly excellent way that being relates itself in understanding to the totality of that which is and itself to be penetrated by the totality. In the play of humans the totality of the world reverberates in itself, allows infinity to glow on and in an innerworldly being, on and in a finite character (S 235).

As David Krell explains, for Fink, "Play is both a cosmic *symbol* and a symbol of the *cosmos*."[44] This is apparent when we recall Heraclitus' suggestion in Fragment 52 that the world is a child playing.[45] The world as totality is a kind of play, in that it is a constant movement and play between creating and destroying, concealing and unconcealing, etc. and in that sense, Fink thinks the cosmos is thus fundamentally playful. Additionally, play, specifically human play symbolically expresses the cosmos. Play is itself worldly: "Play becomes a 'cosmic metaphor' for the collective appearance and disappearance of things in the space and time of the world" (S 62). Play allows the world to appear. Through play,

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[44] David Farrell Krell, "Towards an Ontology of Play: Eugen Fink's Notion of Spiel," *Research in Phenomenology* 2, no. 1 (1972): 64.

[45] Heraclitus, *Heraclitus: translation and analysis*, trans. Dennis Sweet (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1995). 52.

humans not only express, but also process their connection to what surpasses them. Play is ultimately a mode of understanding.

This allowing the infinite to shine forth in the finite is essential to Fink's understanding of play.[46] Such infinity is possible because of the double relation of play to the world. When we play, we produce a playworld, where we are able to take on new roles and suspend who we are in actuality. Yet the objects, the *Spielzeug*, which are essential to play, are brought into this play world from the real world. For example, the cardboard map in real life becomes a dynamic landscape and source of crops in play. There is a sort of double existence. In our creation of a world, we symbolically represent the play of the totality of the world. This is not to say, however, that we are cut off from the real world or that there is some metaphysical difference between reality and un-reality.[47] Indeed, when engaged in play, the playworld does not seem any less real that the world outside this space. Though not a subjective illusion, this playworld is not real in the same way that other things are. Rather than trying to make clear distinctions between the real and unreal, as if both were objectively present somewhere, it would be better for us to think of play as a suspension or interruption of the everyday world, while still belonging to that world.

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[46] This idea is not new to Fink, however, and can be found in the work of other thinkers such as Hegel and Schiller. Schiller, speaking of the way the play impulse unites the sensuous and formal impulses, writes, "But if there were cases when he had this twofold experience at the same time, when he was at once conscious of his freedom and sensible of his existence, when he at once felt himself as matter and came to know himself as spirit, he would in such cases, and positively in them alone, have a complete intuition of his humanity, and the object which afforded him this vision would serve him as a symbol of his accomplished destiny, and consequently (since this is only to be attained in the totality of time) as a representation of the Infinite." Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (Mineola: Dover Publications Inc., 2004). 73.

[47] Whereas one might expect a fair amount of overlap between Fink and Gadamer, particularly given their relationships to Heidegger and shared interest in play, little contact seems to have occurred. Gadamer references Fink minimally, and then typically only in connection to Husserl. Gadamer did, however, review Fink's *Spiel als Weltsymbol*, where he accused Fink of remaining trapped in metaphysics, particularly in his discussions of reality and unreality. It seems to that Gadamer's criticisms are particularly unwarranted since Fink is not making metaphysical, but phenomenological claims. C.f. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Spiel als Weltsymbol," *Philosophische Rundschau* 8-9(1961).

Similarly, according to the anthropologist Gregory Bateson, we can only point to things that are play relative to things that are not play. He writes, "We face then two peculiarities of play: *(a)* that the messages or signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant; and *(b)* that that which is denoted by these signals is nonexistent."[48] For example, we might use an umbrella to pretend to slay someone with a sword, but neither the sword nor the slaying is what we would consider real. Yet the person being slayed, if she's playing along, might clutch her chest and fall to the ground in pretend agony. The content of this performance is not exactly real, but she acts *as if* it were the case. She takes it seriously. We could use that same umbrella to pretend to be Luke Skywalker. Whereas we could have the opportunity to slay someone in real life, chances are we would never have that opportunity to be Luke, so play affords the opportunity to engage possibilities we could not otherwise have. Furthermore, whereas what is denoted in a genuine slaying might be vindication, this is not at all what is denoted in this play situation. Instead, what is denoted might just be the friendship between the two players.

Fink's account is quite similar to that given by D.W. Winnicott, who suggests that play affords the primary opportunity for self-identity and a relation to others. The infant, who initially perceives the rest of the world as an extension of herself, particularly because all her needs are typically anticipated and met, gradually begins to separate out the me from the not-me. What allows for this is the child's ability to play, for play, which occupies a sort of potential space between reality and unreality, enables the child to creatively and symbolically respond to her place in the world. This potential space is itself subject to time and space, and objects from the "real" world are brought into it. Here we can see Winnicott's indebtedness to Freud. In "The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming," Freud suggests that the ultimate

[48] Gregory Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in *Steps to an ecology of mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 183.

activity of children is play. He writes, "every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly, he rearranges the things of this world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better."[49] This is echoed by Piaget, who speaks of the symbolic play of children, typically ages2-6, as a way of making sense of the world. The child who is chastised at lunch, for example, may an hour later use a teddy bear to reenact and process that scene.[50] For Piaget, however, symbolic play is soon supplanted around the age of 7 or 8 by games with rules, mirroring the move to the concrete operational stage. For Freud, too, adults do not play as children do. This is particularly the case as adults, when they play, hide their play whereas children do not. Freud suggests that only unhappy adults play in the form of wishful fantasies. Poets, however, do not attempt to hide their play. Furthermore, they create their material spontaneously rather than adopting it readymade. So, while the child's play is connected to reality by giving reality shape and order, the poet's is not.[51]

Fink's and Winnicott's descriptions of play differ sharply from Freud's and Piaget's as they see symbolic play as also concerning play and as not belong to a single development stage. Instead, as the child develops, the objects brought into the world move from blankets and soft toys to other people and then ideas and traditions. Adults play as well, and in much of the same way as children, for the potential space of play still yields the possibility for self-transformation and symbolic relations. As Fink writes, "play is a symbolic act of representation (*Darstellung*) in which human life interprets itself" (OP 105). [52] Thus if play

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[49] Sigmund Freud, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," in *Collected Papers*, ed. Joan Riviere, Alix Strachey, and James Strachey (New York: The International Psycho-analytical Press, 1924), 174.

[50] Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York City: Basic Books, Inc., 2000). 60.

[51] Freud, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," 181.

[52] Eugen Fink, "An Ontology of Play," *Philosophy Today* 4(1960).

marks the possibility for establishing a self through recognition of a relation to others, then play also is an initial and important locus of ethical life in this responsibility to self and other.

Heidegger, too, draws our attention to the ambiguous nature of play, but insists that despite this ambiguity, we can still determine four aspects or criteria:

> Playing is accordingly 1. Not a mechanical sequence of procedures, but rather a free, i.e. always rule-bound, happening. 2. At the same time in this happening, acting and doing are not essential; rather the decisive feature in playing is just the specific condition character, the particular finding oneself thereby. 3. Because behavior is thus not what is essential in play, regulation is thus of a different character, namely: the rules first form in play. The bond is a free one in a very particular sense. Playing plays itself, and of course each time first brings in a game that can then replace itself as a system of rules. In this bringing-itself-to play…play first comes into being, but must however not form itself into a system of rules, pre-scriptions [*Vor-schriften*]. In this however lies 4. The play rule is not a firm norm that is ordered somewhere, but is rather alterable in playing and through playing. Each time this creates for itself the room inside of which it can form (*sich bilden*), i.e. simultaneously reshape (*umbilden*) (GA 27, 312).[53]

What distinguishes Heidegger's account of play from more anthropological accounts is that for Heidegger, play cannot exist prior to its being played, so play for Heidegger is more than following the rules of the game. Rather it also involves opening up the space for such play to occur at all. For Heidegger, being-in-the-world is this sort of play. He writes, "'World' is the title for the game which transcendence plays. Being-in-the-world is this original playing of the game which every single factical Dasein must attune itself to, in order to be able to play itself" (GA 27, 312). Play as being-in-the-world cannot be dictated or formulated in a series of rules prior to play. Instead, it is only through playing, through being-in-the-world, that the rules and norms arise, and it is in this development that play and players are found. If we recall again the example of the conversation, we see that while there are expectations of how the conversation will proceed, the conversation does not follow pre-scripted rules. Instead,

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[53] Martin Heidegger, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Otto Saame and Ina Saame-Speidel, vol. 27 in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1996).

the rules, norms, and players themselves develop through the conversation, through the to and fro play. So, too, in the case of being. In Heidegger's account, play need not be equated with or strictly modeled on child's play. Indeed it seems more the case that play belongs to adults, for Heidegger's Dasein is particularly adult.[54] Furthermore, Heidegger, as well as Fink, point to what seems absent in more anthropological discussions, namely the excessive or superabundant quality of play. For both Fink and Heidegger, play is excessive insofar as it is groundless and spontaneous, so play can never be fixed in place. Although not fixed, play still always belongs to a particular place while not being reducible to that place. Play is also superabundant since it affords the opportunity to relate to that which surpasses the player, as we see in the play relation of beings to the world or beings to being.

Heidegger makes similar observations in *The Principle of Reason*,[55] taking up the question of being in relation to Leibniz's claim that nothing is without reason. There he refers specifically to Heraclitus' statement that "Life is a child playing, moving the pieces in a game: kingship belongs to the child."[56] Heidegger suggests understanding the *Geschick* of being as this child playing. He continues,

> By the gentleness of its play, the greatest royal child is that mystery of the play in which humans are engaged throughout their life, that play in which their essence is at stake. Why does it play, the great child of the world-play Heraclitus brought into view in the aion? It plays because it plays. The 'because' withers away in the play. The play is without 'why.' It plays since it plays. It simply remains a play: the most elevated and the most profound. But this 'simply is everything, the one, the only. The question remains whether and how we, hearing the movements of this play, play along [*mitspielen*] and accommodate ourselves to the play.[57]

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[54] David Wood, *Time After Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). 108.; Andrea Hurst, "Helen and Heidegger: Disabled Dasein, Language and Others," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2003): 98.. Dasein's adult status will be addressed further in a later section.

[55] Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[56] Heraclitus, *Heraclitus: translation and analysis*: 52.

[57] Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*: 113.

We see again that play is autotelic, that is, it does not have an external goal. The "why" of play disappears into that play, yet I don't believe Heidegger would go so far as to say that play is completely devoid of purpose, but that the purpose of play cannot be thought outside of play. It intends itself. The childlike nature of play points to something wanton or lawless, but again it develops its own order as it plays, much like a kind of dance rather than a definite procedure. In this play, the essences of humans are at stake in play. The essence of humans is ek-sistence, the very standing out in the truth of being. In life, we constantly have our being at stake without some external figure to lend it meaning. Rather, there is meaning only insofar as we stand in being. Earlier we saw that Heidegger describes Dasein as being for its own sake, just as play is. Being, like play, provides its own ground. There can only be someone who ek-sists insofar as there is ek-sisting, just as there can be play only because of playing. Note that although Heidegger does not answer this question himself, he poses it in such a way as to assert the primacy of shaping ourselves to that play rather than seeking to dominate or master it. Thus, as *Mitspieler* of Dasein, we are caught up in this play and are played as much as we play. Play is something ecstatic insofar as it takes us outside of ourselves. Fourth, this play is quite serious business as it is the most elevated and the most profound, especially because essence is at stake. It is perhaps worth noting, too, that the play of the greatest royal child is gentle rather than violent. Thus we might say that the appointed task given to us through the beginning founding of poetry is to be *Mitspieler* of Dasein. There is a difficulty here, however, in that Heidegger does not provide us with any sort of way to evaluate different forms of play. Some forms of play are risky and agonistic and some forms of play are more collaborative, but we have little sense from Heidegger of what sort of play is best suited for this task of life, or whether any form of play at all is adequate.

Heidegger and Gadamer agree that play and players are mutually constituted, such that there is no play prior to players, nor can there be players prior to play. When Gadamer says, for example, that the player is dissolved in play, what he means is not that the player is swallowed up or that play dissolves anything particular to the player, but that the play is not the subjective production of the player (TM 105-6). Play only comes to presentation through the active choice of the player. Since play is a not a matter of domination, the player does not seek to master it. Instead, the player chooses how to comport herself to the play. Furthermore, in participating in play, the player presents herself to it. In so doing, she comes to recognize herself in new and important ways. Again, Gadamer emphasizes that play is not merely frivolous, but serious: "Play is less the opposite of seriousness than the vital ground of spirit as nature, a form of restraint and freedom at one and the same time" (PA 130). Gadamer prioritizes the relationship between art and play, but other forms of play yield similar experiences, namely the penetration of life.

As being for its own sake, i.e. not reducible to any set of determinations or fixed to an external goal, play is superabundant. As Gadamer suggests, the superabundance of play is not the same as the superabundance of nature, which is capricious or empty, but is rather meaningful. As Gadamer writes, in play the player is "affirming what he knows and affirming his own being in the process" (TM 113). The player is transformed in play. This transformation points to a superabundance: play itself is a phenomenon of excess since it seeks no end outside of itself, but also through play we experience an increase of being and an expansion of horizons.

Some accounts of play in anthropology tend to see play specifically in its role for the development of skills. Fagen, for example, suggests that play is evolutionarily significant in the development of skills and adaptive behaviors. Peter Smith, a psychologist, writes, "Play

generalizes skill by varying and recombining previously mastered behavioral routines in new contexts, freeing the animal from the unanticipated limitation of these routines."[58] Smith does point to the creative dimension of play, insofar as play is a matter of creating new combinations in new contexts, but the emphasis is primarily on the development of skills. This emphasis on the development of skill is not exclusive to those studying animal play, but is frequently found in discussions of human, particularly child, play. Scholars claim that play is essential for the development of fine motor skills,[59] metacognitive skills,[60] intersocial skills,[61] and even management skills.[62] Certainly such skills are developed in play and play is essential, as I argue, for development, however such accounts that focus almost exclusively on skill largely ignore play's autotelic dimension. Fagen and Smith both recognize that there is something useless to play, but by defining play as a resource for adaptive behaviors, they consistently locate play's significance and goal outside of play itself.

Alison Gopnik, in her book, *The Philosophical Baby*, suggests a similar sense of useful uselessness: "Play is the signature of childhood. It's a living, visible manifestation of imagination and learning in action. It's also the most visible sign of the paradoxically useful uselessness of immaturity. These useless actions—and the adult equivalents we squeeze into our workday—are distinctively, characteristically, human and deeply valuable. Plays are play,

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[58] Peter K. Smith, "Does Play Matter? Functional and Evolutionary Aspects of Animal and Human Play," *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 5(1982): 162.

[59] Linda K. Bunker, "The Role of Play and Motor Skill Development in Building Children's Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem," *The Elementary School Journal* 91, no. 5 Special Issue: Sports and Physical Education (1991).

[60] Kenneth Ginsburg, the Committee on Communications, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, "The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds," *Pediatrics* 119, no. 1 (2007).

[61] Kenneth H. Rubin, "Fantasy play: Its role in the development of social skills and social cognition," *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 1980, no. 9 (1980).

[62] Geog Cox and Chuck Dufault, *25 Role Plays for Developing Management Skills* (Amherst: HRD Press, Inc., 1996).

and so are novels, paintings, and songs."[63] For Gopnik, then, what is central to play is that it is not the direct acquisition of skill, but rather a superfluous way of developing through play. For her, the opposite of play is not seriousness, but work. Play marks a luxury outside of work. Robert Bellah draws on Gopnik's research in his book, *Religion in Human Evolution*. There he argues that only mammals who flourish, that is, only animals that have had basic needs met in order to have the expendable energy required for play[64] are capable of playing. For both Gopnik and Bellah, there is something serious and useful about play, and it is also a locus of understanding and development. Yet it is not only for the development of skills or adaptive behaviors. For them, the very superfluity of play points to its being autotelic. Furthermore, there seems to be a direct connection, though it would be too strong to suggest a causal link, between play and human flourishing.

Bellah, drawing from Huizinga, as well as a wide swath of anthropological, psychological, and sociological research, suggests that what makes humans particularly human[65] is their capacity to play, i.e. *homo ludens*. In this capacity to play, says Bellah, are found the origins of ritual.[66] While ritualization exists in many animal forms, such as the courtship gifts of the balloon fly or the synchronized diving of the crested grebe, what is lacking in these rituals is the spontaneity and intentionality, but also the autotelic nature, that

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[63] Alison Gopnik, *The Philosophical Baby: what children's minds tell us about truth, love, and the meaning of life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009). 15. This is suggested by Piaget as well. He claims that play is not directly learning since play, or at least, on his account, symbolic play is a matter of assimilation, that is, of changing the environment to match the schemes of the child, rather than a matter of accommodation, that is, of changing of schemes to match reality. Intelligence requires both accommodation and assimilation, but Piaget suggests that education qua learning is more directly accommodation. Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child*: 57-63.

[64] Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). 77.

[65] Bellah is careful to note that there is no strong reason to separate humans strictly from other animals, particularly from non-human primates, and that it seems to be the case that other primates and mammals do play and develop rituals, but not necessarily to the same degree that humans do. For my own purposes, I choose to speak of persons, rather than merely humans, for I think it's still an open question of whether and how to include non-human animals as persons.

[66] Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*: 92.

belong to play. In claiming that play is something that poses itself as its goal and that, while not work, is taken quite seriously, Gopnik and Bellah point toward understanding play as *praxis*, and I think it is correct to follow them in this regard. Although some anthropologists speak of play more in terms of *technē*, that is, as developing knowledge that will yield a product, I think this mistakes the fact that while play is a source of understanding and an opportunity to develop skills with play having those features as its goal. Although play is transformative and important for development, play's goal, development, and significance are located within. Play, as *praxis*, is comported toward itself, although not in any solipsistic or myopic way.[67] When Aristotle speaks in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of *praxis*, for example, he states that "good action has itself as its end," and that the knowledge at stake in good action, *phronēsis*, is "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good and bad for man,"[68] he suggests that this sort of activity is not devoid of knowledge, but requires a practical understanding that can deliberate about that activity and the actor. *Phronesis* is also a mode of self insight. Because play is an action with itself as its goal and because play is guided by knowledge as understanding, rather than theoretical or technical knowledge, I suggest play is understood here as praxis. To be sure, there are other ways of conceiving of action and knowledge than those proposed by Aristotle, but I suggest we think of the action of play in terms of praxis because Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink call for a return to praxis and practical understanding in an age that champions theoretical knowledge, but also because thinking of play as praxis provides a framework for understanding how

[67] In *praxis*, we should also hear Arendt's claim that praxis is not a solitary activity of the individual acting, but is rather predicated on a shared space of meaning with others. There can be no *praxis* where there is no *polis*.

[68] Aristotle and Jonathan Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). 1140b5-6.

substantive understanding is at stake in shared deeds and spaces and allows for beings to come to appearance in those deeds.[69]

Play presents us with the particular difficulty of a fundamentally ambiguous term whose scope is seemingly boundless. Despite play's ambiguous and relative nature, we can still speak about play in a meaningful way and identify important features. Play occurs in time and space, it takes up into itself the objects, actions and relations of everyday life. But it does so not in order to simply mirror the everyday, but to open up a space for itself. For, although play cannot dispense with this relation to the everyday, it is nonetheless not prescribed by the everyday. It takes up the everyday but does is not grounded in the everyday. Rather, play spontaneously grounds itself in playing. Furthermore, while thinkers at various times emphasize more the active or passive sides of play, I argue that play is always a matter of both activity and passivity. Play enables us to experience what is normally beyond our control, not so that we might have control in more areas of life, but so that we can engage with what could be otherwise, to catch sight of ourselves in new ways. This possibility of what could be otherwise marks the freedom of play: in playing we cannot understand ourselves as fixed and static or as determined from the outset.

Play and Traditional Ethics

We find in the thought of Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer a move to follow Aristotle, although still not without some Kantian influence. But if it is right to see all these thinkers as establishing a playful dimension in ethics, the turn to Aristotelian thinking suggests that a playful dimension can be found there as well. We can, I think, find play, in the sense articulated above, at work in not only Aristotle's thought, but Kant's as well. Drawing out

[69] Arendt, for example, says that "In acting and speaking, men show who they are and, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world." Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). 179.

the element of play in their thinking goes a long way towards showing that both take both comportment and creativity seriously, even if neither go quite far enough in their accounts of the situatedness of ethical life.

It might seem contrary to Aristotle's account for us to assert the primacy of play. He writes in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "And we say that serious things [*spoudaia*] are better than laughable things connected with amusement [*paidia*]" (NE 1177a). This statement prompts Mechthild Nagel to suggest that "In the *Nicomachean Ethics* we see a surprising attack on *paidia*. Playfulness is maligned."[70] Nagel explains that Aristotle denounces playfulness as amusement, *paidia*, for anyone other than children. Like Plato, Aristotle sees a pedagogic value in play for children or at times of some slight value for adults to relax in order to be better at work. The life of the virtuous person, however, is that of *bios theoretikos*, which seems to be at odds with frivolity or amusement. Aristotle writes,

> Happiness, therefore, does not lie in amusement [*paidia*]; it would, indeed, be strange if the end were amusement, and one were to take trouble and suffer hardship all one's life in order to amuse oneself. For, in a word, everything that we choose we choose for the sake of something else—except happiness, which is an end. Now to exert oneself and work for the sake of amusement seems silly and utterly childish. But to amuse oneself in order that one may exert oneself, as Anacharsis puts it, seems right; for amusement is a sort of relaxation (*anapausis*), and we need relaxation because we cannot work continuously. Relaxation, then, is not an end; for it is taken for the sake of activity (NE 1176b28-1177a1).

For Aristotle, *paidia* is devoid of any kind of seriousness. This sort of amusement cannot be taken seriously, particularly as it seems to be a particularly empty kind of activity. Furthermore this amusement is not for its own sake. It is useful only in order that we might work better. While amusement might be necessary as a restorative activity, Nagel also cautions against reading this sense of *paidia* as the same as leisure, *scholē*. Leisure, which Aristotle claims to be of great importance for the philosopher, is really philosophical

[70] Machthild Nagel, *Masking the Abject: A Genealogy of Play* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002). 47.

contemplation. Whereas we have amusement so that we might work, Aristotle suggests that we work so that we might have leisure. Amusement is thus even further removed from virtuous activity. Thus *paidia*, devoid of seriousness and meant to divert from contemplation, is at odds with the best activity of the philosopher and virtuous person.

However, based on Aristotle's description, I think it would be a mistake to equate this sense of *paidia* with the notion of play discussed thus far. Play, as has been described, is for its own sake and is especially characterized by the serious way it is engaged. I suggest it would be a mistake to understand the role of play in Aristotle's ethics strictly in terms of *paidia*.[71] There are, however, elements of play as I understand it, namely in terms of activity for its own sake, openness, and understanding, at work in Aristotle's ethics.

An element of play, and not as amusement, can be found in Aristotle's account of how we become virtuous. For Aristotle, virtue can only be developed through the performance of virtuous action:

> Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity….For the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. (NE 1103a26-1103b2)

Thus a person becomes virtuous not automatically, but over time through her development. She acts *as if* she were a temperate person, for example, by performing temperate acts. She

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[71] Nagel's discussion of Aristotle's "malediction of play" identifies play with *paidia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and with *mimesis* in the *Politics* and *Poetics*. She explains, "Three different kinds of hierarchical ranking of play can be identified: first, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, play is ranked lowest and is squarely denounced as an activity unworthy of a virtuous person; secondly, in the *Politics*, play is considered a 'harmless' activity, which can be taken up for educational and recreational purposes by the youth and lower classes (the demos); and finally, in the *Poetics*, play gains a higher status…The play for amusement, enjoyed by the masses, is valuable if it is not tainted by 'bad' elements, i.e., Dionysian elements. Thus in tragedy we find a play that is valued for its own sake, but it is appropriately purified." Ibid., 56. While Nagel is correct that there are important differences in Aristotle's attitude toward play in the different texts and that when play does arise, it is seen primarily as rational play, I suggest that attending only to where Aristotle directly addresses play as *paidia* gives an incomplete picture of what he seems to be up to in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I maintain that there is a fundamentally playful dimension to the *Ethics* despite his malediction of perhaps not so much play, but amusement.

acts *as if* she were courageous by doing courageous things. This "as if" structure is necessary for moral development and she takes her role seriously. This is not the same, I believe, as Sartre's man of bad faith, i.e. believing he is a waiter by performing as a waiter, or de Beauvoir's description of nostalgia for childhood as bad faith, for bad faith involves a self-deception and a kind of playing *at* that I do not believe present in Aristotle. The person of bad faith might be, then, like the rash man who is a pretender to courage (NE 1115b29-30), wishing to appear a certain way rather than committing to being a certain way. The point here, however, is that we do not develop virtue through mere theoretical reflection or the adoption of skills, but through doing, acting as if something is the case.

The ability to become courageous through doing courageous acts relies on practical knowledge. We do not perform the courageous act in order to become courageous, but rather "for good action itself is its end" (NE 1140b6-7). Good action thus has itself as its goal. Furthermore, the knowledge that determines the good action is not theoretical, since the action can be otherwise, and is not technical, since an action is not making, so the action is practical and concerned with particulars. Thus practical knowledge cannot remain at the level of universals, although Aristotle does seem to suggest that some universals are concerned. This is to say that ethical life cannot be determined conceptually, but it is not thus devoid of meaning of knowledge. Furthermore, as play does not make something, but does often yield other things, so, too, do good actions. We find, too, that this practical wisdom is open, social, and an attunement.

In writing about Aristotle's account of the virtuous life, Julia Annas[72] points out that there is something particularly pleasant about this life. Annas suggests that whereas the skilled person may practice that skill without affect, the virtuous person's exercise of virtue is

[72] Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*.

accompanied by enjoyment. The potter may, of course, take delight in creating pottery, but she need not in order to be a potter. Annas suggests that it is this affective dimension that separates the practice of virtue from the exercise of productive skills. This is also what separates the virtuous person from the merely encratic, that is, the person who acts as the virtuous does, but is not yet a virtuous person. She highlights Aristotle's statement that, "'We must take as an indication of a person's states the pleasure or pain consequent on what he does, because the person who abstains from bodily pleasures and finds his enjoyment in doing just this is temperate, while the person who finds doing it oppressive is intemperate; and the person who enjoys facing up to danger, or at least does not find it painful to do so, is courageous, while he who does find it painful is a coward" (NE 1104b3-) Aristotle has made it clear in a previous section that happiness is not merely pleasure, particularly if pleasure is understood only as bodily. This does not mean, however, that pleasure is absent from virtue. Enjoyment, pleasure, arises as we become better at doing something. Annas suggests that as we become better at speaking Italian, we find greater pleasure in it. We are no longer overwhelmed by the verb constructions, but can begin to articulate our thoughts and feelings.[73] It is not that we have mastered the language, but that we have learned how to problem-solve and be creative.

The enjoyment is most present, Annas suggests, "when all the person's relevant goals are harmoniously organized and sorted out, so that she is equipped to deal with feedback and new information without having to stop and figure out how it relates to the goal she is

[73] Ibid., 70. Iris Murdoch makes a similar point, although her example is learning to speak Russian, rather than Italian. She specifically points to what she calls "unselfing", that is, in attending to a particular task, we have to suspend what is most immediate in order to turn toward that task at hand. Unselfing is not a rejection of the self, but a suspension of immediate concerns in order to open ourselves to the task and be transformed by and through it. Murdoch also believes that this unselfing is fundamentally pleasant, particularly as we become better at the task. Iris Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts," in *Virtue Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp and Michael Slote (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 107.

pursuing."[74] Annas, following the work of the Hungarian psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, argues that what belongs to the virtuous action is a kind of 'flow'. Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow experiences, that is, what it is about activities that makes them enjoyable, has been widely taken up by philosophers of sport and play. Csikszentmihalyi claims that when goals and actions are harmonized, when the actor does not feel under threat, but does still feel herself at stake, she is able to engage in that activity in an enjoyable way. This is a 'flow experience'.[75] This feeling of flow should not be understood in the sense of going with the flow, of being passive in a situation. Rather, he explains, "By far the overwhelming proportion of optimal experiences are reported to occur within sequences of activities that are goal-directed and bounded by rules—activities that require the investment of psychic energy, and that could not be done without the appropriate skills."[76] Thus those activities that are bound by rules and requiring of skill, though not necessarily having skill as the goal, are those experienced as most optimal, where optimal includes being able to choose a task, complete a task, concentrate on that task, forget the self, enjoy the task, and experience a return to the self.[77] The flow experience has two fundamental features, namely that it is autotelic and that the participant suspends the self. As we can see, this description of flow very closely resembles that of play. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi identifies play as a key source of flow.[78]

For Annas, and thus on her reading, for Aristotle, enjoyment occurs when the actor is both engaged and responsive, when she can orient herself to a task in a particular way. This task is neither so routine as to be boring and mindless, nor so difficult as to require

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[74] Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*: 70.

[75] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).

[76] Ibid., 49.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 72.

great deliberation. The encratic person, for example, still has not achieved excellence and still must exert a great deal of deliberate effort.[79] The virtuous person, however, recognizes particular situations in kind, so they are not completely routine, and has a practical understanding of how to respond. She writes, "It is very plausible that the enjoyment of virtuous activity does not consist in felt twinges of pleasure. It consists, rather, in the way the activity is done; this is not something extra to be added on but just is the ready and unselfconscious way the activity is performed, 'flowing' effortlessly from the person's overall harmoniously arranged goals unchecked by effortful self-questioning or conscious figuring-out."[80] Thus the pleasure of virtuous activity is not the pleasure of enjoying a meal at a Michelin starred restaurant. It is, rather, that felt harmony in responding to a particular task or situation. We recall, too, that Kant and Schiller both point to a particular harmony that belongs to play. For our purposes, I suggest we follow Annas in understanding virtuous activity as flow, as play, as this account of play qua flow allows us to understand the comportment and affect belonging to ethical life. Furthermore, by understanding play as this responsiveness, we avoid the idea of play as mere frivolity. Aristotle's jettisoning of *paidia*, then, does not mean that there is no element of play in his account, but that the play at stake is one that is serious and very much has the player at stake, too, as she participates in virtuous life.

In the formulation of the Kant's categorical imperative, we find an "as if" structure similar to Aristotle's. Kant follows the first formulation of the categorical imperative, "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" with "act *as if* the maxim of your action were to become by your

[79] Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*: 74.
[80] Ibid., 76.

will a universal law of nature" (italics mine, G 4: 421).[81] That is to say, even if a maxim were not universal, we must act as if it were. In the second formulation, though, Kant does not say that we should use others and ourselves *as if* ends rather than means, but that they are indeed are such. In the third formulation, we see that "every rational being must act *as if* he were by his maxims at all times a lawgiving member of the universal kingdom of ends" or as the formal principle says, "act *as if* your maxims were to serve at the same time as a universal law (for fall rational beings)" (italics mine, G 4: 438). Thus we must act as if we belong to the kingdom of ends and as if others are also rational lawgivers in this kingdom. Again, the playful "as if" dimension permeates Kant's account. This "as if" is serious, though, as play serves as a heuristic. The "as if" enables us to formulate maxims and choose moral actions.

We find play also in how actions are chosen. Kant describes duties of virtue, i.e., duties relating to one's ends, as those "for which external lawgiving is not possible" (M 6: 239) and "based only on free self-constraint" (M 6: 383). As Kant explains, "for if the law can prescribe only the maxim of actions, not actions themselves, this is a sign that it leaves a playroom [*Spielraum*] (*latitudo*) for free choice in following (complying with) the law" (M 6:390) and similarly, "…the duty has in it a latitude (*Spielraum*) for doing more or less, and no specific limits can be assigned to what should be done" (M 6:393). Here Kant points to an element of play in autonomy, even autonomy governed by duty and law. Indeed, his account of autonomy would be unsuccessful, for without it, the agent would have no room to choose how to give herself the law. Lacking this playspace, she would be heteronomous. Despite Gadamer's accusations of Kant's strong formalism and resistance to conditionedness, and although Kant's insistence on the dual nature of humans remains quite problematic, I think Kant quite clearly maintains the conditionedness of ethical life, precisely in the *Spielraum* for

[81] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

free choice of actions. Thus Kant does preserve a dimension of incalculability in ethical life, and what's more, this incalculability is described in terms of play.

Indeed, Kant, too, recognizes a groundlessness that belongs to morality, precisely because the freedom and world of understanding that ground the intelligible world are inaccessible. As Kant explains, "it is impossible for us to explain, in other words, *how pure reason can be practical*" and "[it] is just the same if I tried to fathom how freedom itself as the causality of a will is possible. For then I leave the philosophic ground of explanation behind and I have no other" (G 4: 462). What would provide this ground is the idea of a pure world of understanding, yet this is merely "a useful and permitted idea for the sake of a rational belief, even if all knowledge stops at its boundary" (G 4: 462). This pure world is itself a kind of playspace, meaning that it is not fully real, but we act as if it were, as it lies beyond conceptuality and even comprehensibility.

Play's role in philosophical ethics is certainly not exclusive to Aristotle and Kant. We find it in Nietzsche's revaluation of values and the call to give style to one's character and to live creatively. Zarathustra's laughter marks an attunement to the uncanny and other. Mill reminds us that there must be fair play in following moral rules. Rawls' veil of ignorance and original position are sorts of playspaces that help determine moral convictions and commitments. Derrida's appeal to play as *différance* allows for an understanding of the ethical subject that resists selfsameness. Similarly the thought experiments of trolley crashes, zombie attacks, and violinists on life support help us imagine and engage in possibilities for moral decisions that shed light on how we conceive of morality. What each of these demonstrates is that while these authors might rely on or champion reason in various degrees, it is the case that reason without content cannot tell us very much about what it is to be ethical humans or to show how an ethical life would look. Of course, play is not the

guiding principle or model in each of these examples, but by looking at play, we are reminded of the particular incalculability that belongs to ethics.

Play and Original Ethics

In the 1960 text, *Spiel als Weltsymbol*, Fink writes, "This relation between the human and the world, as it manifests itself in human play, is not exhibited as a relation between two separate matters, rather as a relation of difference preceded by what is combined" (S 232). Again, this is because there can be no difference prior to the world totality. Play always already belongs to the world. The play of the world belongs to no one and no thing. It is the play of individuation that allows all things to be. Play as a cosmic metaphor does not, however, correspond to every way we might talk about the world. Fink describes four senses of "worldly": 1. The innerworldliness of all finite things in general, 2. the rule or governing of the world itself, i.e. that which gives space and allows time, 3. the relating of oneself to the world as understanding, and 4. a defamed mode of human residence, the pagan decline into the sensual (S 225). Play, as "a strange oasis" and interruption of continuity that intends itself as activity and creativity (OG 24),[82] can be said to be worldly in the first, third, and fourth senses. Play cannot itself give space and allow time, for the world that does so precedes it. Furthermore, the play of the world does not require a player, although as we will see, human play does allow the play of the world to come into appearance. Like all things, save the world itself, play is innerworldly for it provides a space for understanding who we are as world beings.

If we furthermore understand ethics as *êthos* as oriented toward world, then we see more clearly how play enters into the relationship since for Fink, play is a mode of being in the world, and the playspace a way of responding to this being. As he explains,

[82] Eugen Fink, *Oase des Glücks: Gedanken zu einer Ontologie des Spiels* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1957).

> In human play Dasein's ecstasy occurs in the world. Playing is thus always more than any innerworldly human comportment, behavior, or acting. In play the human transcends himself, surmounts the determinations, with which he surrounds himself and in which he has actualized himself, he makes the irrevocable decisions of his freedom so to speak revocable, he arises from himself, he emerges from every fixed situation in the basis of life of welling possibilities. (S 231)[83]

Play enables us to engage the world and our lives in a fundamentally different way. At bottom, play is a mode of human freedom and responsibility for it enables the individual to be open to and responsible to what is other and to what exceeds her. The playful moment is an ethical moment precisely insofar as it requires us to respond to that task, that other, in a particular way and to stand open before it. As Fink explains, it is "precisely in the power and magnificence of our magical creativity in an abyssal way that we mortal men are 'at stake' [*aufs Spiel getsetzt*]" (S 29). There is nothing to ground play but playing itself. There is no external goal or basis. Instead, we are 'at stake' as the first gamble in which we open ourselves to the world. Play is not the honing of a skill to get at being, but rather has this gamble itself as its goal.

Writing about Heidegger's 1928/29 lecture course *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Jean Greisch identifies an ethical dimension in Heidegger's discussion of the groundlessness of play. In the lecture, Heidegger speaks of play as transcendence, wherein transcendence means projection, over-stepping, standing in the truth of being, and "the condition of possibility for the ontological difference" (GA 27, 210). To stand in the truth of being, to be thrown, is to be tasked with decision and exposure to one's origin as abyssal. Greisch writes, "Here it becomes clear that the transcendental concept of play simultaneously and in an

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[83] "Im menschlichen Spiel ereignet sich eine Ekstase des Daseins zur Welt. Spielen ist deswegen immer mehr als nur irgendein binnenweltliches Benehmen, Handeln, In-Aktion-sein des Menschen. Im Spiel ‚tranzendiert' der Mensch sich selbst, übersteigt er die Festlegungen, mit denen er sich umgeben und in denen er sich ‚verwirklicht' hat, macht er die unwiderruflichen Entscheidungen seiner Freiheit gleichsam widerrufbar, entspringt er sich selber, taucht er aus jeder fixierten Sitation in den Lebensgrund urquellender Möglichkeiten..."

original sense constitutes the play space of ethics, that is, the space of freedom, without an oblivion of its limits."[84] By this, Greisch seems to be saying that play, as a space of relating to thrownness, is a space of ethics insofar as that thrownness demands self-responsibility. Günter Figal makes a similar point when he writes, "Rather freedom is the openness, the play-space (*Spielraum*), which every activity requires to be carried out at all….[E]very activity, every comportment, can be understood correctly only when one understands them within their play-space."[85] Here actions are understood only within the context of leeway (*Spielraum*), of play, which also points to a kind of excess that fundamentally belongs to action. Actions, however, are aimed at something in particular. Even action in a more original sense, that is, understood as the originariness of movement that belongs to human life,[86] retains this as the sense of movement toward something and movement within a particular place. The ethical comes in precisely here, namely in the choice of action and aim in light of one's situatedness. Dasein must choose for itself and comport itself to the world. Dasein itself is at stake. The ethical enters at this moment of decision.

Again, however, it might seem inadequate to think of ethics as constituted by a space of freedom for it tells us little about specific actions, but in this characterization, we find an insistence on alterity, which is central to ethics. It is here that we locate the originary dimension of original ethics. For Heidegger, philosophy cannot provide a determinate ethics, and we are also not yet prepared to know in what that would consist. Instead, our task is to understand original ethics in the sense of *êthos*, an analysis of which will be fleshed out more in the next section, as original capacities for responsibility. Origin should be understood here in the sense of *Ursprung*, as a springing forth out of groundlessness. For Dasein to be able to

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[84] Greisch, "The 'Play of Transcendence' and the Question of Ethics," 113.
[85] Figal, *For a Philosophy of Freedom and Strife: Politics, Aesthetics, Metaphysics*: vii-viii.
[86] ———, *Objectivity*, trans. Theodore D. George (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). 325.

attune itself and to be able to play requires that Dasein has responsibility, that it answers to its thrownness. This not the responsibility of following prescribed rules, but of responding, answering to what confronts and lays claim. However, since Dasein is always being-with-others and being-in-the-world, to be put into play, Dasein must also play with others. Dasein has a particular responsibility to others, and this responsibility also contain recognition of the other's responsibility. Responsibility, then, is never uni-directional. Greisch draws our attention to Heidegger's statement that "Dasein must essentially be able to be itself and properly be itself, if it wants to know itself as borne and led by an other, if it supposed to be able to open itself for the Dasein-with of others, if it is supposed to stand up for the other" (GA 27, 325). Here, though, it seems as if Heidegger is suggesting that Dasein could somehow exist prior to engagement with others, or that Dasein must be self-contained in order to be with others. Yet if we read this passage in light of Heidegger's work, it seems rather that the task of Dasein's responsibility to itself is always an individual task, its *eigene*, but this task certainly cannot be responded to, let alone recognized as a task, without not only consideration of, but also, and more importantly, being with others. Furthermore, if we understand responsibility as a to-and-fro play rather than merely self-assertion, then the question of Heidegger's tendency toward voluntarism or fatalism seems less relevant[87], for all playing is being is played. Responsibility in this sense is an openness to the other, a letting the other be.

While Heidegger resists providing a determinate ethics, we do need to recognize that not all forms of comportment are equal. Ethical comportment requires a navigation between

[87] Bret Davis provides an extensive and careful account of Heidegger's 'flip-flopping' between voluntarism and fatalism. Cf. Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston: Northwerstern University Press, 2007). In the present discussion, though, it does not seem especially fruitful to decide between them, for I would argue that there are dimension of both in play. However, it might still be said that even in regard to play, Heidegger does seem to oscillate between more voluntaristic and fatalistic descriptions. On my account, play must comprise both dimensions.

our own and others' vulnerabilities, as relations require us to be open, responsible to others. We can also see that play itself enables us to call into question potentially harmful or worrisome practices. Whereas Heidegger does not provide us with resources to distinguish among forms of play or practices, in Gadamer's work on play, however, we do gain a sense that play itself is able to engage critically in practices. While Gadamer has been criticized for placing too much determinacy on tradition, thus espousing a very conservative philosophy that cannot measure up to the rapidly changing times in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I argue that Gadamer's understanding of play and being in tradition actually enable the possibility of criticism, as is made clear by his adaptation of Aristotle's *phronēsis*. While Gadamer maintains that *phronēsis* will not achieve the same certainty as theoretical knowledge, this is not a drawback, for such knowledge is not suited to moral life. As Gadamer explains, "the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes; he is directly confronted with what he sees. It is something that he has to do" (TM 312). The knower is rooted in the knowledge that governs his action. As such, the knowledge employed in ethics, for Aristotle as well as Gadamer, is not mastery like the knowledge one has of a craft. Instead, the moral knower has to know how to apply ethical conduct to herself. She must have self-knowledge to understand how to apply the golden mean and pursue the good. Moral knowledge cannot guarantee future outcomes, either, but it is always future oriented. Since morality is social, the knower also always has an eye to social practices. Gadamer's larger claim with this appeal to *phronēsis* is not only that this knowledge is best suited for the human sciences, but perhaps more basically, that this knowledge always requires and demands application. Whether it is application in understanding a text or choosing a moral action, the knowledge that leads toward this

application is never a hard and fast rule or calculus, but a more cohesive knowledge resulting from formation.

The model of play helps explain the possibility of critical practice, but also the nature of practical and ethical life in general. For Gadamer, play is always dialogic; even as bystanders we are fundamentally participants. It is a matter of question and answer, of to and fro movement. Furthermore, play always provides the space for us to come to know ourselves better and to take things seriously in a way we couldn't otherwise. There are spaces left for us to fill and complete. Play, too, marks the space where we can entertain possibility. What seems determined can be seen in a fresh light. Furthermore, play is always transformative. In the dialogical exchange in play, we can call our practices into question while still remaining open to them and open to new possibilities and change. There is, of course, always risk and vulnerability involved, but we stand resolute even in our playfulness.

The comportment required by play does not mean that we abandon our practices or break radically with the everyday, but that we engage it in a different way. This enables knowledge and truth to present themselves in a way that we would not have otherwise. Thus when we engage tradition in this playful way, we are at the same time away of our relation to tradition and authority and aware of its limits and our own. The game and our co-players place demands on us that we are required to meet if the play is to continue. We do not simply acquiesce, but engage powerfully and critically. We cannot guarantee the transformation that results, but we can remain open to change. We can see the places where tradition has broken down or where practices need improvement and then carry that over into life through application that maintains hermeneutic continuity. Even the knowledge that is necessary for social change and critical analysis is not the knowledge obtained from a view from nowhere, but knowledge that is playful, meaning that it is not fixed, but open, and

engaged in tradition. The truth involved in this knowledge draws us in and we recognize ourselves in it without relying on a scientific method. Furthermore, we recognize there is always something that surpasses and exceeds us.

Play and Development

In the past century more thought was given to providing an account of moral development rather than assuming that one was either moral or not. Jean Piaget, one of the pioneers of child psychology and play theory, provides one of the earliest theories. What is particularly interesting is that he bases his theory of moral development on studies of children playing to determine their attitudes about social rules and norms expressed in their play. Piaget's main point is that morality is a lengthy process and always social and in response to traditions. Furthermore, Piaget describes this development as a move from heteronomy to autonomy. Despite the rather Kantian bent of Piaget's account, however, art and aesthetic experience play a negligible role. Similarly, Lawrence Kohlberg[88] develops a theory of stages of moral development based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, although his stages are more clearly delineated. Stages cannot be skipped, and one does not usually regress in stages, although one does not necessarily progress though all the stages. Moral development culminates in the postconventional stage, where one realizes that individuals or groups may have opinions differing from society's, but contracts can be achieved to ensure basic rights and procedures. These decisions about rights and values are grounded in universal principles. Thus for Kohlberg, like Piaget, morality develops temporally and within social contexts. Morality is not simply handed down; rather the subject must determine for herself how to behave and how to justify her behavior. Thus Kohlberg's moral agent also bears a great resemblance to Kant's, in that morality is a matter

[88] Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Human Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

of giving oneself the law and acting according to a maxim that could be universalized. To be clear, autonomy itself is not the difficulty, for there are different accounts, including Kant's, of autonomy that demonstrate that to be autonomous requires being in relation and in the world. What I caution against is too great an emphasis on formalism and the priority of reason that often accompanies accounts of autonomy.

Although it seems that Piaget and Kohlberg get us far in thinking about moral development, there are still several shortcomings in their accounts. As Carol Gilligan explains, one of the major flaws in the accounts given by Piaget and Kohlberg is they based their analyses only on boys and discounted not only the participation of girls, but also the ways in which girls might regard morality differently. Gilligan argues that in their games, girls focus more on sustaining relationships in the game than following or arguing about rules, as boys do. Thus in terms of morality, girls tend to value relationships and responsibilities more than universal principles, so they are incapable of belonging to Kohlberg's highest stage or moral development. Instead it seems that women are stuck at the third stage, where social norms and expectations are prioritized. Women are constantly discussed as children and men as adults, thus the experiences of women are not taken as seriously, and this is problematic. In truth, the morality of women is not stunted, but instead women experience the world differently. Gilligan writes,

> Thus women…also make a different sense of experience, based on their knowledge of human relationships. Since the reality of connection is experienced by women as given rather than as freely contracted, they arrive at an understanding of life that reflects the limits of autonomy and control. As a result, women's development delineates the path not only to a less violent life but also to a maturity realized through interdependence and taking care.[89]

[89] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). 172.

Thus Gilligan argues the moral domain must be expanded to include the role of care and relationships.[90] Gilligan emphasizes too strongly these differences between men and women with little room for an in-between or overlap, so I do not wish to cash experiences out as strictly male or strictly female, but I do believe it important to follow her thinking that development is not about progressing toward self-sufficient adulthood, but about creating and fostering relationships, colored by vulnerability and care. Gilligan's model makes clear that one must be in relationships and that there is something self-transformative in recognizing the other and one's relation to alterity.

The Space of Development

John Wall agrees that Gilligan's account provides a richer and more nuanced picture of moral development, particularly concerning creativity and vulnerability. However, he argues that she makes a similar mistake as the others, namely as seeing development in terms of stages through which one must progress with adulthood as the standard. What is needed, Wall argues, is not only an ethics of feminism, but also an ethics of childism, wherein childhood is neither seen as the unruly, animalistic precursor to adulthood in a top-down model nor praised for its pureness and innocence against the greed and violence of adulthood in a bottom-up model. Instead, childhood marks the way in which relationships are formed and created and the way in which the child creates herself in and through these relations. Such creativity does not end in childhood. What is also retained from childhood is play. Wall sees development as fundamentally playful, for it is creative, relational, and for its own sake. He suggests that if ethics is a matter of expanding meaning and relations, then what is needed is play, for "Play is the condition for the possibility of new possibility itself. To be human is to inhabit a dynamic world of not only what is but also what could be…Play

[90] Ibid., 173.

is tension turned toward new possibility…Play is ultimately impossible to explain because it is not *a* meaning, but, rather, the very condition for the possibility of meaning as such."[91] As Wall explains, "To be moral is to create more rather than less expansive relations over time in response to each other. It is to transform an always too narrow world toward its own broader possibilities. The ethical demand, in short, is to grow. It is to reconstruct already constructed linguistic, cultural, and social worlds into fuller narrative wholes and wider responses to otherness."[92] Whereas previous thinkers had largely conceived of development in terms of linear development, Wall argues we should see development in terms of an ever-expanding circle, like ripples on water, of meaning and relations.

What has previously been missing from accounts of moral development is not so much time, but space,[93] although such factors are implicit in these accounts. The inclusion of space in understanding development requires an account of relationality, for no longer can an individual be seen as marching along a single axis of development, but must be seen as belonging to and finding herself in a particular space. This space, however, is also not merely the other axis of a Cartesian plane. Instead, this space is also always a home for others, so to find oneself in a space is also to confront what is other. We have a difficult time accounting for what is other if we do not preserve the space of the other, let alone acknowledge it. For example, in Piaget and Kohlberg, the child recognizes that she is not the only person in the world, and this realization occurs through navigating shared space. Gilligan points to this relationality as well, and also discusses the ways in which children give shape to the spaces of their relationships.

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[91] John Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010). 53.
[92] Ibid., 180.
[93] The second chapter will deal directly with what I take to be the space of ethics.

The contribution play in particular makes to an account of ethics is that it enables us to see how fundamental relationships, vulnerability, creativity, and incalculability are to ethical life and the development of an ethical subject. Furthermore, as marked by its opening up in space, play draws our attention to the way in which these elements also occur within and open up spaces, often if playful ways. This, too, is what Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer tell us. It is not enough to think of morality only as the following of particular rules, although one might well invoke principles, but rather of finding oneself situated in a particular space and time. Furthermore, despite the specificity that belongs to such conditionedness, there remains a fundamentally ambiguous element tot that existence. That is to say, both despite and through the particularity of life, there remains an incalculabity to life; there remains something that evades any attempt to grasp it

II. Ethics as *Êthos*

Gadamer draws our attention back to the Greek understanding of *êthos* as being at home. As being at home, ethics fundamentally concerns being in the world. The difficulty of philosophical ethics lies specifically in this dimension of being-in-the-world. If ethics is thought only to concern universal law, then there seems to be no problem, except such universal law is empty unless it can also account for the concrete way we find ourselves in the world. Gadamer suggests in "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics" that there are two tracks in philosophical ethics, namely that of Aristotle and that of Kant. Neither, however, provides a full account. Gadamer is not alone in suggesting that we follow Aristotle rather than Kant, as both Heidegger and Fink make similar points. There is not, however, as clear a dichotomy between Aristotle and Kant as Gadamer makes there out to be, and a Kantian influence is certainly brought to bear on this turn to Aristotle.

Furthermore, it would be wrongheaded to think that Aristotle and Kant are the only sources for ethics. What I take Gadamer to mean rather is that Aristotle is the stand in for the tendency in philosophical, particularly Greek, thought that orients itself toward conditionedness, whereas Kant is the stand in for the line of thought that turns toward unconditionality and formalism. As Gadamer is interested especially in thinking about an account of ethics that does not appeal to a particular foundation and that embraces the particularity of existence, he thus finds more in Aristotle than in Kant. Earlier it was mentioned that a contemporary approach to ethics must account for relationality, vulnerability, and development. In the following, I aim to clarify what Gadamer, Heidegger, and Fink mean by ethics as *êthos*.

Êthos as Dwelling

Heidegger claims that to understand humans as standing in the clearing of being, as allowing for being to be, avoids the dualism present in accounts of humans as rational animals held by versions of humanism. To stand in the clearing of being means that we have ourselves as a problem, not necessarily as one to be solved, but as a way of attuning ourselves to our lives in a particular way. This Heidegger deems ek-sistence. Thinking of the human as a rational animal leads only to an unnecessary bifurcation of human being. While it is true that only humans may be ek-sistent, this does not, Heidegger claims, posit the human against animals since ek-sistence is not a specific kind of living creature. He writes, "Thus even what we attribute to man as *animalitas* on the basis of the comparison with 'beasts' is itself grounded in the essence of ek-sistence" (LH 247). The human is not a soul joined to an animal body, but the living creature who steps out into being. This means that humans recognize their roles as the caretakers of being.

To be a caretaker of being means to allow being to be and beings to show themselves. Thus the primary mode of caretaking is not emphasizing correctness or seeing humans as master over the world and other creatures. Instead, caretaking is seeing oneself in relation to being and other beings that is characterized by openness and not domination. The human is not Descartes' *ego cogito*, but she who belongs to the historical unfolding of being. If our ethical theories presuppose the human as rational animal, then we are basing our conclusions on an incomplete picture of what being ethical and being an ethical being indeed mean. Thus, I argue that an account of ethics must understand ethical personhood in terms of openness and responsiveness and not as the apotheosis of reason over animal nature.

Heidegger also raises the question of the relation between ontology and ethics in the "Letter on Humanism". He traces ethics to the Greek understanding of *êthos*, which means "abode" or "dwelling place," as well as "habit" or "characteristic." He writes, "The word names the open region in which man dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to man's essence, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear" (LH 269). This is to say that ethics is not about the moral perfection of a rational animal, but the dwelling in the totality of being.

Heidegger continues, "Only so far as man, ek-sisting into the truth of Being, belongs to Being can there come from Being itself the assignment of those directives that must become law and rule for man" (LH 274). Ethics requires comportment and attunement to being and the world. Again, ethics is more than rule or reason, and is indeed more original than these. As Heidegger explains, these directives should be understood as *nomos*, which rather than merely law is the dispatching of humans into being, for to think of laws alone is to see them only as a product of human reason and thus to risk mistakenly positing a foundation. If instead we understand laws as *nomos*, we are able to preserve the senses of

convention and tradition that belongs to laws as directives, which in turn reminds us of the linguisticality and dwelling that enable laws. Thus, it is the abode of being that "first yields the experience of something we can hold on to" (LH 274) as a directive. What is important is that Heidegger does not outright reject the necessity for rules or laws, but he cautions against taking them to be either universal objective laws or subjective products of reason.

Although ethics as ê*thos* is a mode of dwelling in the clearing of being, our current historic situation is one of homelessness. As homeless, we, as well as our essence, "[stumble] aimlessly about" (LH 258), for "Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of Being. Because of it the truth of Being remains unthought" (LH 258). Heidegger suggests that the destiny of the world as homelessness is particularly related to the constant demand for reasons that Heidegger believes belongs to contemporary science and technology. He writes in *The Principle of Reason* that, "…the unique unleashing of the demand to render reasons threatens everything of humans' being-at-home and robs them of the roots of their subsistence, the roots from out of which every great human age, every world-opening spirit, every molding of the human form has thus far grown."[94] This constant quest for reasons relies on the idea that nothing is without reason, yet as reasons are sought, there remains a resistance to such laying bare, in part due to the abyssal nature of ground. There is no bedrock to strike. Thus in their attempt to achieve the firmest foundation, humans are rendered homeless. They no longer dwell in the nearness of being. Heidegger claims that so long as we understand ourselves primarily as *animal rationale*, we fail to think of the *humanitas* of being human. The task of original ethics, then, is to think the truth of being and to dwell in its nearness. To be clear, Heidegger does not suggest that we could ever be completely at home; our existence is

[9494] Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*: 30.

ever colored by homelessness. The mistake of metaphysics is to confuse homelessness with being at home, such that homelessness, as the forgetting of being, is itself forgotten.

Fundamentally existence is colored by vulnerability in at least two senses. First, there is always the risk of forgetting being, of turning ourselves away from unconcealment in an effort to ensure rootedness, yet this attempt itself renders us homeless. This sort of vulnerability points to the fact that we do quite frequently become caught up in everyday life without attuning ourselves being, yet, as Heidegger illustrates in *Being and Time* we also cannot always be completely attuned to being. Still, though, we must not let that prevent us from turning away from everyday concerns. Second, when we do attune ourselves to being, we can do so only by being vulnerable, by being open to that which exceeds us. This more positive vulnerability, though, should not be thought of as a passive resignation or withdrawal in the face of an attacker. Rather, it is an active resoluteness and willingness to participate with and in what is other.

Êthos and Philosophical Ethics

Describing Greek philosophy and Aristotle in particular, Gadamer writes,

> I believe the Greeks were right when they placed alongside the *factum* of reason the socially formed thing that they call the *êthos*. '*Êthos*' is the name that Aristotle found for it….One of the greatest legacies of Greek thought for our thinking, it seems to me, is that in establishing its ethics on the basis of really lived life, they left us another phenomenon with broad space, which in modern times has scarcely become the subject of philosophical reflection; namely the topic of friendship—of *philia*. (GP 271).

What is key for Gadamer, and what seems to be key as well for Aristotle, is the social dimension of ethics, not only insofar as ethics must be placed within the lived world, but also that this lived world requires genuine relationships in the form of friendships. By prizing these relationships, Aristotle shows that we cannot treat ourselves as an object to be considered at arm's length. Rather we can understand ourselves on within the world and

relations where we already find ourselves. Since practical wisdom is concerned with action, it cannot operate on the level of the universal. Thus Aristotle provides resources for understanding how knowledge and ethical life can be understood within an attunement to that very life, rather than relying on a vantage point that can never be achieved. However, what is missing in Aristotle is the diversity of viewpoints and openness or vulnerability that would be necessary if we are to expand this account beyond well-to-do individuals.

Kant agrees that such knowledge cannot operate at the level of the universal, yet he still seeks to ground the possibility of conscious choice and free decisions in the universal, that is, in the unconditioned categorical imperative. We choose the maxim that we could will to be universal. If we compare Kant to Aristotle on friendship, for example, we find that Kant conceives of friendship as duty whereas Aristotle conceives of it as virtue. Kant suggests that friendship must be "a purely moral one and the help that each may count on from the other in case of need must not be regarded as the end and determining ground of friendship…but only as the outward manifestation of an inner heartfelt benevolence" (M 6:470-1). Here, too, we find that friendship is understood primarily formally. What is lacking in this account, I believe, is the possibility of openness and vulnerability. Benevolence and interest in the other person's good are important for friendship, but alone are not constitutive. As Gadamer explains, friendship is what makes reciprocity and mutual respect possible, not the other way around. Thus it is the lived experience that allows for shared values, for relationality that requires vulnerability and openness and not the appeal to imagined communities. Thus while it is clear that Kant does want to account for the particularity of lived experience and also wants to create space for practical reason, his appeals to the unconditional cannot do justice to the conditionedness of life

Gadamer credits Kant with rescuing practical reason from the "blind pride of reason" of the Enlightenment (PE 288), yet he is concerned about a tendency in Kant toward methodological reflection without an understanding of really lived life. He concludes that "Thus Aristotle's ethics is able to take cognizance of the conditionedness of all human being without having to deny its own conditionedness. A philosophical ethics that is not only aware of its own questionableness as one of its essential contents, seems to me the only kind that is adequate to the unconditionality of the moral" (PE 289) Against Gadamer, however, we have seen that Kant was indeed aware of and accounted for a conditionedness belonging to morality, especially regarding the playspace belonging to actions, since ethics does not give laws for actions, but for maxims. Indeed, Gadamer does name Kant as "the greatest thinker of the thought of freedom" (GP 271). Still, it seems that Gadamer is (rightly) concerned about what Kant believes to the unconditionality of maxims. Despite Gadamer's apparent false dichotomy between Kant and Aristotle, I believe he is correct in insisting that philosophical ethics must account for conditionedness both in terms of persons and its own position.

Still, there is admittedly something unsatisfactory about the accounts given by Fink, Gadamer, and Heidegger in particular, insofar as it seems rather inadequate to say that ethics is really a matter of disposition, which is an objection Kant also makes of Aristotle. We have little to go on when we are faced with some moral dilemma or seek to imagine in what ethical life consists. The approach that is supposed to account for the conditionedness of life in fact has little to say about specific conditions. In his introduction to Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism", David Farrell Krell raises the critical question of whether Heidegger's ethics, as dwelling in being, can actually provide guidance in our contemporary

world fraught with violence and evil.[95] Krell's point is certainly well taken. Although Heidegger seeks to avoid a merely theoretical approach to ethics, his description of thinking as deed seems rather thin in the face of what is actually demanded of and by us. Heidegger himself cautions against drawing too many practical consequences. Ethical life is marked by ambiguity, and we find here in Heidegger as well as others an understanding of ethics that is also itself ambiguous. Disconcerting as this may be, I believe this ambiguity must be preserved, for otherwise we run the greater risk of ignoring vulnerability, development, and openness. If our behavior is predetermined by some rule or can be decided according to some calculus, then we lose the fundamental creativity and openness that comprise the ethical subject. I would argue that reading thinking and dwelling as a sort of *phronēsis* in the Aristotelian sense helps clarify this. As William McNeill explains, "Our dwelling in the moment of decision is itself determined by, or better, occurs as *phronēsis*, which, as the deliberative accomplishment of dwelling, mediates in an altogether singular manner between ethical virtue of character (formed by habit and by contemplation) and the arrival of the unknown, of that which has yet to be decided: the Being of one's dwelling in the openness of a world."[96] Heidegger's understanding does not preclude the possibility for decision, but reminds us that it is neither theory nor practice nor separate from dwelling. Furthermore, it seems that we cannot arrive at a more concrete morality without first understanding better what it means to be ethical. On Heidegger's account, this would be to remain open to the world that always exceeds us and open to the truth of being. This does not appear to be at odds with a more robust form of ethical consideration. Rather, it reminds us that we cannot separate being in the world and in relation to being from those considerations. We must

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[95] David Farrell Krell in ———, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008). 216.

[96] William McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Ēthos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006). 161.

preserve the incalculability that belongs to ek-static ek-sistence. Although such ek-sistence is incalculable, it is not meaningless. We do still choose how to attune and comport ourselves, and this decision is based in thinking as deed. Our task is to respond to, to be responsible for, Being, which of course requires deep considerations in our being with others. I argue that this task is playful.

We have seen that in their attempts to return to an understanding of ethics as *êthos*, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink have consistently appealed to Aristotle, especially in terms of his account of *phronēsis*, against other thinkers such as Kant. Throughout we have also characterized this sense of *êthos* as a kind of play. This might raise the question, though, of, if we do follow Fink, Gadamer, and Heidegger in following Aristotle rather than Kant, what advantage is gained in understanding *êthos* as play when Aristotle did not himself draw such a connection. Furthermore, we must wonder whether something is lost in reducing ethics to play. The aim, however, is certainly not to perform such a reduction. While I do argue that ethics is fundamentally playful and that there are ethical dimensions to play, it would be wrong to suggest that they are absolutely the same thing. The goal, rather, is to cast ethics in a different light precisely by looking at its commonalities with play. In the following section, I aim to make this relationship between play and ethics clearer by identifying the logic I argue is at stake in both play and ethics.

III. The Logic of Superabundance

Dennis Schmidt expresses reservations in drawing too strong of conclusions from the "Letter on Humanism" precisely because Heidegger warns that we are not yet prepared to ask what an ethics for our time would be. If he was concerned that such questions are foreclosed, or at the very least, significantly imperiled, in a historical age where the

totalization of technology dominates, then our current age is at least as inhospitable. However, Schmidt believes there still may be a way, as he puts it, to tease out the contours of an original ethics while keeping the obstacles in sight. Recognizing the risk of potentially prioritizing theory, he suggests some general characteristics that would belong to an original ethics. He advances these observations in the form of six theses, which I would like to enumerate and briefly explain in turn, before turning to the way in which I believe play may help place these features in better relief.

Schmidt's first thesis is that, "The domain of the ethical is not solely defined by the orbit of the human, by that which we define and can know."[97] By this he means that we should not think ethics from the subject out—as if, for Heidegger, there could even be such a subject—or by beginning with agency. Rather, political and other forces must also be considered. Furthermore, there must be a consideration of the nonhuman, whether animal or nature, which Schmidt refers to elsewhere as the unbidden.[98] That is to say, ethics must think what surpasses the human. Schmidt next suggests that, "The domain of the ethical is not to be thought of according to categories drawn from the realm of law and juridical life."[99] This is not to say that guilt and judgment play no part, or that they are not central to political life, but they are secondary notions that do not get at the heart of ethical life. What is, says Schmidt, more central is the very notion of human freedom. Third, "Insofar as ethics is about human life at all, it is not defined primarily by the spheres of guilt and responsibility but is, as Spinoza (and the Greeks generally) knew, much more a matter of asking whether there can be a doctrine of the happy life."[100] By this, Schmidt means that ethics, which as we will see, fundamentally concerns a feeling of life, is beyond the values of right and wrong.

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[97] Schmidt, "Hermeneutics as Original Ethics," 41.
[98] Schmidt, "On the Incalculable: Language and Freedom from a Hermeneutic Point of View," 36.
[99] Schmidt, "Hermeneutics as Original Ethics," 41.
[100] Ibid.

The good here asks also the "question of the good of life itself." Insofar as ethics is thus withdrawn from right and wrong, withdrawn from categories of codes, "The language proper to thinking about ethics is not confined to conceptual language; in other words, philosophizing has no corner on how it is that we are able to take up the enigma of ethical life."[101]…5. An original ethics is an ethics of sources. 6. The knowing that defines an original ethics is not the knowing of *technē*.[102]

We arrive at what Schmidt describes as an original ethics if we do think of ethics in terms of its playful dimension. As we have seen, in play, we encounter something that fundamentally surpasses us. In this way, the knowledge at stake at play is not conceptual knowledge. We are faced with something that we can never fully know, but that also is a source of knowledge. Furthermore, while not conceptual, the knowledge in play is not technical, but practical, or better, a mode of understanding. By an ethics of sources, Schmidt means that ethics begins not with a definition of human subjectivity, but with the events that constitute this, such as the disclosure of finitude. As disclosive and transformative, play, too, shares in this. While given shape by rules, play also should not be thought as the result of laws, but as the negotiation between freedom and necessity. The point is not so much that play and ethics have similar features, but that thinking of ethics in terms of play helps illuminate the contours of original ethics. The very ambiguity of play helps illustrate the ambiguity of ethical life.

What I would like to suggest is that looking at play enables us to see the logic at work in ethical life, especially as this logic is playful. This is what I deem the logic of superabundance. As we have seen in our discussion of play, there is always something excessive, autotelic, and transformative that belongs to play. Because play is superabundant,

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[101] Ibid., 14.
[102] Ibid., 41-42.

it can be for its own sake and because we encounter something that exceeds us, we must respond to what is other. Mihai Spariosu suggests that philosophers have described play as either rational or pre-rational, logical or illogical.[103] Categorizing play in this way, however, fails to recognize the logic that belongs to play. Play is not pre-rational or pre-logical, for this would assume that play drops out or stops being meaningful once the player becomes rational or that play is a stepping stone to something better. Furthermore, play is not illogical or irrational for play certainly is given shape by rules and boundaries, although it is not dictated by them. Instead, I think it best that we think of play as possessing its own logic.

When we look to ethics, we find this logic at work there as well. The logic of superabundance suggests that ethics always retains an element of incalculability, otherness, and vulnerability, and that it is this fundamental openness to the other that marks the ethical self and the beginnings of freedom. Furthermore, as a kind of logic, this superabundance is not haphazard, but provides a structure that enables ethical life, such that, as superabundant, ethics is not pre-rational or illogical, but has a different logic. By seeing ethics as belonging to its own sort of logic, we stop attempting to subject ethics to the logic of other disciplines, such as the sciences. Instead, this logic is understood as *logos*, i.e., the letting something be seen. It is what enables the ethical subject to emerge and what enables the senses of freedom and incalculability that belong to being an ethical subject. In this way, I understand the logic of superabundance of ethical life, as well of play, to characterize a dimension of the human and understanding that exceeds the scope of a rational concept, and that this dimension is anchored in an intuition of freedom within the experience of finitude. It allows for the contribution of experiences of art, play, or emotions, for example, to such understanding. What play shows us is that there is a way for an event to have cognitive content or important

[103] Mihai I. Spariosu, *Dionysus Reborn: Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). 10.

in a way that need not be merely conceptual. Furthermore, this superabundance characterizes the development of a self that is neither static and self-identical nor the actualization of possibilities, but rather a self marked by transformation and appropriation. This illustrates, too, the way in which the ethical is always characterized by the possibility of otherwise. When we say, then, that ethics has an element of the incalculable, we do not mean to say that no action can be chosen. There is deliberation, but it is always conditioned. Importantly, too, this superabundance still always occurs within a particular place or horizon. In the next chapter we will turn to a discussion of how to understand the place of ethics, and so also the place of play and incalculability.

Chapter Two: The Playspace of the Ethical

Central to how Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer understand the world is the radical change in how the relationship of humans to the world is thought. No longer is the world conceived of either as an objective entity over against subjects or as the result of subjective experience. Indeed, all three thinkers are very suspicious of and largely reject thinking in terms of subjects and objects in this sense at all. With modern philosophy from Descartes forward as the primary target for criticism, each of these three calls in his own way for a return to Greek thought, i.e. a place where being is being in the world, developing in and through the world, and knowledge a mode of understanding, and thus also a mode of being, rather than a possibility for domination over an object. We must caution, of course, that these thinkers are neither anti-science nor anti-technology; instead the target of their criticisms is more the tendency of these fields to presuppose their objectivity and methods, which are at odds with or misunderstand human experience and being, without attending to the question of being. These trends are, briefly stated, the pursuit of objectivity, the espousal of knowledge as domination and calculability, and the championing of the individual as a rational animal. In response to these scientistic trends, Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer each seek to characterize this dynamic between humans and the world as one whereby it is only through being in the world that anything like a subject could appear, and as such, the appropriate orientation in life is not an exertion of one's mastery over the world, but rather an attunement of oneself to the happening, the event or play, of the world. Thus the relation of the self to the world is not static, but one of becoming and participation.

As I argued in the previous chapter, understanding ethics also requires understanding being at home in the world, thus in this chapter I aim to make clearer what the world is and what being at home in such a world would be like. First I will turn to discussions of the

world as the condition of possibility for experience and self-understanding, and thus for being. Here the world is thought as the origin, as the groundless ground, of being as well as knowledge. As such, the world is what allows being to come to appearance or to be revealed. However, despite the world's unconcealment, there remains something which resists unconcealment, namely the earth. While the tradition of philosophy had forgotten the world, even more so had it forgotten the earth. Second, I will examine how returning to the earth will enable us to gain a clearer sense of the connection between *physis* and being at home in the world, as well as to see how, as resisting unconcealment, the earth preserves what is other. I will thus look to how this preservation of alterity marks the beginning of ethical life. As the site of original alterity,[104] that is, as the site that allows anything like alterity to occur at all, the earth is the site of original ethics. This alterity arises not only within the world and out of the earth, but with others in the world, for being in the world is always already being with others. This analysis of the earth as self-concealing and other prompts a departure from a conception of the human as a rational animal toward one as developing and playful through her creative participation in and attunement toward the superabundance of world and earth. What this play further illustrates is the way we might think of the role of ground in ethical life. Thus, as Fink, Heidegger, and Gadamer eschew any sense of a fixed foundation, I suggest that by returning to the discussion of ground put forth in the first chapter, we see how the self-grounding ground of play provides a more topological understanding of the ground of ethics, namely one that is not static, but changing and

[104] Jean-Luc Marion discusses the idea of originary alterity in *Prolegomena to Charity* where he identifies the injunction of the gaze of the other as the site of originary alterity, since it is the recognition of the other that secures one's existence. Similar remarks appear in *On the Ego and in God: Further Cartesian Questions* and *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Jean-Luc Nancy makes a similar point in *Being Singular Plural*, where he argues that the plural origin of being-with is necessary for being. What I would like to suggest is that Marion and Nancy are correct in identifying originary alterity as being with others. Here I seek to locate originary alterity in the earth in order to emphasize the grounded and topological character of alterity. Our experience of this alterity is possible only through language, and thus through being with others, so I would see the earth not chronologically prior to beings' relations with others, but as the basis for alterity.

superabundant. Finally, this discussion of ground demonstrates that the world and earth are not anonymous or neutral; rather we always encounter them within a particular place. I will argue that in order to understand ethical life, we must also understand place, in the sense of *topos*, such that the situatedness or particularity of place does not reduce ethical life to subjectivism, but rather, as play, is what makes ethical life possible at all.

I. The World

Fink, Heidegger, and Gadamer express concern for the way the history of philosophy has addressed the world, for they identify therein a lurking subject-object dualism that fails to recognize the world as prior to anything like a subject or object. Indeed, the world is actually largely forgotten. Similarly, these three object to the way philosophers have attempted to understand nature in order to understand the world. In so doing, philosophers have examined objectively present things without also considering worldliness, while often also attempting to separate nature or present things from the world. Such approaches further the problem of an explanation of the world that does not attend to the worldliness of the world, i.e. without regard for that which makes encountering innerworldly beings possible at all. Instead, the question of the world must be posed in a way that does not treat the world merely as an object of knowledge and that also inquires into the worldliness of the world. Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer alike suggest instead that the world might be understood as the possibility for existence and experience, as the totality of beings, and, perhaps most importantly, as a site for self-understanding, for it is in this way that we must consider the world as fundamental in ethical life

The Being of the World and World Beings

Although Fink, Heidegger, and Gadamer insist on a return to the world, their descriptions of the world are not identical to each other even differ within each one's

thought. We find discussions of the world as transcendence, as the Fourfold, as contrasted to environment, and as playspace. I aim to trace these descriptions to demonstrate that at stake in each is an understanding of the world as that which gives being its appearance and beings their conditionedness, as well as that which surpasses both being and beings. Furthermore, we find that based on this analysis of world, we must think of the world as topological, that is, not merely as a nexus of space and time, but rather as itself an interplay in its own conditionedness and boundlessness that gathers and gives place to beings. This will also prompt an understanding of being and beings as topological, characterized by conditionedness and concrete belonging in and to the world.

Fink argues that Western metaphysics is marked by a forgetting of the world. In its attempt to achieve objectivity, especially scientific objectivity or absolute truth, metaphysics has sought a vantage point that would be a view from nowhere. It has forgotten the conditionedness of the world. When metaphysics does account for the world, it mostly conceives of the world only as a frame or container for objects and experiences. There is no relationship to the world as such and beings are not thought in their world-conditionedness.

Fink claims that with Kant, however, there is a radicalization in metaphysics. Looking back to Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770[105], Fink argues that Kant is the first thinker in the metaphysical tradition to think beings in relation to the world. As Fink makes clear in *Welt und Endlichkeit*, a book based on his lecture courses given in 1949 and 1966 in Freiburg, Kant is the first to understand things against the background of the world as a totality. This totality itself cannot be understood as a part; rather all parts belong to it. Thus what fundamentally characterizes beings is their belonging to the world (*Weltgehörigkeit*). The

[105] Immanuel Kant, "On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World [Inaugural Dissertation]," in *Theoretical Philosophy: 1755-1770* ed. David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

key development in Kant's thought is thus not simply that beings are in the world, like a point on a grid, but that they actually *belong* to the world. They cannot be thought without accounting for this belonging. Similarly, as Jeff Malpas explains,

> What Kant provides us with, in fact, is one of the few sustained inquiries into the nature of space and spatiality in the history of philosophy—an inquiry, moreover, that does not merely assume a concept of space as it might be taken up within physical science, but rather adopts a properly *critical* approach to space and spatiality that enables them to be understood in what Kant would have thought of as their *transcendental* character, that is, in terms of the role they play in the possibility of experience, or, as Heidegger has it, in the possibility of world or world-formation.[106]

As Fink shows, Kant also enables space to be thought in terms of world formation. By treating space and spatiality as essential to experience, Kant not only develops an important role for space beyond merely physical extension, but also requires that we think of humans as dependent on this space. Furthermore, this also entails that for Kant, the mind must be embodied. Since the world is the possibility for experience and space is thought in a more robust way, the body is necessary for both experience and knowledge. With Kant, then, we have an important return to the conditionedness of being that was present in Greek thought, but largely absent in modern.

Despite this radicalization, however, Fink is reluctant to espouse this turn fully, for ultimately Kant's Copernican revolution is overly subjective. He writes, "The radicalization consists, briefly stated, in that Kant interprets the essence of a subject, the subjectivity, with world-character. He provides the subject with traits that actually accord with the world. Kant's new concept of subjectivity includes, in a concealed way, essential moments of the world itself, however even these are conceived of in the language of subjectivism" (WE

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[106] Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012). 133.

72).[107] For Fink, Kant thus enables the subject-world relation to be made apparent in a significant way, but the problem is that this relationship is still only understood and expressed from the side of the subject. Whereas metaphysics had traditionally understood the subject as standing opposite objects (*Gegenstände*), Kant now understands objects as all belonging to the field of the subject. Since space and time are a priori intuitions of the subject and the conditions of possibility of appearances[108], all objects belong to this field of the subject in a way akin to that by which all objects belong to the world as totality. In a certain way, then, the world is forgotten again for it is effectively replaced by the subject. So long as the world remains understood in these subjective terms, it remains merely a marginal phenomenon (WE 143). Or, more strongly put, the world for Kant, according to Fink, remains merely a principle of reason or a concept. It has no content or actuality.

Fink does not deny that there is an element of forgetting the world in everyday life, but this *Weltvergessenheit* is seemingly different from that of metaphysics. Rather than attempting to get outside of the world, Fink insists on the primacy of our relation to the world. Although this relation remains in the background or even forgotten in everyday life, everyday life could not be without originally belonging to the world. Here Fink avoids what he takes to be the subjective tendency of Kant's account by demonstrating that the world is not the product of the subject, but rather that something like a subject could only come to be because it is in the world. I suggest that, "The world is more original than beings, objects,

[107] "Die Radikalisierung besteht, thesenhaft gesagt, darin daß er das Wesen des Subjekts, die Subjektivität, interpretiert mit *Welt-Charakteren*. Er stattet das Subjekt mit Zügen aus, die eigentlich der Welt zukommen. Kants neuer Begriff der Subjektivität enthält in verdeckter Weise Wesensmomente der Welt selbst; aber diese werden eben ausgesagt in der Spracher der Subjektivismus."

[108] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*: AK24/B38-9.

and subjects, for it is only from out of the open totality of the world that these things could come to appearance"[109] (WE 149).

Although Husserl does seek to return to the things themselves, and thus to allow beings to show themselves, Heidegger and Fink alike find Husserl's account overly subject-oriented. Despite his contributions and extensive work to integrate Husserl's thought into a more comprehensive system, as evidenced in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, Fink gradually distances himself from many of Husserl's positions.[110] He does not abandon Husserl or phenomenology altogether, but expresses great concerns about Husserl's work, particularly its subjectivist bent. One of Fink's main targets for criticism is Husserl's idea of the world as horizon. Husserl understands horizon in a variety of ways, but what remains consistent is the idea that the horizon marks the possibility of perception and experience. It is precisely to this that Fink objects. So long as the horizon is understood from the side of the subject's intentionality as the horizon for possible experience, it remains fundamentally empty. Fink writes, "The world, the entirety of being, is fundamentally characterized by Husserl as a *universal horizon*. It is not a horizon of a single being, but rather of an entire field of experience, within which things come across us; and thus it is an *empty* horizon, which is never redeemable in actual experience" (WE 148).[111] By this Fink means that so long as the world is thought only as a horizon of potential experience for a subject, it remains devoid of content. Furthermore, it is empty because Husserl assumes a relationship to an entire field of

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[109] Catherine Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (2013): 288.

[110] Ronald Bruzina provides an extremely detailed and nuanced account of Husserl's relationship with Fink in Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology 1928-1938* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).. See also, Dorion Cairns, Edmund Husserl, and Eugen Fink, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976).

[111] "Die Welt, das Ganze des Seienden, wird von Husserl grundsätzlich charakterisiert als ein *Universalhorizont*. Er is kein Horizont an einem einzelnen Seienden, sondern am ganzen Erfahrungsfeld, innerhalb dessen uns die Dinge begegnen; und zwar ist er ein *Leer*-Horizont, der niemals einlösbar ist in wirklicher Erfahrung."

experience. Although it seems clear that Husserl does ultimately believe that this horizon is concretized in real objects and experiences, Fink's objection is directed more toward Husserl's claim that this horizon qua horizon is experienceable. On Fink's account, as we will see, this relationship to totality as such is untenable, for we never encounter totality qua totality in experience. As in the case of Kant, world in this sense of horizon remains a principle of thought. If the world is conceived in this way, then it precludes the possibility for genuine being in the world. Fink argues that what is required is a sense of world that makes possible any sort of being at all, not where the world is a formal condition for existence, but the totality that allows all things to come to appearance.

Despite Fink's distancing himself from Kant and Husserl, he maintains the prominence of space and time that they assert. Yet rather than thinking space and time from the side of the subject, he thinks them from their fundamental relation to the world. The world for Fink is that which gives space and allows time: "The world gives being space and allows it time. It is the space-giving and the time-allowing for everything that is separate" (S 145).[112] It is not the case, for example, that there is space because two things stand next to each other. The world is what grants space, not because it holds things, but because it is what allows things to come to appearance at all. It is only because the world gives space that these two things can stand next to each other. The world, however, is fundamentally groundless. Yet it is through this groundlessness that it provides a ground for innerworldly (*binnenweltlich*) things. In *Welt und Endlichkeit*, Fink writes, "The world is not a mere container in which things are gathered, it is not a mere krater in which beings are brewed, it is yet essentially that which grants every being appearance, the rise into light and its finite tarrying"

[112] "Die Welt gibt dem Seienden Raum und läßt ihm Zeit, sie ist das Raumgebende und Zeitlassende für alles, was in der Weise der Vereinzelung ist."

(WE 117).[113] This is especially expressed in Fink's choice to describe beings as *binnenweltlich* rather than *innerweltlich*, since it emphasizes the both *bei* and *innen*, suggesting the sense of belonging to the world or being together with the world. This is similar to Heidegger's discussion in *Being and Time* that "being in" the world means that we are not in the world like beans in a jar, but that we belong to the world. Heidegger suggests that "'In' stems from *innan-* to live, *habitare,* to dwell… The expression *'bin'* is connected with *'bei.' 'Ich bin'* (I am) means I dwell, I stay near ... the world as something familiar in such and such a way. Being as the infinitive of 'I am': that is, understood as an existential, means to dwell near…, to be familiar with..." (BT 51/SZ 54). We have a relation to the world upon which we can reflect and relate ourselves. Being in the world is also "being together with the world" (BT 51/SZ 54). For both Fink and Heidegger the world affords an introspective relation. Furthermore the world itself does not exist, qua world, in the world. Rather, we encounter space and time in the grounding from the world and we experience the innerworldly things that come to appearance from this grounding. Thus the world is in a way a condition for the possibility of experience, although neither in the Husserlian or Kantian sense. Rather the world is the possibility of experience as that which gives space and allows time for all things

In *Welt und Endlichkeit*, Fink expresses the concern that although Heidegger seeks in his earlier works to overcome the subjective tendencies of Kant and other philosophers, Heidegger's analysis of the world, particularly in understanding the world as transcendental, falls itself too far on the side of the subjective. Specifically, Fink argues that Heidegger, despite having devoted a great deal of thought to an analysis of the world, still fails to ask the question of the world fully. His account emphasizes too much the world as for Dasein,

[113] "Die Welt ist nicht ein bloßer Behälter, in welchem die Dinge gesammelt sind, sie ist nicht bloß der Mischkrug, worin das Seiende brodelt, sie ist doch wesentlich auch das, was allem Seienden das Erscheinen schenkt, den Aufgang ins Licht und sein endliches Weilen."

rather than the world as world, such that the world is essentially dissolved into Dasein. In this way, Heidegger fails to preserve the fundamental, insurmountable difference between being and the world, and he thus fails to account for the cosmological. What is lacking in Heidegger's work prior to his discussion of the strife between world and earth in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is precisely the negative moment that points to the cosmological difference, i.e., the difference between world and being. Thus while Heidegger preserves the difference between being and beings, his early understanding of the world still tends toward the subjective.

This relation to the world as one where, despite its being essentially hidden from us, this world is fundamentally intimate and familiar.[114] Adapting Heidegger's idea of ontological difference, Fink identifies this relation as cosmological difference. Fink explains,

> World is the *totality of appearances*. This expression can be interpreted in a double sense. In one sense, that the totality as the all-surrounding is placed opposite that which is located *in* it, however not like a thing opposite other things. In another sense, in that one says that the mode of being of the totality is not to be explained here by the mode of being of the inner-worldly, that is to say that one very emphatically emphasizes the *cosmological difference*. (WE 117) [115]

Thus the cosmological difference expresses first the difference between inner-worldly beings and the world itself as totality.[116] Here Fink's negative cosmology comes to light. The world is fundamentally different from innerwordly beings and surpasses any attempt to grasp or conceptualize it. We might then think of the world as superabundant insofar as it is fundamentally incalculable. The world is neither horizon nor existential nor idea. This is not to say that as excessive or superabundant the world is not meaningful. Instead, the world

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[114] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 288.

[115] "Welt ist das *Ganze der Erscheinungen.* Dieser Ausdruck kann in einem doppelten Sinne ausgelegt werden. Einamal so, daß das Ganze als das Allumfangende dem *in* ihm Befindlichen entgegengestellt wird, aber nicht wie ein Dine einem anderen Ding. Sondern indem man sagt, daß die Seinsweise des Ganzen sich nicht von der Seinsweise des Binnenweltlichen her auslegen lasse, d.h daß man ganz nachdrücklich die *kosmologische Differenz* betont."

[116] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 288.

exceeds any single meaning we could have for it, and as such, reminds us of our inability to control it. Furthermore, it would be wrong to think of the world as itself an actual thing (*ein Wirkliches*). Instead, the world is better understood as actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) and a web (*Gewirk*) that provides all things a place, a beginning and an end (S 168).[117] It is not always clear, however, whether Fink sees this difference primarily on the one hand as between world and being or, on the other, as a difference between world and beings. What is clear, however, is that the world is not a thing among things, but the totality that allows for things to appear. Although all beings are beings because they are inner-worldly, it is only the human who has a relationship to the world. Fink continues, "The human is the world being – not because he gives shape to the world, rather because he alone among all living creatures can hold himself out into the totality that surrounds, binds, joins, and maintains everything, gives everything space and leaves everything time" (WE 184). We can see, then, how Fink resists any sort of subjectivization of this relationship. The world is not the result of projections or concepts of the subject, rather the subject is constituted by the world. She steps out into the open of the world.

Second, the cosmological difference also characterizes the way in which the human being, while inner-worldly, thinks and expresses this totality symbolically. This symbolic expression occurs most fully in play. The world is never fixed and static, but rather is always moving, always the play between creation and destruction. The world is the playspace of being. When humans play, when they create and participate in playworlds, they symbolically express the totality to which they belong. With symbol Fink intends the sense contained in

[117] "Die Welt ist nie *ein* Wirkliches, auch nicht das *höchste* Wirkliche in einer Rangleiter der Seinsstärke, aber sie ist am Ende die allumfangende *Wirklichkeit*, das *Gewirk*. Im Gewirk der Welt hat jedes Endlich-Seinende seinen Ort und seine Weile, seinen Aufgan und seinen Untergang—ist es erwirkt und verwirkt."

the Greek *symbolon*, i.e. a fragment.[118] Unlike a sign, which points to something beyond itself, the symbol as part simultaneously expresses the whole to which it belongs.[119] He writes, "The cosmological difference is no mere separating into different things, no mere logical sophistry or subtlety; it is a difference, which permanently, even when forgotten, penetrates our entire being. The human is the world-open being because in all boundedness to being, he always steps out into the open *in* which all things are found" (WE 19).[120] Thus, while humans may have no direct relationship to the world totality as such, this totality still shines forth in symbolic play. We will turn to a fuller account of symbolic play momentarily. What is key here, however, is that humans alone are capable of this symbolic relationship. The being of the world cannot be explained in the same way as other forms of being, and it is clear that Fink himself struggles at times to explain the being of the world, often concluding that any full account of the being of the world exceeds our capacity. However, while unable to speak directly of the being of the world, what is particular to humans is the ability to express the totality of the world symbolically.

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[118] Although Fink does not refer to Ernst Cassirer's text, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, in his discussion of symbol, he was still familiar with Cassirer's work, having even been present at the Davos debate between Heidegger and Cassirer. There are similarities between Cassirer's and Fink's accounts, particularly in the way that the symbol is a meaningful expression of the whole, although Fink would likely balk at the subjective dimension in Cassirer's description, although Cassirer does not discuss the relationship between play and symbol. As Andreas von Arnauld explains, "In his wide-ranging text, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Ernst Cassirer shies away from conceiving of play as a serious manifestation of cultural sense, although the references between play and myth in archaic cultures, which were available to him in the legendary library of Aby Warburg in Hamburg, could have been familiar to him. In contrast, for Eugen Fink, the assistant and confidant of Edmund Husserl for many years, presents play completely as a symbol of the world" Andreas von Arnauld, "Prälaudium: Recht und Spiel," in *Recht und Spielregeln*, ed. Andreas von Arnauld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 3. In viewing the human as capable of stepping into the infinite through play while still characterized by finitude, it seems Fink stands between Cassirer and Heidegger. Fink and Gadamer also do not reference each other's work on the relation between symbol and play, although in his discussion of symbol in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer does make note of Cassirer, although he contends that Cassirer erroneously sees language merely as one symbolic form among others. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 64.

[119] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 288.

[120] "Die kosmologische Differenz ist nicht das bloße Auseinanderhalten von Verschiedenem, keine bloß logische Spitzfindgkeit und Subtilität; sie ist eine Unterscheidung, die ständig, wenn auch vergessen, unser ganzes Dasein durchwaltet. Der Mensch ist das weltoffene Wesen, weil er bei aller Gebundenheit an das Seiende immer darüber hinaussteht ins Offene, *in* welchem all Dinge vorkommen."

Furthermore, the person who steps out into the open of the world does so primarily as a finite being. Mario Ruggenini explains, "What is decisive is allowing the understanding of being to originate in the frame of the world relationship, not as the initiative coming from human being to shape the world, rather much more as the answer with which existence opens itself up opposite the primacy of the world."[121] The world is not a projection of the human, but what allows the human as finite to step out into the world. Everything in the world, says Fink, is finite, and it is just this finitude of things that gives them their world character. Because humans alone understand their finitude, humans alone are world beings. It might seem here that Fink is tending toward a sort of speciesism. While he does believe humans are exceptional in their capacity to relate to the world, we must be clear that Fink does not seek to posit a sharp distinction between humans and nature. Furthermore, neither does he seek to establish a hierarchy of living beings, nor to award different rights or standing to humans based on this feature. In fact, Fink's text, *Natur Freiheit, Welt*, radicalizes traditional conceptions of the human by insisting that we abandon the idea of the human as rational animal. As Fink writes in *Existenz und Coexistenz*,[122] "every mythic, religious and also speculative intimacy of human being (*Daseins*) alone lives out the experience of the world, that is, from the experience of the infinite depth in every finite thing" (EC 101). The human is a world being. All things express the world symbolically, but humans alone can reflect on this relationship.

Despite Fink's emphasis on the finitude and situatedness of world being, by focusing almost exclusively on the insurmountability and inaccessibility of the world and the

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[121] Mario Ruggenini, "Selbstbezug und Weltbezug: Grundprobleme der Anthropologie Eugen Finks," in *Eugen Fink: Sozialphilosohie - Anthropologie - Kosmologie - Pädagogik - Methodik*, ed. Anselm Böhmer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 144. Translation my own.

[122] Eugen Fink, *Existenz und Coexistenz: Grundprobleme der menschilchen Gemeinschaft*, ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz (Würzburg Königshausen & Neumann, 1987).

cosmological nature of human existence, it seems that he still pays too little attention to the particular place of human existence. This is seen most readily in the fact that he discusses the space-giving nature of the world without also attending to the specific places that allow for the happening of world through them. On the one hand, the advantage of his description is that it avoids the subjective tendency present in Kant and Husserl, since space is no longer directed from the subject toward the world. Furthermore, this description also resists tendencies toward relativism since the world is the common ground to all and there remains the fundamental possibility for a person to step beyond her particularity. On the other hand, it is not especially clear that this particularity can be preserved in light of the constant participation in the infinite. For example, in discussing the symbolic participation in play, the emphasis lies more on the expression of the totality of the play rather than the particularity of the playspace or the player. What is lacking in Fink's account that is present more in Heidegger and Gadamer is the sense of "mineness" that belongs to being. Thus although Fink most often chooses to speak of beings as *binnenweltlich*, thus belonging to rather than merely being in the world, the very specificity required by such belonging is often obscured or overshadowed by the totality of the world. While Fink does consistently return us to the necessity of the concrete and finitude in human being, there remains a risk that his account of world suggests too much a getting beyond the very particularity that makes such participation possible at all and that of beings points rather to anonymity and substitutability in that participation. It seems ultimately that Fink wants to place a check on what he believes to be the hubris of conceptual thinking. Some of the difficulties of his account will be lessened, however, when we look to the role of earth, particularly as that which provides the space for that concrete dwelling, which will be addressed shortly.

World as Transcendence

Although Heidegger moves away from the idea of transcendence in his later works, it is still important to consider his early discussions of the relation between the world and transcendence for, as stated in the previous chapter, transcendence marks an important instance of alterity and standing in the truth of being. Although the world provides the possibility of beings and is understood as the totality of being, it would be a mistake to think of the world as a static ground or foundation. Similarly, it would be a mistake to think of the world as a mere assemblage of parts, such as beings and objects. Instead, the world provides a ground through its worlding, through its self-grounding. As self-grounding, the world is "directed toward an interpretation of human existence in its relation to beings as a whole" (P 121). Again, the world is not itself a being, but is in a relation of understanding with being. As being is possible only because it is in the world, the world has the character of "for the sake of." The world is for the sake of Dasein by enabling the very possibility of Dasein. Furthermore, from out of the world Dasein exists for the sake of itself, meaning that in the world, Dasein chooses how to comport itself. Although the world is for the sake of being, and as such belongs to the subject, this does not mean that the world is subjective. Rather, it is that Dasein projects itself toward the world. In this way, Dasein transcends. Transcendence is meant here in the sense of *übersteigen*, that is, surmounting or surpassing. For Heidegger, this surpassing pertains to Dasein and is always toward something. As moving toward something, it marks the constitution of the self as it first enables the self to distinguish itself from others. That toward which Dasein transcends is the world, again because the world is that out of which Dasein could give itself signification. In "On the Essence of Ground", Heidegger writes, "'Dasein transcends' means in the essence of its being in its *world-forming*, 'forming' in the multiple sense that it lets world occur, and through the world gives itself an original view that is not explicitly grasped, yet functions precisely as

a paradigmatic form for all manifest beings, among which each respective Dasein occurs" (P 123). The world is not subjective, so it is not the product of Dasein, yet Dasein projects the world, which is to say that it sets the world as its task in its transcendence. This, says, Heidegger, is the freedom of Dasein. For this reason, the world is transcendental as allowing the possibility of the transcendence of things toward the world.[123]

In projecting itself and the world, Dasein exceeds itself as it steps out beyond itself. However, Dasein is not somewhere in space, but is in the midst of beings. The projection of Dasein is not an empty horizon of possibility, but a concrete being in the world. Neither is this projection a specific plan. Thus Heidegger again draws us to the necessity of specific locales or places for this transcendence or stepping while also reminding us that both Dasein and the world are fundamentally abyssal. They spring forth, but only from these particular places. Because Dasein is in the midst of beings, certain possibilities are precluded, withdrawn from Dasein. Here we have a similar sense of being as *binnenweltlich*, as not simply contained in the world, but belonging to it in the midst of worldbeings. Thus as much as transcendence exceeds, it also withdraws. Dasein lets things be and attunes itself toward those possibilities. The world is not the static foundation of Dasein, but allows Dasein to ground itself. In grounding itself, Dasein is for the sake of itself, which means that Dasein does not rely on a prior foundation or explanation, but provides its own basis and account. This is suggested in the language of the leap or of springing forth. As this language also demonstrates, although Dasein is for the sake of itself because it is concerned with the question of it own being, this does not mean that Dasein is strictly individual or isolated. Because being is always being with, the why of Dasein, the for the sake of itself, means that Dasein must attend to others and the world. A leap or springing forth must occur

[123] Cf. Jeff Malpas, "Heidegger's Topology of Being," in *Transcedental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Galt Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 128.

somewhere, so it must be toward the world and in a place, but the way this is done is Dasein's own. However, also because Dasein springs forth toward the world from its own grounding, there remains an abyssal dimension. Later, in *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger will speak of the abyssal grounding of Dasein as a form of play. This play, as Dasein's abyssal grounding of ground and providing its own foundation, is freedom.

Heidegger again suggests the relationship between the world as transcendence in the section, "'Welt' als Spiel des Lebens" in *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, his lecture course at Freiburg in 1928 and 1929.[124] There Heidegger again argues that being is being-in-the-world and such being-in-the-world is transcendence. Furthermore, this transcendence is play, based on its original character as it creates itself and its space. Heidegger writes, "World' is the title for the play that transcendence plays" (GA 27: 312). The play is not subjective since it does not happen within the subject. The subject rather happens in play; beings are *Mitspieler* with being. This is found as well in Heidegger's discussion in *Being and Time* of the leeway, the *Spielraum*, of Dasein's spatiality in the world. I will turn to a fuller discussion of the relationship between play and being shortly, but here I want to emphasize primarily that the transcendence of being-in-the-world and play is not one of surmounting or overcoming the world, but of providing the possibilities for understanding being, of finding oneself thereby. As the play of transcendence, play is world-formation. The world as totality provides the possibility for Dasein's self-articulation.

[124] As Ronald Bruzina observes, Fink underlined every sentence in this section and reported to have gathered many of his ideas on cosmic play from it, despite his many reservations conceiving of the world as transcendental. Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology 1928-1938*: 136 n. 26.

Being-in-the-world as Understanding

For Heidegger, being is being in the world. Despite the changes between his earlier and later thinking, this insistence on the compound being-in-the-world does not fade. As he argues in *Being and Time*, the philosophical tradition has never properly asked the question of being. Dasein, however, understands itself in relation to being and also understands something about itself, and so asks the question of being. Dasein understands itself in its possibilities or being itself or not. In this way, Heidegger highlights the hermeneutic dimension of Dasein, for Dasein is always self-interpreting. Heidegger rejects the approach that traces the origin of beings to being. Instead, he argues, we must ask the question of the meaning of being. To do this is "to make a being--one who questions--transparent in its being" (GA2: 10/SZ 7). Dasein, understood here, is not a specific, conscious subject, but refers to the way of being of beings. In one of his marginal notes, Heidegger remarks that Dasein is the exemplary being in which the meaning of being is to be found because Dasein is "the co-player (*das Bei-spiel*) that in its essence as Da-sein (perduring the truth of being) plays to and with being—brings it into the play of resonance" (GA 2: 9c/SZ 7c).[125] What we find here, then, is that Da-sein marks a response to, a playing with being. Furthermore, it reminds us that being is relational: "Thus it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being" (GA 2: 16/SZ 12). However, because Dasein is not a particular subject, we cannot think of this self-interpretation as a subjective activity in the mind of the interpreter. Dasein does, however, have a sense of "mineness." As Dasein chooses or responds to possibilities for itself, it cannot merely be an indifferent genus. Instead, Dasein interprets itself in its everydayness, in a particular culture.

[125] Heidegger's note relies also on a play of words. The German *Beispiel* means "exemplar," but the hyphenation of *Bei-spiel* suggests "playing with." Furthermore, we find that such playing perdures and preserves, which will echo claims made in "The Origin of the Work of Art".

Heidegger highlights the particularity of Dasein by emphasizing the Da- of Dasein: being is being there. Furthermore, being there suggests not a vague indeterminacy, but being-in-the-world. Heidegger describes being-in-the-world as a "*unified* phenomenon," (GA 2: 71/SZ 53)[126] that is, there is not the world on one side and beings on the other. Beings are not contained in the world like beans in a jar. Although "in" does often mean that one thing is located in another, Heidegger points to the German *innan-*, which has more the sense of habituating, of dwelling (GA 2: 73/SZ 54). The being-in-the-world of Dasein is to dwell, to stay near to the world. Here world seems to mean the space of significance or meaning. There is little discussion of nature or of the earth, which is an omission he corrects his later writings. In *Being and Time*, world appears rather as shared space of significance that allows the possibility of human beings and Dasein at all. Thus it is not the case that Dasein is in the world because it happens to be in the world, but "[Dasein] *can be* as existing, i.e., as Dasein, only *because* its essential constitution lies in being-in-the-world" (P 111). Dasein is together with the world and can only be thought to have its own space by virtue of its being-in-the-world in general.

As inhabiting the world, Dasein does not have the world as an object, or even could be said to "have" the world at all; rather it is absorbed in the world (GA 2: 73/SZ 54). Dasein is not so much in the world, but is rather penetrated by the world and lives out of this world. Because Dasein understands itself in relation to being, and thus to being-in-the-world, this understanding is not neutral. Dasein attunes itself to different possibilities. Furthermore, Dasein can only attune itself and meet with other beings "because they are able to show themselves of their own accord within a *world*" (GA 2: 77/SZ 57). Because

[126] This emphasis on unity persists through all of Heidegger's works, as can be seen in the unity of the Fourfold, the unity in the strife between world and earth, and even in referring to the equiprimordiality of things.

Dasein can encounter things only because it is already in the world, the traditional dichotomy of subject and object breaks down. What Dasein encounters are not objects at arm's length, *Objekte*, but things that confront it, *Gegenstände*, and lay claim. So, it is not the case that Dasein is subject and the world object. There is no vantage point that could yield some sort of objective knowledge, so any attempt to achieve this sort objective knowledge is fundamentally misguided.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger identifies Descartes as attempting to proceed from nature without understanding the worldliness of the world. Descartes' achievement of "I think, therefore I am" equates the self with thinking, thus prompting a distinction between nature and spirit. Furthermore, this equation also yields a knowing subject in opposition to an object for knowledge. As Heidegger explains, Descartes understands the world in terms of extension, that is, in terms of substances extended in space. The difficulty, however, is that substance and extension rely on a conception of being as such, but this being is not perceivable in the world. Thus Descartes' explanation of the ontology of the world leaves the world unintelligible since the meaning of being is left unexplained (GA 2: 124=127/SZ 93-5). Gadamer raises a slightly similar objection to Descartes' argument for objective knowledge: "The leading example of clear limits in our power to objectify, it seems to me, is our experience of the body. What we call our 'body' is quite certainly not the *res extensa* of the Cartesian designation of the human *corpus*. The way the body is perceived by us is clearly not in terms of mere mathematical extension. The body is perhaps essentially removed from objectification" (GPT 270). Fink believes, like Kant and Schopenhauer, that our bodies are not like objects over against us; instead, we rely on our bodies without much thought unless there are disturbances in how we find ourselves with our bodies. Gadamer's criticism is that Descartes' insistence on objectivity is ultimately alien to how we have knowledge and find

ourselves in the world. As Heidegger explains, this is also the case because "Descartes does not allow the kind of being of innerworldly beings to present itself, but rather prescribes to the world, so to speak, its 'true' being on the basis of an idea of being (being – constant objective presence) the source of which has not been revealed and the justification of which has not been demonstrated" (GA2: 128/SZ 96). Thus Descartes projects a conception of being onto the world, rather than allow for being to show itself. Descartes's analysis also identifies our relation to the world as one merely of knowledge.

Although knowledge is a mode of being of Dasein, and thus a mode of being in the world, it is not the only mode. Furthermore, Heidegger is quick to caution that this knowledge is not merely mathematical knowledge, but includes the practical way we find ourselves in the world, e.g. the way we know how to use tools or engage others that does not require conscious, calculated knowledge or an objective, scientific perspective. A foundation that relies on the deduction of being from natural objects is doomed to fail because it distorts the relation of being to the world. Instead, for Heidegger, Dasein directs itself toward other things and can perceive and think about other things, and because Dasein encounters other things only in the world by being-in-the-world, knowledge is a mode of being-in-the-world. In addition to knowing, there are other modes of being-in-the-world, such as neglecting, producing, or attuning. Each of these modes is a way of taking care, in varying degrees, of the world. To take care is to have being as a concern, to be taken in by the world.

Like Heidegger, Fink also claims that the fundamental mode of being in the world is not merely one of openness, but one of understanding. For Fink, this *Weltverständnis* as *Weltverhältnis* is the fundamental mode of human existence. In other words, to be open to the world, to be aware of our finitude, is to understand ourselves in relation to the world. Again,

it is not that the world is the result of understanding, but rather what enables understanding at all.[127] To be in a relationship is to be in understanding. This understanding need not be a matter of logic or concepts, however. Understanding, too, requires things. Echoing Heidegger's claim that being in the world "is not mere perceptual cognition, but, rather a handling, using, and taking care of things which has its own kind of 'knowledge' [*Erkenntnis*]" (GA 2: 90/SZ 67), Fink views understanding as the most basic capacity to make sense of and move about the world, such that there is a reciprocal relationship between understanding and being in the world. The mistake of philosophy from Plato forward, and especially with Descartes and modern philosophy, is to champion self-consciousness and knowledge over understanding while attempting to free thinking from its rootedness in the world.

As being in the world, all things, too, are shot through with the totality of the world, which they express symbolically. A bed, for example, is what it is because of the way that it is used. Thus a kind of handiness belongs to the bed. Furthermore, despite its being finite, or in fact precisely because of its finitude and status as a thing, the bed, according to Fink, symbolically expresses the totality of the world. It is the place where children have been birthed, where partners have laid together nightly in love and care, where workers, exhausted, have fallen to recover their strength, where people have died. This bed, says Fink, is the site of the mysteries of humanity, but it is not such simply because there is a meaning associated with it. Rather, phenomena such as life, death, and love are fundamentally bound to things: "It indicates that the human openness for death and love, for wakefulness and sleep necessarily manifests itself in a thing, although the factical form of this necessary thing may represent a fullness of empirical and accidental variations" (EC 101). Meaningful human

[127] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 291.

experiences could not be such without things. Heidegger does not employ the language of symbolic relations, choosing instead the language of signs in *Being and Time*, yet he is close to Fink in claiming that the "World is always already 'there' in all things at hand" (GA 2: 111/SZ 83) such that signs, as useful things, indicate the ontological structure of usefulness and worldliness. In this way, too, Fink returns to the particularity that seemed to be missing in his description of the way that humans playfully express the totality of the world. Here it seems rather that the totality of the world cannot be expressed except through particular things, although still humans alone are capable of capable of understanding this symbolic expression.

Gadamer, too, points to the world as a place for understanding by marking the difference between an environment and the world. Animals, as well as humans, always have an environment. It is the space in which they move about and lead their lives. To have a world, however, is to have a particular posture or orientation to that environment. Gadamer refers to this as "freedom from environment" (TM 441), which at first sounds suspiciously like he sees having a world as abandoning the animal dimension of humanity. However, this does not appear to be the case since the freedom Gadamer intends is the freedom to take a posture to the world, to provide meaning for the world, and to be in a verbal relationship to the world. Gadamer writes, "For man, however rising above the environment means *rising to 'world'* itself, to true environment. This does not mean that he leaves his habitat but that he has another posture toward it—a free, distanced orientation—that is always realized in language" (TM 442). To rise above the environment is not to leave it, but to gain perspective toward it through being able to relate to it in a more complex and reflective way. Furthermore, the distanced orientation toward the world should not be conflated with the attempt for distanced orientation and objectivity espoused by the natural sciences. Instead, it

means that our way of being in the world is not dictated by the environment. Rather, we are always already in the world since we have language. Whereas Fink, for example, does not seem to distinguish between the world and environment as he sees the world as totality as prior to subjects, although he does argue for a difference between human and non-human animal ways of being in the world, Gadamer understands the world as particularly human. As we will see, the world and language mutually invoke each other. Language provides freedom from environment by enabling the world to have meaning and us to attune ourselves to the world. In this way then, I suggest we understand freedom from environment best to mean freedom for the world.

What is important in this discussion of the world, particularly of the relationship between the world and understanding, is that the human is always embedded and embodied, such that if we are to take seriously the human as an ethical person, we must also take seriously this conditionedness and locatedness. We must see the human in her essential relation to the world, and must thus also see that this essential locatedness is what enables her to be an ethical person at all as it allows for and demands self-understanding and self-articulation in real and concrete ways. Her ethical comportment is not in any abstract or general way, and neither is it threatened by this relationship to the world. Instead, it is her freedom for the world, in holding open what is other and what exceeds her, that allows a person to step forth in her ethical life.

II. World and Earth

Earth and Concealment

In his discussions of the world, Fink reminds us that despite the world's unconcealment, there remains a dimension, namely the earth, that resists this unconcealment. If philosophers have been guilty of forgetting the world, even more so have

they forgotten the earth, particularly because the earth accounts for the sticky, dark, sensual, finite, and erotic dimension of humanity that philosophers abandoned in conceiving of the human as a rational animal. Like the world, the earth is neither thing, nor is it material. Instead, the earth is understood in the sense of *arche*, i.e. as original source, rather than *hyle*, i.e. as matter, and as such, never factically given or perceivable. He writes in *Sein und Mensch* that the earth is in "the compactness of the primal fact [*Urfaktum*], which maintains with it the character of necessity; that being is at all is grounded in the earth; however the earth on the other hand does not establish itself somewhere, it is the space for all where, the leeway [*Spielraum*] for all actual and possible; the earth seals itself against every penetration, [it] is the inilluminable and incomprehensible…" (SM 284) Fink sees the earth as ultimately having a meontic character, wherein me-ontic is understood as non-being. This is to say then that the earth as meontic has a character that preserves non-being, nothingness, as well as being.[128] Thus the earth marks something fundamentally abyssal, but also something absolute in its non-being, meaning that the non-being of the earth can never be conceptualized. This does not mean, however, that preserving the meontic character of the earth dissolves in mysticism or nihilism. Rather, Fink sees it as fidelity to the world and earth in allowing the earth to be something insurmountable. Furthermore, without the earth as meontic, there could be no origin, no leap, meaning that without drawing out of that non-being. Fink intends this not in a temporal sense that would posit nothing merely as pre-something, but rather in the sense

[128] Fink's discussions of meon occur mostly in the context of addressing the methodology of phenomenology: "It is the task of phenomenology to venture the leap into the depth of the non-ground, the abyss, that opens up beyond all being and beings, to wrench the non-ground abyss of this "Nothing" out of the emptiness of its dialectical conceptuality into being experienced in the phenomenological question," Eugen-Fink-Archiv Z-IV 57b, cited in Ronald Bruzina, Similarly, "Meontic philosophy is not a flight into the Nothing, but rather fidelity to the world [Welttreue] in the deepest sense: the finite, being, time will not be abandoned (left aside) for the sake of a mystical sinking into the Nothing, but instead will be drawn out of the Nothing, "created." The philosopher thus becomes in this way "creator of the world." . . . Being: the world, is necessary." Thus to speak of the earth as meontic means to preserve the way in which things are drawn out of this nothing, this finitude." Eugen-Fink-Archiv Z-IX V/3a, emphasis Fink's, from a subset of notes dated "fall 1931."

that there is nothing, an abyss, that belongs to the earth out of which things are drawn and created.

The Play of World and Earth

Whereas Heidegger may have forgotten the earth in his earlier texts, the dynamic strife between world and earth is central to his essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art". Heidegger believes that each artwork is the site of this strife in the setting up of a world and setting forth of the earth, which Heidegger identifies as *physis*. The work erects the world, and in setting up and worlding of the world in the work of art is what allows the beings of the world to presence. However, because the earth presences itself as self-closing and the world is the clearing and opening of paths, there is fundamentally a belligerent struggle between the two. "In its resting upon earth the world strives to surmount it. As the self-opening it will tolerate nothing closed. As the sheltering and concealing, however, earth tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there" (GA 5: 35/26). Based on the dynamic play of forces in this strife, we might identify this relationship as Heraclitean struggle.[129] Furthermore, like Heraclitus' flux, the strife is never something resolved or concluded. In fact, world and earth are only what they are so long as they remain in this struggle.

Although it seems that struggle or strife is antithetical to play, especially since we already determined that play is a matter of letting things be without attempting to conquer them, we see that this strife is more a kind of dynamic interplay than an attempt for

[129] "In Heidegger's discussion of the presence of gods in the tragedy, just prior to his discussion of the strife of world and earth, he makes reference to Heraclitus' Fragment 53, stating "Rather, it transforms that speech so that now every essential word fights the battle and puts up for decision what is holy and what unholy, what is great and what small, what is brave and what cowardly, what is noble and what fugitive, what is master and what is slave" (22). Most references to Heraclitus on strife are to fragment 80: "One should see that war is common and justice is strife, and that everything is happening according to strife and necessity." Heraclitus, *Heraclitus: translation and analysis*: 35.

domination or destruction. We see the play through the intimacy and unity between the powers of world and earth. Heidegger writes, "In the struggle, each opponent carries the other beyond itself" and "the opponents admit themselves into the intimacy of their simple belonging to one another" (GA 5: 35/27). Although the strife marks a fundamental rift (*Riss*), we should not think of this as a sort of tearing asunder, but as the common ground and "shared outline" (*Umriss*) (GA 5: 51/38). It is this intimacy in the struggle that provides the unity of the work, such that the rift structures and gives rise to truth. In this way, this intimacy of the rift also provides the unconcealment of beings.

Heidegger writes, "The essence of truth is in itself the ur-strife [*Urstreit*] in which is won that open center within which beings stand, and from out which they withdraw into themselves" (GA 5: 42/31). What is won in the strife between earth and world is not one over the other; rather what is won is truth. This is clearer when we recall that Heidegger reminds us that truth is not correct correspondence, but unconcealment, for which he uses the Greek *alētheia*. However, because the earth resists unconcealment, the unconcealment as *alētheia* is never total unconcealment. Thus the tension between the world as the light of day with the earth as the dark of night is preserved as world and earth belong together in their intimacy. Whereas in a military battle one side does seek to overcome the other, in this strife as Heidegger understands it, world and earth do not attempt to surmount one another, but to hold each other in play through this tension. Thus while this strife is certainly a more agonistic form of play, it would be wrong to think of it merely as a form of conquest. Through the strife between world and earth that requires their shared outline and mutual play, beings are able to come to appearance, so truth as alētheia, the play between concealment and unconcealment, is won. Furthermore, truth happens only in space, only in the clearing that is held open by this play.

The Play of Beings

As *ens cosmologicum*, the human is characterized according to Fink by her openness to the world. Her freedom is thus not characterized by her dominion over her animal nature or as random behavior, but as the actualization of ideals, which Fink characterizes as Nietzschean.[130] Things no longer have absolute value, as in the sense of the Platonic idea, but have worth in relation to others, as willing of the will to power. Here Fink draws our attention to Nietzsche's discussion of the child in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and his references to Heraclitus' child playing with the universe. The ideal is playing with and in cosmic play. Furthermore, this emphasizes, too, the degree to which beings are in play, i.e. at stake, in existence:

> In the creativity of pure play, a person experiences himself as co-player in the play of the world…Playing he dwells in the play of the building and destroying, joining and separating, letting-be and annihilating world…In play the human being's relation to the world occurs as the double relation to the concealing, closing earth and the exposing light. Thus being achieves *radical worldliness*, – it relates not only to *beings*, rather the roots, the 'radices' of all innerworldly things, it *exists 'worldly' in relationship to the night and day of being*…The human does not appear merely as an in-between, like other things, between heaven and earth: he inhabits the abyss of the deep and the bright realm of light, – he is attached to Mother Earth and Father Ether: he stands in the tension of worldliness (NFW 193-94).[131]

On Fink's account, then, to be a world being is to participate in the play of the world itself. It is not merely to stand passively as the world passes over, but to relate to oneself and the world actively. The human is not a pawn in the play of the world, but a co-player, as we saw as well in Heidegger's analysis. I argue that, "At no point does Fink deny the natural aspect

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[130] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 289.

[131] "Im Schöpfertum des reinen Spiels erfährt sich der Mensch als der *Mit-Spieler im Spiel der Welt*... Spielend wohnt er im Spiel der bauenden und zerstörenden, der fügenden und brechenden, der sinelassenden und vernichtenden Welt...Im Spiel geschieht der Weltbezug des Menschenwesens als der Doppelbezug zur bergend-verschließenden Erde und zum aussetzenden Licht. So gewinnt das Dasein die *radikale Weltlichkeit*, — es entspringt nicht nur dem *Seienden*, sondern den Wurzeln, den ‚radices' aller binnenweltlichen Dinge, es *existtiert ‚weltlich' im Verhältnis zu Nacht und Tag des Seins*...Der Mensch kommnt nicht bloß als ein Zwischending, wie auch die anderen Dingen, zwischen Himmel und Erde vor: er bewohnt das Abgründige der Tiefe und das helle Lichtreicht, --er ist zugetan der Mutter Erden und dem Vater Äther: er sthet in der Spannung der Weltlichkeit."

of humanity; neither does he suggest humanity as merely a natural occurrence or causal result. There is something superabundant to the world, in that there is always a dimension, the negative moment that Fink identifies as the night, that exceeds our grasp and resists clarification."[132] Furthermore, thinkers such as Plato who focus almost exclusively on the light of day, frequently equating *logos* with light, give only a distorted, sanitized, and overly rational picture of world. To relate to the world is rather to preserve that tension between concealing and unconcealing rather than attempting to classify and quantify every moment.[133]

What thus gives Fink pause about Heidegger's account of earth is that although Heidegger reintroduces the earth and asserts that unconcealment is never total, earth and concealment still belong to, or are at the service of, unconcealment. For example, Heidegger writes in a marginal note in *Being and Time* in reference to Heraclitus, "*physis* is intrinsically alētheia, since *kryptesthai philei*" (GA 2: 282n/SZ 212n).[134] To all emerging, to all appearing, there still remains an element of seclusion or concealment, this seclusion as seclusion belongs to the light of unconcealment. Thus to all unconcealment belongs an important dimension of alterity. This fragment is addressed by Heidegger many times, including in the

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[132] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 290. Fink also cashes this out in reference to Nietzsche's analysis of the Apollonian and Dionysian. The Apollonian marks the light of day that allows for individuation, whereas the Dionysian marks the chaotic, dark night. Cf. *Natur, Freiheit, Welt* 190-97 and *Nietzsches Philosophie*.

[133] We must be careful to remember, however, that we do not relate the world qua world. The word Fink uses is *Weltbezug*, which means relation to the world, but more in the sense of orientation toward or regard to the world. It should not be understood in the sense of a relation between two people.

[134] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 290. Gadamer also notes that above the mantel in Heidegger's hut in Todtnauberg, there was a piece of bark upon which was written Heraclitus' Fragment 64, "*ta de panta oikezai keranous* [Lightning steers all.]" Gadamer writes, "These words are like an oracular pronouncement and paradox at the same time. For, surely, this saying does not refer to the attribute of the lord of the heavens with which he thunders his decisions down to earth, but rather the abrupt lightning-filled elucidation that makes everything visible in one stroke, yet in such a way that the darkness engulfs it again. In any event, this may be how Heidegger tied his own questions back into Heraclitus' profundity. For, to Heidegger, the dark task of his thinking was not, as it was for Hegel, the omnipresence of the self-knowing spirit that unites within it sameness in change and the speculative unity of opposites, but precisely that insoluble unity and duality of revealing and concealing, light and darkness, into which human thinking finds itself interpolated." Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Tradition of Heraclitus," in *The Beginning of Knowledge*, ed. Rod Coltman (New York: Continuum, 2001), 21-22.

Heraclitus seminar co-taught with Fink, in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, and *The Principle of Reason*, to name a few. In "On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις in Aristotle's *Physics* B", having argued that *physis* be understood not as nature or natural foundation, but being as self-concealing revealing, Heidegger points to this fragment of Heraclitus, writing,

> 'Being loves to hide itself.'…Self-hiding belongs to the predilection [*Vor-liebe*] of being; i.e., it belongs to that wherein being has secured its essence. And the essence of being is to unconceal itself, to emerge, to come out into the unhidden – physis. Only what in its very essence *un*conceals and must unconceal itself, can love to conceal itself. Only what is unconcealing can be concealing (P 229-30).

Although Heidegger emphasizes the concealment as inherent to unconcealment, emphasized by a-letheia, Fink's concern is that Heidegger has not yet freed himself from the metaphysics of light at work since Plato, for Heidegger's emphasis seems to be not that what is unconcealing can be concealed, but that only what is concealed can be unconcealed. Cathrin Nielsen explains the differences between Heidegger and Fink. Heidegger, concerned that nature has been conceived only as material for technology, suggests that in order to rediscover the world, we must rediscover the earth, which is to let the world be in its opening and earth be in its withdrawing. Nielsen writes,

> [The earth's] liberation and renewed collection appears to Heidegger as capable only as another beginning; the concealing, being-for-itself of nature required the inflammation, the flashing in, the impulse in order to let…the sea *as* sea, the stone *as* stone to be seen. The light, that gathers all presencing in appearance, shows its essence in the flash of lightning…In Fink's thought we find conversely a peculiar faith in the unknowability and the self-contained weight of *physis* as the dark, 'motherly' substrate of each historical world.[135]

For Fink, then, Heidegger is not quite radical enough in letting the earth be earth for he still characterizes this unconcealment of concealment in terms of light, although Fink does believe Heidegger's later writings on the Fourfold do better account for the cosmological

[135] Cathrin Nielsen, "Kategorien der Physis. Heidegger und Fink," in *Welt denken: Annäherungen an die Kosmologie Eugen Finks*, ed. Cathrin Nielsen and Hans Reiner Sepp (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2011), 180-81.

difference. Furthermore, these later writings also emphasize the play of being, such that to dwell in and with the Fourfold is a kind of play that requires comportment and vulnerability.

Dwelling

Heidegger does not maintain the language of strife in his later writings, although he still holds the idea of things, namely earth, sky, mortals, and divinities, belonging together in their difference. This relation Heidegger names the Fourfold. Just as the world let the earth be as described in "The Origin of the Work of Art", each of these four allows the others to be. They are not four distinct poles, however, but belong together in one. In the discussion of *Being and Time*, we saw that humans are not in the world as mere objects. Instead they dwell in the world. Dwelling is not merely to occupy a space. Rather as he describes in "Building Dwelling Thinking", "To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence."[136] In dwelling, we mortals always already do so on earth, for we do not dwell in a vacuum. To be on earth is to be under the sky, which is also to be before the divinities and with other mortals. Each of the four can be understood only in relation to the others, but at the same time can never be dissolved into them. This holding open of difference is what safeguards each thing in its essence. This safeguard belongs to mortals. Heidegger writes,

> This simple oneness of the four we call *the Fourfold*. Mortals are in the Fourfold by *dwelling*. But the basic character of dwelling is safeguarding. Mortals dwell in the way they safeguard the Fourfold in its essential unfolding…Mortals dwell in that they save the earth….To save properly means to set something free into its own essence. To save the earth is more than to exploit it or even wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it….Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave the sun and the moon their journey…they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest. Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is unhoped for.

[136] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperPerennial, 2008), 327.

> Mortals dwell in that they initiate their own essential being—their being capable of death as death—into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death. To initiate mortals into the essence of death in no way means to make death, as the empty nothing, the goal.[137]

To dwell is to allow for the earth to be earth, the sky to be sky, the divinities to be divinities, the mortals to be morals. Heidegger here allows even more for the earth to be earth, and for night to be night. This difference is preserved in the safeguarding happens through the gathering of the Fourfold, yet this gathering is not just an activity of thought. This gathering happens in things. A bridge, for example, draws together the earth on either side, stands beneath the sky, provides a path for mortals, and it gathers before the divinities. In this gathering, each of the four mirrors the other and plays to the other. In dwelling, humans belong to the mirror-play of the Fourfold. To be human requires then letting what is other be other, not in such a way that a relation is impossible, but in such a way that there is a basic belonging-together in this difference. Being together is not calculation, but measuring, i.e. seeing ourselves in relation to others and gathering in the mirror-play. In this way, then, dwelling constitutes a fundamental experience of alterity, and it is this original alterity and engagement with what is other that also marks the beginning of the ethical.

Heidegger's discussion of the Fourfold also points to an important development in his understanding of space, particularly in the relational nature of space. In *Being and Time*, we find that Dasein's relation to space is one of care:

> Dasein can *be* spatial only as care, in the sense of factically entangled existing. Negatively this means that Dasein is never objectively present in space, not even initially. Dasein does not fill out a piece of space as a real thing or useful thing would do, so that the boundaries dividing it from the surrounding space would themselves just define the space spatially. In the literal sense, Dasein takes space in. It is by no means objectively present in the piece of space that its body fills out. Existing, it has already made room for a leeway [*Spielraum*]. It determines its own direction in such a way that it comes back from the space made room for to a 'place' that it has taken over (GA 2: 486/SZ 368).

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[137] Ibid., 350-52.

Because Dasein does not merely occupy space, but rather actively engages in it, is entangled in it, the space of Dasein is also not something neutral or generic and it is also not predetermined by this space. Instead, Dasein makes room for itself and others. Furthermore, this suggests that Dasein can be Dasein only in so far as it is spatial, which is further emphasized by the fact that Dasein is embodied and in the world. There seems to be the suggestion, though, that Dasein alone is spatial since other objects are not in the world by their own accord. Rather they are objectively present like we expect things to be.

In his later writings, however, such as "Building Dwelling Thinking", we find that things, too, are capable of being engaged in spacing and the creation of place. The bridge gathers the earth such that the banks of the river can be banks. It clears a space and allows a site for the Fourfold. As Heidegger explains, it is not that there is a location, which then has a bridge placed in it. Rather, there is only a location because of the gathering of the bridge. In its gathering and spanning, the bridge makes room for and shelters divinities, mortals, earth, and sky**.** One can hear something ethical in this gathering and granting insofar as the bridge, for example, responds to what is other than itself. That is to say, the bridge can be a bridge only by comporting itself toward and preserving this alterity. Heidegger speaks of the relation of the Fourfold as a mirror-play, that they are such only in playing with and reflecting one another and holding open the tension of difference. Furthermore, this example of the bridge demonstrates that this relation to the other occurs in a very specific way and in a very specific place. To be sure, the bridge cannot be ethical in the way that a person can be ethical, precisely because the person has care at stake. Her being is characterized by concern, especially as she is mortal, finite.

We find in "Art and Space"[138] that "Sculpture would be the embodiment of places. Places, in preserving and opening a region, hold something free gathered around them which grants the tarrying of things under consideration and a dwelling for man in the midst of things" (AS 7). This is echoed in Heidegger's discussion in the *Parmenides* lectures, where he characterizes the Greek conception of *topos* as not a

> mere position in a manifold of points, everywhere homogeneous. The essence of the place consists in holding gathered, as the present 'where,' the circumference of what is in its nexus, what pertains to it and is 'of' it, of the place The place is the originally gathering holding of what belongs together and is thus for the most part a manifold of places reciprocally related by belonging together, which we call a settlement or a district *[Ortschaft]***.** In the extended domain of the district there are thus roads, passages, and paths. (GA 54: 174/117)

These examples demonstrate that although mortals and not things dwell, such dwelling is possible through the spacing and locations granted by things. Things are places, not things in places. Furthermore, these examples demonstrate how such spacing and dwelling is fundamentally relational. Space is granted, received, gathered, and allowed. It is held open, sheltered, and cleared. In no way, then, can such space be the "homogenous expanse" of Newton and Galileo (AS 1). Rather, we encounter places and locations through the openness of region, in the "gathering of things in their belonging together" (AS 6). Such places and locations are textured and meaningful, as well as essential for dwelling.

What this ultimately demonstrates is that being human requires not merely space, but place, and that there is always a leeway, a playspace, that belongs to dwelling in these places. This is thus where Heidegger has an advantage over Fink. Although Fink speaks of the essential way that being belongs to space, particularly to the earth, and despite his attention

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[138] For a rich discussion of Heidegger on the relationships among sculpture, the Fourfold, and dwelling, see especially Andrew J. Mitchell, *Heidegger Among the Sculptors: Body, Space, and the Art of Dwelling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). There he concludes that, "Sculpture reveals to us our mediality by making visible the invisible (world). Every sculpture performs this impossible task differently. Sculpture is the articulation of being, appealing to us that we change our bearing in the world, that we dwell, *that we change our life*." Ibid., 94. See also Mitchell's forthcoming text, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*.

to the way that being requires things, he never properly addressed the richly topological nature of such being that occurs not just in space, but in places and locations. Thus if we are to understand ethical life and the ethical subject, we must be able to think the human in her dwelling, and thus also consider the ways in which places give rise to and initiate such dwelling and thus ethics at all.

What is also important in Heidegger's description of the Fourfold is that he further resists equating beings with rational animals. Instead, it is mortals who are at stake as they initiate their own essential being and participate in the play with and among the others in the Fourfold. Thus it is no longer those who can exercise reason, but those who dwell who are at stake in ethics. As we saw in the first chapter, dwelling is a mode of thinking, so while this dwelling is not merely an activity of reason, it is still very much one of thinking and understanding, and such dwelling is not accidental but essential. In "Building Dwelling Thinking", Heidegger speaks of "man's dwelling", so it may seem still that dwelling is ultimately human, but as Andrew Benjamin suggests, "…what is announced in Heidegger's formulation is neither the specificity of human existence, one practice as opposed to another, nor the differences that are, on one level, constitutive of human existence. More is at stake. What is announced is human existence formulated in terms of that which is proper to being human."[139] It might seem, then, that in speaking of mortals Heidegger avoids the very specificity of existence that I am here seeking to emphasize. Yet I believe Benjamin is correct in his explanation that there is still something more that is at stake, namely that which is proper to being human and the way that this dwelling is configured in space. Based on Heidegger's account, I understand what is proper to being human as that dwelling, persisting through space: "Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the

[139] Andrew Benjamin, "Who Dwells? Heidegger and the Place of Mortal Subjects," *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 10(2001): 223.

dwelling of man. To say that mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locales."[140] Beginning instead from specific practices or differences would risk missing the way in which spacing allows for this dwelling, which again does not occur abstractly or in generalities. Instead, there is a mutuality between spacing and dwelling in concrete ways. Thus there can be no being, no dwelling, without the particularity of place. Space is accordingly "not something that faces man. It is neither an external object nor an inner experience;"[141] instead, "Man's relation to locales, and through locales, inheres in his dwelling. The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, thought essentially,"[142] thus as much as dwelling requires spacing, so, too, does spacing require dwelling.

Furthermore, this conditionedness is again emphasized by placing the mortality, the finitude, of beings at the fore. What most defines humans as mortals is their dwelling in their finitude. This is not to say that morals are reduced to or imprisoned by their particularity and finitude or to say that the limit that belongs to finitude marks the end of being. To be finite is to be vulnerable, to be perhaps under threat from, but more important, responsive to the other. It is through being bound or limited that mortals can be in relation, thus the limit marks the beginning, not end, of being.

It may seem peculiar that I have not yet addressed the role of time, especially considering the importance of time in Heidegger's thought. The reason for this is largely because time seems to have priority over space, particularly in his earlier works, and I wish to ensure that we do not give short shrift to the significance of space. In *Being and Time*, for example, spacing is thought out of the temporality of Dasein. As Jeff Malpas explains, the

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[140] Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 359.
[141] Ibid., 358.
[142] Ibid., 359.

place of Dasein, the Da-, is expressed almost strictly in temporal terms, such that space is almost reduced to time. For example, "*Only on the basis of ecstatic and horizontal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space*" (BT 369). Heidegger immediately follows this by saying that space is independent of time, but that temporality makes the spatiality of Dasein intelligible. This is not unfounded, since it is through the happening and worlding of the world and of Dasein that space comes to appearance, yet on the whole, space is almost always cashed out in terms of time. In *Contributions*, we find rather that space and time are more unified, as seen in the language of timespace and *Zeit-Spiel-Raum*, although that time is consistently listed before space suggests again a kind of priority, but here Heidegger does treat more the specific character of space and place.[143] The unity of space and time comes much more to the fore in Heidegger's writings on the Fourfold. We find the more spatial elements in earth and sky and temporal in mortals and gods, yet we find that none of these poles can exist independently but only in their play and holding open. Malpas explains,

> The multiple unity that the Fourfold exhibits is an exact mirror of the similarly multiple unity that can be seen in the unity of *topos*, of place, and that is evident as soon as one looks to understand the constitution even of those ordinary locales in which we find ourselves—a town, a stretch of landscape, a countryside. Places find their unity not in any preexisting element in that place from which that unity of the whole derives, but rather in the way in which the multiple elements of the place are gathered together in their mutual relatedness to one another…It is this essential gathering of elements in a mutual belonging together in which they come to presence that Heidegger also describes as the *Ereignis*—an event that is to be understood not as purely temporal, but as the temporalizing of space and the spatializing of time in the single gatheredness of place.[144]

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[143] Certainly, too, time is essential, particularly in the way that time allows for rupture, springing forth, historical being, and meaning. As such, there is, as Richard Polt argues, an excessive dimension to time. He writes, "Time-space, or the leeway we have to pursue possibilities for ourselves and other things, originates in a wrenching moment, the moment when meaning and excess come into play. The traditional notion of eternity ossifies meaning while forgetting excess and the inceptive event." Richard Polt, "Meaning, Excess, and Event," *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1(2011): 43. Through the interplay of time and space, we have can pursue possibilities for ourselves, but this is also because of the interplay of meaning and excess. Thus we see here as well the excessive dimension of being.

[144] Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*: 19.

This is precisely what thinking of being as connected to *physis* tells us. Development, presencing, occurs not merely in space, but only because of the clearing and making room of place. In "Science and Technology", Heidegger sees *physis* in connection to *thesis*, as the bringing and placing of something out of itself into presencing.[145] Thus whereas Heidegger might still be guilty of overemphasizing the clearing and lighting of the world, by insisting on dwelling in, he returns us to that very locatedness and development, the intertwining of time and space, that Fink finds so vital in an account of the earth. To grow, to develop, is to be grounded, but not grounded on a fixed foundation. It marks rather a beginning in standing forth through abyssal grounding. Through the contours of space that belong to dwelling a mortal comes to appearance; through this space with others she can also move beyond herself.

Although this mirror-play and openness in the Fourfold suggests a rather peaceful mode of dwelling, Heidegger alerts us that indeed dwelling is inherently risky and unsettling. Despite the way in which places shelter and make room for dwelling and being at home in the world, such dwelling actually arises from not being at home in the world, from *Unheimlichkeit*. In *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*", Heidegger tells us "humankind emerges from uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*] and remains with it" (GA 53: 89) since "Becoming human is provenance from the unhomely [*Unheimlichkeit*]; the homely always remains related to the unhomely in such a way that the latter is present in the former" (GA 54: 84). Similarly, following Heidegger's analysis of *topos* in *Parmenides* discussed above, Heidegger writes that, "A *daimonious topos* is an 'uncanny district.' That now means: a 'where' in whose squares and alleys the uncanny shines explicitly and the essence of Being comes to presence in an eminent sense" (GA 54: 174/117). That place where being and beings come to presence is

[145] Malpas explores Heidegger's discussion of development and presencing at length, although he is here more concerned with *thesis* than *physis*. See ibid., 104-05.

uncanny; it is the place of withdrawing concealment that we find so emphasized by Fink. The finding of oneself at home in the world in being not at home is no mere passive identification, but rather an action proper to such finding oneself thereby, which Heidegger describes in *Hölderlin's Hymn* as Antigone's situation:

> This first of all entails that the unhomely is nothing that human beings themselves make but rather the converse: something that makes them into what they are and who they can be. Here, however, *pathein* does not mean the mere 'passivity' of accepting and tolerating but rather taking upon oneself—*archēn de thēren*—making it through to the end, that is, properly experiencing. This *pathein*—experiencing the *deinon*—this enduring and suffering is the fundamental trait of that doing and action called *to drama*, which constitutes the 'dramatic,' the 'action' in Greek tragedy (GA 53: 127-128).[146]

To experience and respond to the *deinon*, to the unhomely or uncanny, is to take it upon oneself as a kind of self-exposure, to undergo and submit oneself to risk, although not just in any way, but in a way of poetic knowing involving *phronēsis*. Thus while incalculability and displacement remain, to find oneself at home still involves a particular kind of knowing. If ethics is to be understood as *êthos*, that is, as standing in relation to the world and others, then the task of ethics is never complete for any sense of being at home contains these experiences of homelessness, of disruption that resists selfsameness. The task of ethics, then, is neither to abandon oneself to that movement nor to stand in opposition to it. Rather, it is to submit and respond to the task issued through understanding how to play along with that movement.

I find it particularly important to follow Fink and the later Heidegger in maintaining the fundamental unknowability and incalculability of the earth and dwelling for two main reasons. First, such a conception of the earth protects against the totalizing character of the natural sciences. The natural sciences, at least as Fink and Heidegger understand them, tend to rely on an objectifying knowledge, that is, the sort of knowledge that attempts to

[146]Cf. McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Ēthos* 146.

dominate its subject matter, conceives of knowledge primarily in terms of reason and objectivity, and equates truth with correspondence. The *Herrschaftswissen* of the natural sciences does not allow for things to show themselves and attempts to divorce its inquiry from the world. The earth, however, as concealing and sheltering, resists this sort of domination. Heidegger is thus correct in protecting against this not only by understanding truth not as correspondence, but as unconcealment, but also by allowing for the earth to be in its concealment. If humans are not only world beings, but also earth beings, then there is an element to the human as well that resists this totalization. This leads to the second point, namely that preserving the earth emphasizes a particular vulnerability in being human. There is always something beyond our control in being human, something more than a dark corner that could be illuminated if we only shone the light there. Rather, the earthly dimension points primarily to our finitude as well as to the confusing and troubling dimensions of being in the world. Our thrownness is not something neutral. Furthermore, the earth resists any kind of foundationalism. Instead, the earth is origin, and as fundamentally concealing, is the site of original alterity. Lastly, if ethics is a matter of how we find ourselves in and attune ourselves to the world, then the ethical subject cannot be thought without this earthly dimension that makes anything like ethics, let alone being, possible.

III. *Êthos* and *Topos*

Throughout the discussions of world and earth persists the question of ground. The question arises not only in thinking of the physical space of the earth, but also in thinking of what grounds our experience and what grounds being and beings. As Heidegger says, "Philosophy has always and constantly asked about the ground of beings" (GA 40:18/ IM 26). This emphasis on ground, and even so on abyss, reminds us that our own thinking has a topological dimension. We find as much in Kant, for example, seeking to provide a

groundwork for the metaphysics of morals. Yet the question remains here of how to think the ground of ethics in light of the claims made by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink that we must resist thinking of ground as equivalent to foundation or bedrock and instead must recognize the abyssal dimension of ground while also not ending up in nihilism. Our task here is thus to think ethics topologically, which means to examine the contours, shapes, space, and ground of ethics while accounting for both this abyss and rootedness.

Ground and Abyss

Heidegger addresses this question of ground specifically in "On the Essence of Ground" and in *The Principle of Reason*, where he challenges the reliance on principles, grounds, and foundations in philosophy without their having been properly understood. Such ideas as Leibniz's *principium rationis* persist, Heidegger claims, without looking at what makes these principles possible. What we must do, then, is let the essence of ground unconceal itself for us. Heidegger suggests that what undergirds this principle as well as all things is the grounding of ground, that is, a grounding which is always active. It is the grounding of ground that is the essence of ground. Grounding means to establish something or set forth possibilities, to provide a basis for something, and to provide an account for something. Grounding is thus always for something as it springs forth in this threefold manner, which we find in the grounding of a work of art in "The Origin of the Work of Art". Thus grounding is not so much a temporal beginning, but that in which things have their basis. Insofar as grounding is always a happening and not a static foundation, there is no absolute ground to which we could appeal. Instead, there is only this active grounding, and as such, there is an abyss that resists any attempt to fill and complete it. Yet while this grounding is abyssal, as setting forth possibilities, providing accounts and bases, this grounding is still meaningful. Furthermore, this grounding occurs within a place, a *topos*.

It might seem that in describing the grounding of ground, and thus also being, as abyssal, Heidegger and Fink in particular, but Gadamer as well, introduce a kind of nihilism to their accounts of being and ethics. Yet all three of these thinkers are quite adamant that by asserting the groundlessness of ground, they are precisely avoiding that nihilism that does not cling to an unknowability of things, but rather cuts off questionability from the start and so is characterized by a forgetting of being, particularly due to the instance on objective knowledge and method. Gadamer, for example, sees philosophical hermeneutics' resistance to method as a resistance to nihilism. Nicholas Davey explains, "The nihilism that philosophical hermeneutics detects in the will to method concerns the latter's suspiciousness toward change and instability. It aspires to control the spontaneous movement of thought and the play of *Sachen*, which animate thought."[147] This is akin to Fink's concern that contemporary pedagogy is fundamentally nihilistic as it excludes from its methodology the very things, such as language and culture, that provide meaning.

Similarly, Malpas, regarding Heidegger's call in "On the Question of Being" for a topology of nihilism, wherein the topology is a "discussion locating the locale which gathers being and nothing into their essence" (P 311) writes, "The nihilism of modernity is, above all, a denial of the very *topos* in which thinking itself comes to pass; and the possibility of finding a way to think in the face of such a denial (a denial that refuses even to recognize its character *as* denial) is thus essentially dependent on maintaining a proper sense of the topological character of thinking, and so of thinking's proper *place*, as well as our orientation within it."[148] In other words, nihilism is a "seeming obliteration of place."[149] Thus metaphysics' desire for an absolute foundation, which is not a local, but universal

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[147] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 105.
[148] Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*: 98.
[149] Ibid., 107.

foundation, evidenced in its tendency toward enframing, fails to allow things to come to presence (although Heidegger admits that even such enframing allows things to presence in some way) and forgets its own place of thinking, whereas the spontaneity and change preserved by this alternative topological understanding of ground that enables this attendance to becoming and locatedness.

If these three are not guilty of nihilism, it may seem that they remain guilty of subjectivism, or at least an overly subjective view by locating the beginning of ethics in the subject's openness to the world. If ethics is understood in light of *topos*, which is very particular, then it seems that we are bound to this certain particularity, especially as understood in light of the subject's orientation toward that place, without recourse to anything beyond the subject. This would be true if it were the case that they believed place arises from the subject's intentions (although it does appear this way at times in *Being and Time*, although Heidegger believes that *Being and Time* is already anti-subjectivist.[150]) and modality or if the world were conceived in terms of representation of the subject. Yet as we have seen, it is only through the particularity of place and being with others in concrete ways that anything like a subject can appear, thus this orientation toward the world is not merely the product of the subject's thought or actions, but rather is always already intersubjective. I believe it would be wrong to think that there is a subjective space on one side and an objective space on the other or a private world opposed to a public one. Here I agree with Malpas that "Subjectivity may be a necessary element in the structure of being (that is, of presence), and yet this does not mean that being is thereby 'subjective' since subjectivity is

[150] Hubert Dreyfus points out that Heidegger himself believed that in *Being and Time* he had "not properly distinguished *public* space in which entities show up for human beings, from the centered spatiality of each *individual* human being." Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1991). 129. Thus it is not entirely clear whether Heidegger primarily sees spatiality as the public space of equipmentality or as a result of the individual's actions.

not the only nor the most basic element in the structure at issue here."[151] Thus while subjectivity may be a necessary element in the structure of *topos* and also of ethics, this does not mean that the structure is exclusively or primarily one of subjectivity. Instead, the structure is a constant interplay of subjective, objective, and intersubjective. This enables us to see that ethics is a matter of the subject's comportment to the world, but this world is there, not as a projection of the subject, and that the subject's ability to be open in this world is presupposed by her being with others and in language. Thus neither are the world and others creations of the subject nor is the subject reducible either to her environment or social location.

By seeing ethics as topological, which is also to say as interpretive for it allows for the meaning of the particularity of place and space, we are able to preserve precisely this interplay. For example, as Jeff Malpas explains, the very approach of hermeneutics, specifically in the hermeneutic circle, is also very much topological. He writes,

> The circularity or reciprocity that can be discerned in ordinary textual interpretation as well as in the philosophical 'interpretations' undertaken by Heidegger and Gadamer, refers us to the character of interpretative inquiry—and also, in Heideggerian terms, of ontology or phenomenological description—as always a matter of exhibiting the interconnectedness of the elements that make up a certain region or domain (once one arrives at the appropriate level of description) rather than through their reduction or derivation which can only be carried out 'internally' to that region. Strictly speaking, this does not mean that the region on question is itself possessed of some 'circular' structure. Instead, any such circularity arises as a result of the fact that the only way the integrity or unity of some domain can be articulated is through a process that involves working through the elements of which that domain is composed, and such working through will indeed give an appearance of circularity.[152]

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[151] Jeff Malpas, "From the Transcendental to the 'Topological': Heidegger on Ground, Unity, and Limit," in *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental*, ed. Jeff Malpas (London: Routledge, 2003), 99n70.

[152] _____, "Gadamer, Davidson, and the Ground of Understanding," in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Ulrich von Arnswald, and Jens Kertscher (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), 203.

What Malpas' insight demonstrates is that interpretation is itself spatial and belongs to a particular region or domain. There is a movement, a play, between parts and wholes, among and between concepts. Furthermore, this space is not an Archimedean point where perfect perspective can be gained, but instead that very space is internal to the subject matter. The interpretation can begin only from out of itself, and yet it also always points beyond itself, as we see in Gadamer's analysis of the fusion of horizons, so it is neither merely a subjective projection of meaning nor an attempt to get at a purely objective matter of fact. By attending to the topology of such interpretation, we have a much better sense of the interplay of self, other, and world, for we are able to attend not only to the relations at play, but also to the boundaries and limits that mark the beginning of and give contours to the space of the ethical.

The Playspace of the Ethical

Nicholas Davey addresses this topology of interpretation as well, describing it as a mode of being in-between: "It is the generative space of the in-between, the space of the hermeneutical encounter, which discloses the reality of alternative possibilities not presently my own but which might yet become *my* own."[153] This in-between is a playspace, as Gadamer argues that this hermeneutical encounter is a form of play, although it is not just any space. It is a space both my own and not my own. Or, better put, it is a place both my own and not. Thus I take Malpas seriously when he writes,

> Nevertheless, it is only in the direction of the thinking of *topos*, itself an essential form of question—of holding open a free-play of possibility (a 'play-space')—that any proper response to the overpowering movement of nihilism can be found. Any such response must take the form of a returning to place, a refinding of oneself, a reorientation (even, perhaps, a respositioning)—as Heidegger himself refers to it, a

[153] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 15.

> form of homecoming, although a coming-home to that from which we never really departed.[154]

Through encountering what is other, we come to face not only the other, but also ourselves. This place is opened up through the encounter and, as held open, gathers the two into its place and locates them there. What this demonstrates as well, I believe, is the way in which we can think of the place of ethics in a way that avoids both a reduction to the local or subjective and an abstraction into the cosmos. By thinking of the space of ethics as a playspace, we are able to see better how ethical life, as marked by an openness to the world and what is other, is neither subjective nor objective, but a localized interplay between self, other, and world. On the one side we find an ethical dimension to play in the holding open of what is other, but we find as well a fundamentally playful dimension to ethics when we attend to *topos*.

If we do attend to *topos*, we see how ethics is already implicit in this holding open of possibilities, and that this response is a finding of oneself thereby both in the familiar and foreign. In this way, too, we avoid the nihilism that forecloses the spontaneity and movement of life and meaning by preserving the grounding of ethical life in being in the world. We thus also see how ethics is playful as engaging both being and not being at home and as always interpretive in this location, is also a constant play between part and whole. This demonstrates not only a futurity as we encounter possibility that might become our own, but also a spatiality in being gathered in this space and locating ourselves, but also being able to step out beyond that location. Thus the place of ethics is not static, but as belonging to concealing and unconcealing, absence and presence, such that it, too, suggests the superabundance of ethical life.

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[154] Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*: 111.

What distinguishes this playspace of ethics from the playspace Kant describes in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* or that which Derrida describes in "Structure, Sign, and Play" is that the place of this playspace is never forgotten. For both, play is marked by the constant flow or play, whether of signifiers, in Derrida, or possibilities, in Kant. What is missing in both is a proper topological understanding of such play. Here the space is treated as merely that through which these things flow freely, without much thought of the way in which the place gives rise to such play. Derrida does state that it is the free play and substitutability that gives shape to the center of the structure, which in turn makes possible the continued play of dislocation, yet we have no sense in what this space consists. Both do attend to the way that limits and boundaries give shape to this space, so it is not so much that they ignore the spatial at all. Kant, for example, speaks of the way in which aesthetic experience involves running up against the limits of our own finitude and yet we are opened up beyond that finitude or that imagination brings together the manifold of representation. Yet what I find lacking is the particularity of *topos*, that is, attention to the concrete place that allows for such experience and articulations. For this reason, I would suggest we think not merely of the role of a playspace, but more properly a play*place*.

As Annette Hilt explains, "the challenge for the ethical horizon of play [lies] in the task to be conscious of conflicts and for the resulting possibilities thereof to be critical."[155] Play points to the inherent leeway and in-between of ethical life. On the one hand, play allows for us to engage new possibilities and conflicts, but it also allows for an immanent critique of those practices. Thus where Gadamer calls for a philosophical ethics that could account for conditionedness while at the same time questioning its own conditionedness, I

[155] Annette Hilt, "Welt als Spielraum des Politischen," in *Welt Denken: Annäherung an die Kosmologie Eugen Finks*, ed. Cathrin Nielsen and Hans Reiner Sepp (Freiburg im Breisgau: Karl Alber, 2011), 291.

believe play, which always has an element of questioning and criticism, provides an answer, or at the very least a starting place, for how we would think that philosophical ethics.

Thus far, however, we have largely discussed ethics as something attitudinal. Ethical life is marked by vulnerability, openness, and comportment, and while this sort of attunement is still an activity, I think we would be quite mistaken to think that ethical life is entirely comprised by having the right sort of attitude. It would also be mistaken to think that such attitudes could be divorced or understood separately from practices. As Gadamer reminds us in the essay, "Greek Philosophy and Modern Thinking",

> In the end, the molding of our consciousness really does not take place through the methods of modern science and its method of constant self-checking; rather, it takes place in the praxis of social life itself, which must always reclaim its practical responsibility for the power that has been placed in the hands of man, a responsibility that has to defend the setting of limits, for there are things which human reason must oppose with its own power with reckless daring. No special proof is required to assert that for people today it is the *world to be understood*—a world in which man is indigenous and a world in which he feels at home—that remains our last court of appeals in the alien world of modern technology wherein it can now only claim a secondary, ancillary function (GPT 273).

Being at home in the world, being open to the world, is achieved not through scientific calculation, but through concrete social practice and life wherein individuals set themselves the task of practical responsibility and where spontaneity and ambiguity are preserved.

What Gadamer makes clear, then, is that there is a performativity that belongs to ethical life: actions must be carried out. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick adds to this by introducing the notion of texture: the space in which utterances and actions are performed is not uniform or neutral, but complicated and multifaceted. Even the smoothest of surfaces is textured. Texture, on Sedgwick's account, means that there is never a lack; something is always there.[156] What texture also evidences, however, is relationality. Sedgwick writes, "to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always also

[156] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). 15.

to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in the making of the textured object."[157] Texture adds to the idea of performativity in that it captures the idea that performativity may be about expressing knowledge, but it need not be. Instead texture is much more about one's relation to the texture and to other persons as well as a narrative about this texture. Texture enables us to get at the affective and phenomenological as much as the epistemological.[158]

Sedgwick's description of texture returns our focus to questions about experience that are not necessarily epistemological. Sedgwick provides the example of Judith Scott, a texture artist who was also deaf and had Down syndrome. Scott's work was surprisingly innovative. Despite her talent, however, Scott was rarely accepted as a "real" artist and only described in terms of lack.[159] Even some of her biggest proponents and teachers explicitly deny Scott full status as artist or the possibility of her conscious artistic activity because of her inability to use language or communicate in traditional ways. Sedgwick uses this example to demonstrate not only the literal texture of Scott's work, but also the texture of Scott's story. She reminds us again that with texture there is no lack, meaning that no matter how smooth something may be, how empty of substance it might appear, it never is. For something to be textured means that there is always something there. Rather than thinking of Scott as lacking particular abilities, Sedgwick claims that Scott represents "an affective and aesthetic fullness that can attach even to experiences of cognitive frustration."[160] Sedgwick's example is important because by emphasizing the role of relationality and performativity, philosophical ethics could pay greater attention to those experiences that linger on the periphery and risk being forgotten or ignored. Texture again emphasizes the necessarily

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[157] Ibid., 14.
[158] Ibid., 17.
[159] Ibid., 23.
[160] Ibid., 24.

relational and complicated element of social construction. Ideas are not simply had; they are performed. Beliefs are manifested in practices. In this regard, even those who do not immediately experience something, such as disability, are not completely separated from it because they participate in so many of the other practices that give shape to such experience and also because the experience of disability is not reserved only for those diagnosed as disabled. The concern here, then, regards which beliefs, bad or good, are normatively played out and whether harmful or over-determined discourses are engaged that systemically silence others.

Ethics thus has its ground not in any particular method or foundation, but rather grounds itself in itself through this being at home in the world, through the activities that bear it out. A topological approach to ethics, which insists on seeing ethical life not in any general or abstract way but preserves the differing textures, presupposes concrete activities and dimensions that give rise and shape to that life. In the following chapter, then, we will turn to discussions of poiesis, praxis, and play, as well as the role of education, in order to determine better how activity, combined with vulnerability and openness, is constitutive of ethical life.

Chapter Three: *Mitspieler*: The Conversation that We Are

With the linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy, it became increasingly evident that accounts of subjectivity could no longer rely on a conception of the subject as an encapsulated ego. Instead, as a language-speaker, the subject is fundamentally intersubjective, that is, with others in and through language. Since most moral theory focuses on actions toward and with others, this social dimension is not especially novel for accounts of ethical subjectivity. However, the turn toward the role of language did shift the way in which these relationships were understood. For example, in the analytic tradition, philosophers such as G.E. Moore and A.J. Ayer addressed the way in which the questions we ask, statements we make, and definitions we employ do or do not have normative power. Later, Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam look to the ways in which linguistic practices and experiences inform ethical discourse and judgments. Whereas these attempts focus primarily on the roles of definitions and evaluative languages or attend to specific linguistic practices, the aim of this chapter is not so much to say precisely what role semantics play in moral theory. I argue that while this turn to language is critical, there persists a misunderstanding wherein language is viewed as a tool for rational autonomous agents, which has consequences for how agents and language are understood to function in ethical life. I suggest that if we see language not as a tool employed by rational agents, but rather as providing the basis of community and responsibility, then we develop a more nuanced understanding of the human language user as fundamentally dependent and in community.

In the following I seek to understand how language, as the very possibility for responsibility, provides the basis for ethical personhood. In particular, I will trace Heidegger's and Gadamer's claims that being is constituted in language and with others. Existence is, as Fink argues, coexistence. What distinguishes these accounts from others in

philosophy of language is that Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink do not conceive of language as a tool for communication or in epistemic terms, but rather as an event of meaning that need not be strictly verbal or linguistic. Language in this sense is what provides meaning and enables us to engage the world and others. Thus as beings in language, we must understand ourselves as relating and responding to others. There is no self-contained identity. This is made especially clear in Heidegger's claim that we are conversation (EHP 58)[161]; we are not singular. Because of this conversation that we are, our identities are always fundamentally at stake and open to what is other, so existence is not only colored by, but is essentially defined by vulnerability. I argue that what has been lacking in other accounts of the relationship between language and ethical life is precisely this attention to vulnerability, relationality, and embodiment. Without vulnerability and openness to the other, there can be no responsibility, which is essential not only for ethical life, but also having a self. I suggest that by understanding the relation of language as conversation and ethical life in light of play will enable us to understand how responsibility requires more than mere reciprocal recognition, namely a more robust sense of being with others in which one's own being is at stake and at play.

I. Conversation

Being in Language

Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer agree that language does not preclude access to the world, but rather is that which allows access to the world at all. For Heidegger, language is a mode of being in the world. It is not so much the case that humans have language, but that language discloses being. Language for Heidegger, as for Fink, does not distort the world, but enables us to understand the world. Heidegger writes in "The Origin of the Work of

[161] Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000).

Art" that "Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their being *from out of* their being."[162] Heidegger is here not suggesting that language projects meaning onto an objective world or maps onto the world in a particular way. Language instead is the letting of things come to appearance. If we consider the story of Adam in the second narrative of Genesis, for example, we may be inclined to think that Adam's naming the cattle, birds, and beasts implies Adam's dominion over the animals, particularly as Adam finds no counterpart, no equal, for himself in this naming. To a degree, this is true, insofar as the beasts do not have language, thus Adam's equal must also be in language. Yet if we think of naming as allowing for beings or things to come to appearance, for the cattle to be cattle, for the birds to be birds, and the beasts to be beasts, then we see this naming less as applying pre-fixed labels or asserting dominion or mastery and more of a poetic mode of creating meaning. To name, we must have knowledge of what is named. This naming is not a laying bare, but a holding open of the space that allows for things to show themselves. Furthermore, it is only in having a partner in language that Adam can even be Adam.[163] We find this as well in the naming of a child. The parent does not name the child merely to assert her possession, but does so in recognition of and responsibility to that being who develops the capacity to call herself "I" by this recognition.

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[162] _____, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46.

[163] I hesitate to use this example since it seems to imply that there is something inherently un-animal about being human or reaffirms Heidegger's earlier claims that animals are poor in world and does certainly seem to suggest that humans have authority or dominion over animals. Yet I see the point of the example rather as suggesting the way that naming is more of a call to meaning and relation. Adam, like the parents of a child, is not projecting some subjective idea on a neutral world, but rather creating meaning. Derrida will suggest, following Benjamin, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* that the story of Adam naming the beasts points toward a certain kind of violence in that the animals are named without in return being able to name or use language or respond to the given name.

As Gadamer explains in *Truth and Method*, to have language is to have a world. One is not, however, prior to the other: "Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all…Not only is the world world only insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it" (TM 440). Like Heidegger, Gadamer understands being-in-the-world as primordially linguistic. Language provides meaning for the meaning of the world for things come to presence through language. Language enables us to distinguish among different things, identify relationships, and orient ourselves.

Similarly, in "Language" Heidegger writes, "As the calling that names things here and there, so the saying that names the world calls into itself, calling here and there. It entrusts world to things and simultaneously keeps the things in the splendor of world. The world grants to things their presence. Things bear world. World grants things."[164] Language, as the calling and the naming of beings, does not divorce us from the world, but enables us to be in the world at all. Naming does create a difference between the world and beings, but this difference is an intimacy that preserves the relation between the two. Naming is what allows something to become meaningful. For example, Winnicott claims that children begin naming objects, particularly their transitional objects, as they begin to realize that the world and others are something other than an extension of the self.[165] The child also begins to refer to herself by her name before she begins using "I", suggesting that she recognizes herself first as the recipient of address, of naming, before she can articulate the difference between "me" and "not me". Naming marks meaning as what is mine and what is not. This intimacy, *Innigkeit*, points both to the preservation of difference as well as the essential belonging

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[164] Martin Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 199.

[165] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2005). 51.

within and together of difference. As Heidegger explains discussing Hölderlin's poem, "Der Rhein", "Such originary and thus singular unifying is that prevailing unity that Hölderlin, when he tells of it, names by the word "intimacy" [*Innigkeit*]" and that "Intimacy is that original unity of the enmity of the powers of what has purely sprung forth" (GA 39: 406).[166] This unity is not a blurring together or covering over of differences, but a holding together of those differences. Thus such intimacy, or the sense of interiority conveyed by *Innigkeit*, refers not to a sentimental or subjective viewpoint, but to an attunement to those differences.

This intimacy and preservation of difference occurs not merely between beings and the world, but even more so as between self and others. Similarly, Fink writes in *Existenz and Coexistenz*, "The human, the creature who understands being, addresses all other things in the way that and what they are; as supplicant (*Ansprecher*) of the being of being, he lives *in* language, which is also to say *in conversation*. The human is meaningfully (*sprechend*) joined to fellow humans" (EC 126). As Heidegger remarks in "Building Dwelling Thinking", "Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man."[167] Language, understood here not only as grammar or syntax, but more in the sense of poiesis as the projective saying of being, beckons us to the world. Our very being in the world is through language, and thus also through being with others. In the "Letter on Humanism", Heidegger claims that "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells" (LH 239). As such, language is what provides the basis for our dwelling in the world. Such a dwelling is fundamentally abyssal, as it has no basis but itself. This is to say that language, as meaningful and relational, provides the basis for our dwelling that develops

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[166] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980).

[167] ———, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 348.This same sentence appears also in ———, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." 212.

and grounds out of itself. If we return to the example of the conversation discussed in the first chapter, we can see more clearly how language provides this grounding. In having a conversation with my sister, there is no conversation except through our talking to one another. The conversation does not exist beforehand, only to be made manifest upon our talking, nor is it conjured ex nihilo. Rather, such a thing as conversation grounds itself through our conversing and in respect to certain boundaries and contours. In "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry", Heidegger explains,

> We—human beings—are a conversation. Man's being is grounded in language; but this actually occurs only in *conversation*. Conversation, however, is not only a way in which language takes place, but rather language is essential only as conversation. What we usually mean by "language," namely, a stock of words and rules for combining them, is only an exterior aspect of language. (EHP 58)

Language as conversation thus occurs only as conversation, that is, not as a tool or as a series of rules, but as an event. Language is possible through and makes possible being with others. Language as conversation can never be private or solitary, but presupposes both hearing and speaking. This speaking and hearing, however, are not simply two activities occurring simultaneously, but achieve a unity in conversation. This is precisely why being with others, as grounded in language as conversation, must be more than simple reciprocal recognition. Such recognition does not require anything more than populating a space together and says little about how the self develops out of these shared relations and how we are fundamentally dependent and interdependent. Thus, as we will see, other accounts of language as play, such as those from Brandom, Davidson, or Habermas, fail because they take language and intersubjectivity to result from the mutual recognition of individuals, but such intersubjectivity is not genuine intersubjectivity. Although recognition is presupposed by relationality, which we see especially in instances of naming, we must go beyond a thin conception of recognition as the minimal condition for being with others or responsibility,

for, as I argue, there is a danger of this thin recognition foreclosing the possibility of genuine responsibility.

Recognition

If recognition is an essential dimension of relationality and thus also of ethics, then what is it about recognition that is troubling? It seems that something like nominal reciprocal recognition in a political sense is necessary for the protection of vulnerable populations or the functioning of a democracy, and I am not sure that the recognition involved in human relationships and ethical personhood deviates much from this sort of recognition. What I suggest is that it is not recognition itself that is particularly problematic. Instead I would like to distinguish between what I take to be a thin versus thick account of recognition. On the thin account, we find collections of individuals who recognize generic others and thus these accounts place priority on the subjective rather than intersubjective. This sort of recognition is also characterized more by first- and third-person dynamics rather than first- and second-person dialogues. A thick account of recognition, however, is one whereby the "I" is made possible by the "We." Others are recognized not as representations of possible persons deserving recognition, but rather in the richness of their alterity. This thicker account prioritizes the roles of vulnerability, interdependence, and care. Furthermore, I suggest that thick and thin accounts of recognition go hand in hand with thick and thin accounts of intersubjectivity and responsibility. My goal in the following is to suggest that by emphasizing more the dialogic nature of recognition, and thus develop a thicker account of intersubjectivity, we are better able to understand the interdependence and vulnerability at stake in ethical personhood.

It is true that any action, ethical or otherwise, presupposes some form of recognition, whereby one is able to recognize a situation as both meaningful and one requiring some sort

of behavior or comportment. As Alasdair MacIntyre explains, "It is a form of practical knowledge, a knowing how to interpret, that arises from those complex social interactions with others in which our responses to others and their responses to our responses generate a recognition by them and by us of what thoughts and feelings it is to which each is responding."[168] For Kant, too, the synthesis of recognition involves judgment and interpretation. To recognize something is to recognize it *as* something. As Heidegger explains in *Being and Time*, we never hear pure noise, but the barking of dogs or the jingling of keys (GA 2: 217/SZ 163. Thus, recognition and meaning are inextricably connected. Furthermore, as both MacIntyre and Heidegger indicate, such recognition is possible because of complex social interactions with others, not where we abstract schema or formulae of things in the world, but where there is, as MacIntyre says, a practical knowledge involved. Similarly, Gadamer suggests in *Truth and Method* that when we encounter a work of art, we recognize what it is that the work represents or imitates. Although he is here specifically addressing art, I believe this account of recognition holds as well for other instances:

> But we do not understand what recognition is in its profoundest nature if we only regard it as knowing something again that we know already—i.e., what is familiar is recognized again. The joy of recognition is rather the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar. In recognition what we know emerges, as if illuminated from all the contingent and variable circumstances that condition it is grasped in its essence. It is known as something (TM 113).

For Gadamer, then, while recognition reaffirms what we know, it also exceeds what we know. When I spot a friend crossing the quad, I realize it is he and not just anyone else when I recognize his particular gait, the slight hop in his step or the way his arms swing, and the way his pants never quite reach the top of his shoes. None of these features alone is

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[168] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999). 14.

essentially my friend, as if there were some Platonic form of my friend, and in many ways I do not recognize these features as so familiar except when they enable me to recognize him. Similarly, when I recognize what a work expresses or represents, I recognize it as something and as something true. Something is brought forth that I did not see before. We know more than before. Thus recognition is not a matter of a mental recreation or copy of a scene, but an expansion of what was already known, a deepening of understanding.

Similarly, as Fink explains, our recognition, or even awareness, of others does not occur through an abstraction, but through lived practice. In response to Husserl's account of intersubjectivity and empathy, Fink claims that, "We do not exist in *shared knowledge* (*Mitwisserschaft*) and express witness of human being only then when we first achieve a reduction of our self-consciousness and its relations, rather prior to that much more originarily in concrete, social ways of life with fellow humans, thus in the space of the social being with others" (EC 41). Husserl does not seem in sharp contrast to Fink when he writes, for example, in *The Crisis of European Sciences* that "Rather we, in living together, have the world pregiven in this 'together,' as the world valid as existing for us and to which we, together, belong, the world as world for all, pregiven with this ontic meaning."[169] The world is pregiven for all, such that the world itself provides the ground for togetherness. Husserl also points to the ways in which we work, live, and act together. What Husserl suggests is that each individual knows herself to belong to the same horizon as another person and that she could at some time interact with this other person. Fink's criticism, however, is that Husserl identifies individuals as occupying the same space without requiring any intersubjectivity. Husserl's account is flawed because it claims that there first is an individual

[169] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). 108.

who infers the existence or possibility of others, whereas Fink argues that it is only on the basis of being with others, as participating in the "we", that anything like an "I" can occur.

Fink finds particularly problematic in Husserl's analysis of bodies and the possibility of the other in the *Cartesian Mediations*.[170] On Fink's reading, Husserl—and we might also say Descartes—argues that since I know myself to have a body, and can even observe and experience both external and internal parts, when I observe another body, I can conclude that such an "I" belongs to that body as well. What Fink finds so questionable is neither the idea of embodied consciousness nor the sense of "ownness" we experience as selves. Rather, it is the idea that the first "I" is fundamentally self-contained and constituted without first encountering others. When an "other" is subsequently encountered, it is not as "other" but as another "I". Fink writes, "The I-ness of the I, which experiences such others in its I-field, does not at all depend – so it appears – on these others, rather they from it – insofar as they are even 'repetitions'" (NFW 111).[171] The problem of Husserl's analysis is two-fold. First, the reflection on others does not point to others, but only reiterations of the self. While Husserl does at least include the necessity of bodies for selves, it seems that these bodies are substitutable, meaning that any given one may just as readily be identified as another. There does not seem to be a more thorough sense in which the self as embodied in a way that gives rise to this self confronts us. We imagine only what it would be like for our self to be in another position, not what it is for someone to be other. Second, Fink argues that Husserl's starting point of the self is unfounded:

> The I, as that which I myself, for example, experience, — as that which I know about myself, is not first open for itself when it reflects on itself, when it bends back upon itself; it lives always already in a mode of self-awareness and self-familiarity; it is

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[170] Fink does not specifically cite the paragraph in question, but it seems evident that he has §50 in mind. ———, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960). 141.

[171] Eugen Fink, *Natur, Freiheit, Welt: Philosophie der Erziehung* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992). 111.

> jointly known in all knowledge of what is not-I…And this I-understanding is stamped through and through by the meaningful moment of 'recognition'. I recognize the other, precisely insofar as I am recognized by him. The reciprocity of recognition is not an act after the fact, whereby two I's could perform against each other, — it is the original act, in which alone the I-ness comes into existence. (NFW 111)[172]

Thus Husserl's reliance on *Eigenheit* is undermined by Fink's insistence on We rather than I as primary. For Fink, the moment of self-understanding is already stamped by the recognition of the other, where this genitive is implied in both senses. I recognize the other and the other recognizes me. Even when I turn back on myself in reflection, I realize again that I am the subject of address. There could not be an I without the reciprocity of recognition, without the realization that to be an I is also to be a You.

For Fink, Husserl's I is incapable of genuine community not only because such a community cannot result from a self-contained individual, but also because the community does not seem to require anything more than generic others and formal relations. Fink identifies a similar lack in Kant's moral philosophy. Although Kant's kingdom of ends might enable universal moral judgments and equality of subjects, so long as the population at stake is hypothetical, our genuine relationships are neutralized and formalized. As Fink explains, "Sociality is not the after-effect of simultaneous existence of many people – it is a central structure of human being as such" (EC 126). While Kant does suggest there must be concrete and not merely imagined or hypothetical relations, Fink reads both Kant and Husserl quite strongly to argue that although both identify the importance of language and empathy or being with others, they proceed first from the individual. Thus while Husserl and

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[172] "Das Ich, als welchesich mich z.B. erfahre, —als welches ich um mich selber weiß, ist für sich selber erst nicht offen, wenn es auf sich hin reflektiert, sich auf sich zurückbeugt; es lebt immer schon in einem Modus der Selbstbekanntheit und Selbstvertrautheit; es ist sich mitwissend in allem Wissen von Nicht-Ichlichem...Und dieses ursprüngliche Ich-Verstehen ist durch und durch geprägt durch das Sinnmoment der ‚Anerkennung'. Ich anerkenne den Anderen, gerade sofern ich mich von ihm anerkannt weiß. Die Wechselseitigkeit des Anerkennens ist nicht eine nachträgliche Handlung, welche zweie Iche gegeneinander vollführen könnten, — sie ist die Urhandlung, in der allein Ichheit entsteht."

Kant both want to argue that there is a fundamental unity achieved through *Eigenheit* or the *sensus communis*, both of which are indeed important attempts at ensuring the inclusion of others in community, these attempts actually fall short in two key ways. First, both seem to cover over difference in that the other is recognized not in her otherness but in her possible being an "I". Thus the other is not differentiated from the self. Second, and in a way in direct contradiction to the first, there is too great a difference. I and others are treated atomistically wherein we share space and recognize each other as other and yet no relation between us is asserted. We might read Kant and Husserl more sympathetically, as is suggested, for example by the participating in aesthetic judgment Kant proposes in the Third Critique. There, judgment is always already interpretively against the background of others. It is important to note that both Husserl and Kant, and as we will see later, especially Habermas, assert the importance of social practices and relationships in having a self. However, there is a tendency with these thinkers to believe that our duties to or relationships with others extend only insofar as the two individuals do not run up against each other. On these accounts there is thus little to say about how interdependent our relationships are, such that while we ought to be concerned about transgressions or violence to another, this does not mean that our relations to the other end just where the other begins. Our selves are not constituted merely by reciprocal recognition, but also by mutual dependence. Our selves are interpenetrated by others.

Fink's account thus introduces a more robust version of recognition. Rather than the one-sided recognition merely of something as something that we find in Husserl, among others, is that recognition of others is actually necessarily two-sided. As Gadamer describes in a discussion of Aristotle on friendship, this recognition is a kind of mirroring, but that does not mean it is only a copy:

> The other is like the mirror of self-knowledge. One recognizes himself in another, whether in the sense of taking him as a model, or — and this is even more essential — in the sense of the reciprocity in play between friends, such that each sees a model in the other — that is, they understand one another by reference to what they have in common and so succeed in reciprocal co-perception.[173]

In the mirroring of friendship, the partners are in a reciprocal relationship of recognition, but more so than in other relations, the two "cannot remain concealed from each other."[174] They do not turn to each other merely out of good will, nor are they completely exposed to the other, but understand each other through each other and their life together. To be sure, not every relationship has such a bond, but Gadamer is right to claim that reciprocal recognition must involve this self-understanding and openness as the other makes a claim on us and also presents an increase in meaning. Recognition does not leave either party the same as she was before.

Fink reminds us similarly that being with others also presents ourselves as the subject of address. To recognize another is not to project a hypothetical self, but to recognize our own selves as open to the other, as the partner in a conversation. By proceeding from the intersubjective rather than the subjective, what is included in recognition is actually the very possibility of responsibility. If another is recognized only as another possible being occupying the same space, then there is potentially a violence done in the foreclosing of responsibility, namely in that this form does not immediately allow our own selves to be the subject of address or allow the other to address or lay claim on us.

This sense of being with others makes sense if we return again to the idea of intimacy. As above, intimacy is neither the covering over of differences nor absolute difference. Rather it is a holding of things together in their difference, such that one part can

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[173] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics," in *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 138-9.

[174] Ibid., 134.

be such only because of its relation to the other. There is certainly a kind of tension here, but it is not violent and one does not seek to overcome the other. As Heidegger explains in "Building Dwelling Thinking", this is like the tension that allows a bridge to span a gap. One side cannot be said to stand across from the other except in the way that both are gathered by the span of the bridge. Thus instead of thinking of this tension as a struggle for recognition, like in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, we could instead say that one is always in play with another, in the sense that there is always a to and fro movement and also that one is always at play, at stake. As we will see, the very possibility for intimacy presupposes vulnerability as being open to what is other, just as vulnerability presupposes intimacy. I will develop this discussion of vulnerability and intimacy more in a later section, but here I would like to argue that so long as accounts of recognition do not acknowledge the ways in which the self and other not only are, but belong, together and that the intersubjective precedes the subjective, then these accounts cannot be sufficient for understanding ethical personhood. As we will see, to have a self is possible only because one is open and vulnerable to the other, not only to potential harm but also to care and concern.

Responsibility

Communities are not univocal and, as we have come to realize especially in the past century, not all persons were or are regarded equally as participating members of a community and voices are frequently silenced. We find thus that communities that give rise to the possibility of personhood simultaneously threaten this personhood. In the following I seek to understand better how it is that communities, as both constituted by and constitutive of conversation, present the possibility of selfhood and responsibility.

Language is not merely a set of statements, but is, as Gadamer describes, a coming to an understanding. Such coming to an understanding occurs in dialogue: "It is a life process

in which a community of life is lived out" (TM 443). Gadamer's analysis of language goes a step beyond Heidegger's in further emphasizing the linguistic element of being-in-the-world and with others. In the introduction to Gadamer's essay, "Hermeneutics and the Ontological Difference," Richard Palmer explains,

> [Gadamer] agrees with Heidegger that language is not a tool of man but the medium in which we all live and move and have our being. But he goes a step further to see in the interaction of dialogue the very life of language itself. Living language, says Gadamer, is conversation; it is the conveying of an interpreted meaning to another as well as receiving the meaning conveyed by the other. It is the fabric and living medium of our life together.[175]

Palmer's description directs us to Gadamer's claim that it is not only that we are in language and with others, but that to be in language means to be in dialogue and the play of language with others. Not only are we incapable of understanding ourselves outside of language, but moreover are we unable to understand ourselves without others. Here, too, Palmer returns us to the idea of relationality and being as textured. Language is not merely anywhere, but is concrete, felt, and multidimensional. Gadamer writes, "We seek conversation not only in order to understand the other person better. Rather, we need it because our own concepts threaten to become rigid; and also because when we say something we want the other person to understand what we are thinking."[176] In this way, not only does engaging with the other help us understand the other, but it also presents an essential critical dimension. The other challenges us to respond, to make ourselves understood, but also to resist a calcification in thought or to question held positions. Gadamer continues, "…the problem is not that we do not understand the other person, but that we don't understand ourselves! For precisely when we seek to understand the other person, we have the hermeneutical experience that we must

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[175] Richard E. Palmer, ed. *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 357.
[176] Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and the Ontological Difference," 371.

break down resistance in ourselves if we wish to hear the other as other."[177] For Gadamer, to have a self and to understand this self requires being in conversation with others. Furthermore, what may seem like introspective activities, such as Descartes' meditations and attempts at self-understanding, actually involve a turn outward as we open ourselves to this responsibility and response-ability to and from the other. Thus the imperative to know thyself turns out to be an imperative to hear the other. Importantly, however, Gadamer does not see this knowledge or understanding of self and other as strictly cognitive or as shared space. This relation is rather one lived out, where we find ourselves under address of the other and are thus prompted to act in response.

Gadamer's discussion of shared space is already present in Dilthey's writings on the historical world. Dilthey, like Palmer, emphasizes not just participation in language, but an inherent interweaving that belongs to that shared space: "Individuals, as carriers and representatives of the commonalities interwoven in them, can appreciate and grasp the historical genesis of these commonalities."[178] He continues, "Before the child learns to speak, it is already wholly immersed in the medium of commonalities. The child only learns to understand the gestures and facial expressions, movements and exclamations, words and sentences, because it constantly encounters them at the same time and in the same relation to what they mean and express."[179] The child, then, does not proceed by any sort of method, but through the saturatedness of meaning that surrounds her. She is already immersed in conversation and coexistence. To be an individual is always already to understand oneself as historically situated and a participant in traditions and commonalities. Furthermore, in speaking of interweaving, Dilthey returns us to the sense that being in the world is both to

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[177] Ibid.

[178] Wilhelm Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). 173.

[179] Ibid., 229.

be with others in shared experiences as well as fundamentally textured, and, as interpretable, textual.

Like Gadamer, Fink believes that all existence is coexistence. This is crystalized in Fink's description of the five basic phenomena (*Grundphänomene*), namely death, work, political power, love, and play. What of is particular significance is that none of these phenomena is solitary. To work is to work with or for someone, to love is to be in a relationship. Even death, which seems as if it is the most solitary, is never actually so since it is never a phenomenon for the person dying (G 144).[180] Instead, it is only a phenomenon for the fellow humans of the one dying. To understand our own deaths, though, already involves an understanding of the death of another. Fink thus points to a double sense of vulnerability. We are vulnerable insofar as we are finite and that finitude is present to us only through our relation with another**.** Thus even the very possibility of mortality, or understanding our own mortality, hinges on our relations to others. We cannot make sense of or understand our essential vulnerability as mortals except through opening ourselves toward what is other.

Fink argues further that these phenomena are exclusive to humans. Again Ruggenini explains: "Certainly one cannot speak of work and love in the same sense with men and animals, in contrast one can assign these experiences to animals through anthropological metaphors. The difference is language, if one defines it existentially, as the possibility to exist humanly – not only according to an epistemologically limited perspective as the capacity to discover and develop theories."[181] Key to Ruggenini's observation is that Fink does not assert that it is reason that distinguishes humans from animals. Instead, it is language and

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[180] Eugen Fink, Egon Schütz, and Franz-Anton Schwarz, *Grundphänomene des menschlichen Daseins* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1979). 144.

[181] Ruggenini, "Selbstbezug und Weltbezug: Grundprobleme der Anthropologie Eugen Finks," 145.

these everyday activities that separate the two. Not only is to be human always to be with others, but it is also always to understand and interpret being with others. Only in light of this understanding can one understand herself. As we have seen recently, we have reason to believe that there are some nonhuman animals, such as dolphins, elephants, or bonobos, who do share understanding. As Fink assumes that it is language, and not reason, that separates humans from nonhuman animals, then we see that Fink preserves our animality, further resisting over intellectualizing our relations with others and leaves open the possibility of different considerations of those animals who might use language.

Heidegger certainly does believe that being is always being-with-others and that this occurs in language, but Gadamer believes this more intersubjective and more thoroughly hermeneutic and dialogic dimension is missing from his account of language. Gadamer suggests that at times it seems that Heidegger speaks as if language has a certain autonomy or there-ness to which we could point, whereas for Gadamer, language cannot be such without being lived out in the community. Whereas Heidegger departs from his earlier discussions of hermeneutics in order to break from transcendental reflection, Gadamer preserves hermeneutics in an effort to also preserve a particular unsayability or inarticulability that actually belongs to language. In a sense, this is present in Heidegger's characterization of language as unconcealing as well as concealing, although for Gadamer, it seems to point rather to a particular humility and finitude that belongs to being-in-the-world, but, most importantly, the unsayability or excess of meaning is always anchored in coming to an understanding and community. As he explains, "Coming to an understanding is a life process in which a community of life is lived out…Thus the world is the common ground, trodden by none and recognized by all, uniting all who talk to one another. All kinds of human community are kinds of linguistic community: even more, they form language" (TM

443). For Gadamer, then, there is no language without this dialogic coming to an understanding. To say that the world is trodden by none seems again to point to Gadamer's distinction between world and environment, that is, that the world is not a definite physical space, but an event of meaning wherein this meaning is lived out.

Responsibility is anchored in linguistic communities and coming to an understanding, which are always carried out in specific practices. Thus responsibility is not that of following prescribed rules, but of responding and answering to what confronts and lays claim on us. We recognize not only the other who lays claim, but also that this other, too, is responsible. Responsibility in this sense is an openness to the other, a letting be of the other.

II. Vulnerability

This responsibility is quite closely related to the centrality of vulnerability in our account. Throughout I have been arguing that vulnerability is a necessary component of ethical life without clarifying in what sense I intend vulnerability or why such vulnerability is important. As I suggest elsewhere,[182] to be vulnerable is to remain open to what surpasses us, not only as a kind of mental attunement, as might be suggested by Heidegger's account, but to see that this is neither merely mental nor merely physical as well. If we do not remain open to what surpasses us, we risk not only silencing or foreclosing that which provides meaning for our lives, but also excluding the possibility of any response-ability, which seems to be at the heart of any moral theory.

In order to determine how best to understand this relationship between vulnerability and responsibility in ethics, I suggest we might look at the positions of Alasdair MacIntyre and Jürgen Habermas., particularly as both assert the central role of vulnerability. With this

[182] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 292.

discussion of Habermas and MacIntyre, we return again to Gadamer's claim that in developing a philosophical ethics, we might choose between the path of Kant and the path of Aristotle, and because Aristotle better accounts for the conditionedness of human experience, Gadamer suggests we follow Aristotle. Both Habermas, following Kant, and MacIntyre, following Aristotle, do seek to account for human conditionedness in their theories, but whereas Habermas strives to establish universality in spite of this conditionedness, MacIntyre seeks rather to preserve this conditionedness.

As MacIntyre explains, vulnerability has largely been ignored by philosophers. He writes,

> From Plato to Moore and since there are usually, with some rare exceptions, only passing references to human vulnerability and affliction and to the connections between them and our dependence on others….When the ill, the injured, and the otherwise disabled *are* presented in the pages of moral philosophy books, it is almost exclusively as possible subjects of benevolence by moral agents who are themselves presented as though they were continuously rational, healthy, and untroubled.[183]

What MacIntyre demonstrates is that moral philosophers have ignored the centrality of dependence and vulnerability. There thus seems to be a great divide between "us", the rational and self-sufficient, and "them", the afflicted and dependent. As such, "this fails to account for the ways in which those who are disabled or dependent on others require moral consideration beyond being the subject of charity and how those who are seen as untroubled might become troubled or that indeed they already are dependent on others."[184] MacIntyre thus strongly cautions against any kind "us" versus "them" consideration of others, as well as against a "generalized Other" who makes it possible for us to exercise our virtue. Instead, we must understand our relationship to others as one in which we, too, are vulnerable or in need. These communal relationships do extend beyond our immediate familiar relationships,

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[183] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*: 1.
[184] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 292.

such that there is a sense in which being open to strangers requires some generalization. Part of this generalization requires recognition of the other's participation in shaping the common good and as a member of the community. Yet to be truly hospitable or to care is to recognize and remain open to the other in her particular otherness, not any general or neutral otherness, but in a way that preserves this fundamental difference. MacIntyre also insists that these encounters with others change us insofar as this intimacy brings us beyond our immediate horizons. Thus there is always something excessive that belongs to our relations to others, both in the sense in the other exceeds any understanding we might have and resists any totalization, as well as in the sense in which our relations to others leave us changed and moves us beyond what we were.

Despite their rather different starting places, we find that Habermas agrees with MacIntyre that individuals become such through social relations in the world. Thus the individual alone is not the starting place, but rather the web of mutual recognition. As Thomas McCarthy explains, "This interdependence brings with it a reciprocal vulnerability that calls for guarantees of mutual consideration to preserve both the integrity of individuals and the web of interpersonal relations in which they form and maintain their identities."[185] Because a person cannot maintain her identity alone, since any minimal articulation of the self requires the use of shared language, the welfare of the community must be preserved in order for the individual to be preserved. With this interdependence comes vulnerability: "The more the subject becomes individuated, the more he becomes entangled in a densely woven fabric of mutual recognition, that is, of reciprocal exposedness and vulnerability."[186] This echoes precisely Dilthey's claim about existence always as part of the interweaving of

[185] Thomas McCarthy, "Introduction," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990), x.

[186] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lernhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990). 199.

commonality. While our identities are formed through being with others, they are also always at risk through this interdependence as well. Individuals cannot remain cut off from others to leave themselves intact. For Habermas, in order for there to be an ethics that ensures both justice and solidarity, as the preservation of individuals and the community, what is necessary is that individuals can move beyond their particular viewpoints in order to give equal weight to those of others and so recognize the inviolability that belongs to others as much as to the self.

Although Habermas follows Kant, he is very concerned to account better for conditionedness, as is evident in his insistence on the primacy of social relations and mutual dependence as well as vulnerability. The difficulty, however, is that Habermas understands vulnerability too much in terms of not violating the integrity of the other, rather than, as we find in MacIntyre, as a more robust sense of interdependence that allows for mutual growth, shared meaning, and care. It seems that this requirement fails to consider both not only the ways we might be harmed, but also care for others, and in what ways we are addressed by others and must respond to these claims. To be sure, not violating the integrity of the other is absolutely something with which we should be concerned. Yet, I suggest that despite this important dimension, because Habermas does not also leave space for the ways in which we might care for another or ourselves be cared for or the ways in which our relations to others leave us unchanged, he does not properly account for the conditionedness of human experience.

The mutual or reciprocal recognition Habermas espouses still tends to be more cognitive than lived, as is especially the case in his appeals to Kohlberg and Piaget. Recognition is here understood as a matter of imagining another's viewpoint or observing the actions of another rather than leaving oneself open to the address of another. It seems

instead that Habermas does not move us beyond any kind of procedural turn taking of viewpoints. So long as morality is understood as progressive development toward rational autonomy supported by observer status, then it is unclear how this conditionedness remains. Habermas attempts to defend the possibility of situatedness by insisting that "…the demotivated solutions that postconventional morality finds for decontextualized issues must be reinserted into practical life,"[187] yet if questions of morality are separate from questions of the good life, that is if we have no way to think of ethical life apart from abstracted principles and ideal speech acts or what Gadamer would deem "anonymous responsibility"[188], it is unclear how such a reintegration is possible. Habermas' version of vulnerability remains at the level of the concept, as a universal condition of human experience, without providing a way of understanding this vulnerability in the concrete particularity of our lived experiences.

In order to explain how vulnerability is seen not as an impediment to personhood, but rather as a fundamental dimension, I suggest we turn toward the work of Adriana Cavarero. She argues that in place of accounts of relationality as reciprocal recognition, we need instead to think of relationality as dependency made possible through mortality, thus to see our relations not as threats to our finitude, but indeed made possible by it. As Cavarero explains, our mortality is inextricably linked to our being embodied, so we are ultimately vulnerable precisely because of our corporeality. Our bodies are fragile and open to being wounded or damaged as much as they are open to being soothed and healed. Writing about a woman whose burned face has been wrapped in gauze by aid workers following a bomb blast, Cavarero says, "In the ambivalence of the mask, what is revealed is the two poles of the essential alternative inscribed in the condition of vulnerability: wounding and caring.

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[187] Ibid., 179.

[188] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Friendship and Solidarity," *Research in Phenomenology* 39, no. 1 (2009): 3.

Inasmuch as vulnerable, exposed to the other, the singular body is irremediably open to both responses."[189] Our bodies enable us to be wounded, but also enable us to wound others, to care for others, and to be cared for. At times, too, another's intention to care results in some harm. I suggest that "To be vulnerable is not to be passive to potential harms, but also to respond, to care, and to risk."[190] Like MacIntyre, she argues that vulnerability should not be cashed out in terms of those abled and disabled, marginalized or not, but instead is the basis of humanity, shared by all. Cavarero further reminds us that such responses are not merely theoretical, rational, or independent, but fundamentally embodied and shared. There can be no responsibility without others and without this kind of openness to others, namely vulnerability.

In *The Fragility of Goodness*, Martha Nussbaum concludes that despite every desire we have for universal principles or complete trustworthiness with others, that what Aristotle and the ancient Greek tragedies show us is that

> [T]here is in fact a loss in value of whenever the risks involved in specifically human virtue are closed off. There is a beauty in the willingness to love someone in the face of love's instability and worldliness that is absent from a completely trustworthy love. There is a certain valuable quality in social virtue that is lost when social virtue is removed from the domain of uncontrolled happenings. And in general each salient Aristotelian virtue seems inseparable from a risk of harm.[191]

Not only are we incapable of exercising our virtues or becoming virtuous without dependent relationships, but the very richness, which is itself vulnerable, of these relations is jeopardized by attempts to protect against risk or harm. Nussbaum's point is not that we expose ourselves to every danger or enter into dangerous situations in order to have richer experiences. Neither does Habermas or those in the Kantian tradition suppose that we ought

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[189] Adriana Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). 20.

[190] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 292.

[191] Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). 420.

to protect against any sort of risk or harm. Instead, if we consider vulnerability as the site of uncertainty or ambiguity, then we see that vulnerability allows for sadness or suffering as much as it does for joy and friendship. If we restrict the domain of virtue to that which is in our control, then we jeopardize any possibility to be virtuous.

This sense of vulnerability and care becomes especially crystallized if we consider it within another of Fink's explanation of love as a basic phenomenon. He argues that traditional metaphysics has separated love, like most things, into animal and supernatural parts: "Eros was divided into a sensuous, animal component and a supersensuous, spiritual-divine component" (G 336).[192] The problem, he claims, is that love is neither animal nor divine, but possible for humans alone. Animals mate and live together and may demonstrate things such as loyalty, but they do not love. God does not love for God is self-contained and lacking nothing.[193] In this sense, any account of human beings that treats them as primarily self-contained thus fails to recognize this essential Furthermore, it is not just that only humans love, but that love, and more specifically, sexual love, is the basis for being human. He writes, "The community of love of the husband and wife is the primordial grounding of sociality in general" (G 338).[194] Momentarily setting aside concerns about heteronormativity, we see that what is essential for Fink is that love, as the holding together of two individuals, is the basis of sociality. Love is what makes individuation possible insofar as the existence of one sex is dependent on the other.[195] "Eros holds all opposite moments in a strange

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[192] "Der Eros wird in einen sinnlichen, tierischen Teil und einen übersinnlichen, geistig-göttlichen Teil zerteilt."

[193] This claim is perhaps at odds with most Christian theology.

[194] "Die Liebesgemeinschaft des Mannes und des Weibes ist das urtümliche Fundament der Sozialität überhaupt."

[195] Fink's discussion emphasizes that love and death are pan experiences, in the sense of an experience of unmitigated totality prior to individuation. Whereas other basic phenomena, such as struggle and work, are individual, love and death are *panisch*. Fink's understanding of pan is twofold. On the one hand, it does seem to point to the god Pan as indicating something dark and is so in line with Fink's emphasis on the meontic and groundlessness, as well as the angst associated with such groundlessness. Related to this groundlessness is the

intertwining: it withdraws into the pan-depths of life and yet holds firmly onto to beloved individuation; it denotes the pairing of individuals, which thereby temporarily cast off their separation, and emerge out of their intimacy once again new individuals" (G 342).[196] Love is not merely the relationship between two people. Rather it marks the profound intimacy of a holding together of two individuals that both crosses over and preserves their difference. Furthermore, what is most essential to love is that it is love is possible really because of death. Our mortality prompts us to stretch beyond ourselves and love thus affords the possibility of the immortality of mortals. However, Fink does not mean that love is the attempt to flee our fate "Love is the pan-experience of the primordially unified, indestructible ground of life and is essentially related to death, is always shot through with death; and death is for humans not the awareness of absolute nonexistence, it means the negation of the finite form, its sublation and thereby the clearing for the originary ground, from whose anticipation love precisely creates its joys" (G 349).[197] Thus love and death are in constant play. Sexual love always reaches beyond the mortality of the individual since the aim, basically understood, is propagation of the species, so there is the creation of something beyond the individual. For a host of reasons, such as the realization that love isn't only between two heterosexual individuals, it might seem that Fink's account of love is no longer adequate for our age. Yet I think if we focus on Fink's central claim, namely that love is a

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other sense of pan as all, as something unmitigated or total existing prior to individuation. He appeals often to Heraclitus' Fragment 50B, "*ouk emou, alla tou logou akousantas homologein sophon estin hen panta*". As Fink explains, "The panic [*das Panische*] is the medium of life, which is mostly overlooked basic occurrences, that as such so to speak provides the ground for the acts and actions of selfhood." Thus for Fink, the pan does not refer to the blending or leveling of all things, but is rather that originary ground that allows individuation at all.

196 "Der Eros enthält in seltsamer Verschlingung alle gegenteiligen Momente: er entrückt in die panische Lebenstiefe und hält doch am geliebten Individuum fest; dieses wird zum symbolischen Repräsentanten des ganzen anderen Geschlechts; er bedeuteted die Paarung von Einzelwesen, die dabei gerade zeitweise ihre Vereinzelung abwerfen, und aus deren Innigkeit wiedere neue Einzelwesen hervorgehen."

197 "Die Liebe ist die panische Erfahrung des ur-einen, unzerstörbaren Lebensgrundes und ist wesenhaft auf den Tod bezogen, ist immer toddurchdrigend; und der Tod ist für den Menschen nicht das Bewußtsein des schelchthinnigen Nichtseins, er bedeutet die Negation der endliche Gestalt, ihre Aufhebung und damit die Freigabe für den Urgrund, aus dessen Ahnung die Liebe gerade ihre höchsten Entzückungen schöpft."

fundamental mode of pairing individuals in such a way that their intimacy allows them to be individuals and to experience their mortality in important ways as they are open to each other and to their own finitude.

On a more practical level, it is not entirely clear in what ways we determine boundaries to or give weight to different sort of vulnerabilities. Suppose, for example, that there are two close friends, Anne and Camilo. Camilo faces frequent cycles of debilitating depression that last for months or even years at a time, and so preemptively ends a romantic relationship with Anne since he knows that his ability to care for her to his fullest will be made impossible as he anticipates his next bout of depression. Anne, in turn, is rather deeply hurt by this end as it strikes her as premature. She also feels a greater harm is done to her in assuming she requires some sort of emotional protection and because Camilo denies her ability to care for him, especially in difficult times, and thus forecloses her vulnerability by not allowing her to remain open and responsive to his needs. At the same time, she feels that she harms Camilo by insisting that they stay together despite his reservations and thus, in a sense, forcing him to care or be vulnerable. A similar account is found in Stanley Cavell's analysis of *The Philadelphia Story*.[198] In this story, the main character, Tracy, is set to marry George, who refers to Tracy as a queen, a goddess, perfection embodied. But in his perceiving her as fundamentally perfect and self-contained, George admits no possibility of her caring for him. While it may seem wonderful that he holds her in such high esteem, it is rather the case that he does not take her seriously as a human being; he does not recognize her vulnerability or capacity to care. As it turns out, Tracy calls off the wedding and remarries her ex-husband, Dexter. What this example demonstrates is, I believe, that our relationships are not neutral and require more than simply leaving the other one as she is in

[198] Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). 133.

herself. Instead, we might rather think of an attempt to leave someone intact, as whole, meaning that we recognize and allow for the alterity of the other without intentionally causing her harm. Recognizing someone as whole, however, does not mean that we recognize her as self-contained. Instead, it means recognizing her as carer and cared-for, as interdependent. Furthermore, our relationships are joint ventures that do not exist prior to our engaging them. I do not stop where the other begins, but instead find myself in the other and the other in me; we not only have responsibilities to the other, but because of our relation to the other.

It is worth noting, too, that Cavell identifies conversation as what lends legitimacy to marriage, at least in the genre of the comedy of remarriage. What conversation demonstrates is this very capacity to take the other seriously as other, which is a great responsibility. Conversation requires remaining open to both what is and what is not said. It requires a commitment to letting the conversation continue. My aim in this discussion is to take seriously the idea that the recognition of other as other is not merely to see the other as another I, but also that this other address us and demands a response from us. To have a self is to be an I, but also a You. What this means is that we must also leave open the space for others to address us, to care for us, although at times this is not without risk of harm. This mirrors in some ways Nel Noddings' ethics of care. For her, responsibility to the other means recognizing the other not only as the recipient of our care, but also as one-caring. Indeed, for Noddings, the basis of personhood is being both one-caring and cared for.[199] What this calls for, I argue, is that our responsibility to the other is not merely to do no harm, but also to leave ourselves open to the possibility of care from the other. These interdependent relations are always at stake, at play.

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[199] Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*: 17.

III. Mitspieler

In the previous chapter I argued that the space of ethics is a play space insofar as it is a space that opens and holds open the space of the in-between, that is, the space of alternative possibilities where we come to face both who we are and who we are not, or as Jean Greisch deems it, the space of freedom.[200] This space enables us to engage with others as well as ourselves, and as a site of alterity, marks the very possibility of responsibility and vulnerability. Furthermore, we find, too, that Gadamer as well as Fink and Heidegger claim that every conversation, as the to and fro of dialogue, is play. However, I argue that other accounts of intersubjectivity, stemming largely from the Wittgensteinian tradition, fail to provide a thorough enough picture of the dynamic between language and play for two main reasons, and as such, cannot provide us with an adequate understanding of responsibility and recognition. First, language is treated as a tool for communication, and is thus addressed primarily in epistemic terms, rather than being understood as a mode of being in the world, thus as a lived sharing of meaning. As a tool for communication, language's achievement of intersubjectivity is portrayed as external to the participants instead of, as Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink claim is the case, as the possibility for selfhood. Second, because play is primarily seen as the application of rules to a situation, play takes on an overly cognitive and self-directed character rather than that of spontaneity, openness, and vulnerability. As such, this sort of play would then foreclose the possibility of responsibility—at least in any robust sense—since the actor's response is in effect prescripted. If it is the case, as I argue, that conversation is essential to ethics as the space of responsibility, relations with others, and vulnerability, and that this space of responsibility is also a playspace, then we must examine further what this relation between language as conversation and play is. Focusing primarily

[200] Greisch, "The 'Play of Transcendence' and the Question of Ethics," 113.

on Gadamer, I argue that play, as a primary mode of responsibility and being with others in and through language and as a site of superabundance, provides an apt model for ethics.

Language Games

Since Wittgenstein, the connection between play or games and language is fairly commonly recognized. Arguing against an Augustinian view of language wherein we have a priori knowledge of language or that language is a singular type of activity, Wittgenstein claims in the *Philosophical Investigations* that language cannot be reduced to any one universal common feature or use. Instead, as he demonstrates through a discussion of games, language is rather comprised by multiple "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail,"[201] i.e., family resemblances. In showing the multivarious ways in which we use the word "game" or "play", Wittgenstein demonstrates that our use of language is very much one of play. We do not employ language through recourse to universals, but at the same time, our use of language is not merely random. We learn language through use, through the particular forms of life to which we belong and this language is bound by rules. We observe the ways in which language is used and recognize resemblances in novel situations. The rules do not function by dictating behavior, but as in play, they act as a sign post in showing us where to go, although not absolutely how to do it. We learn, as Donald Davidson explains, how to go on. We learn how to follow the rules through our play and participation with others.

Wittgenstein's project has been largely influential in philosophy of language as well as ethics, as we see in the work of Anscombe, Diamond, Putnam, and Habermas, just to name a few. While this turn to language is significant and important in providing an alternative to

[201] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2010). §66.

the Cartesian subject, I argue that many of these positions remain inadequate primarily because the intersubjectivity described in accounts from figures such as Rawls, Davidson, Brandom, and Habermas are lacking a more robust sense of intersubjectivity that moves beyond co-subjectivity, where two subjects occupy a shared space, to intersubjectivity that bears with it also *intra*subjectivity. By this I mean not that that the subjects are collapsed into one another or that there is a sort of panpsychism—although Fink does seem to suggest that this is the case—but that participants in a dialogue are more than observers of a game or speech acts. In conversation the relationship with the other is at play and so, too, is the individual's sense of herself at play as she is addressed by and challenged by this other.

Recently many scholars[202] have sought to bring Davidson and Gadamer together as both prioritize linguistic intersubjectivity and dialogue, especially in relation to truth. Furthermore, both maintain a variation of the principle of charity, wherein a dialogue partner seeks to maximize the interpretation of her partner's position, and also believe that conversation begins with certain prejudices or anticipations of meaning. Despite the apparent similarities, both Davidson and Gadamer attempt to differentiate their positions. Davidson suggests that Gadamer is mistaken in assuming that any conversation presupposes a shared language. He argues that since all understanding requires not only interpretation but also translation, there is no need to begin with shared language.[203] Gadamer contends that

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[202] See also Malpas, "Gadamer, Davidson, and the Ground of Understanding." John McDowell, "Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism," in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Ulrich von Arnswald, and Jens Kertscher (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002). David Vessey, "Davidson, Gadamer, Incommensurability, and the Third Dogma of Empiricism," in *Dialogues with Donald Davidson*, ed. Jeff Malpas (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2010). David Hoy, "Post-Cartesian Interpretation: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Donald Davidson," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1997). Donald Davidson, "Gadamer and Plato's *Philebus*," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court 1997). Charles Taylor, "Understanding the Other: A Gadamerian View on Conceptual Schemes," in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Jeff Malpas, Ulrich von Arnswald, and Jens Kertscher (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: 2002).

[203] Both Gadamer and Davidson do agree that misunderstanding is possible only because of understanding. This is evident in Davidson's classic example in "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme"

Davidson is right to turn to conversation, but maintains that Davidson cashes conversation out exclusively in terms of communicating knowledge and thus fails to see language beyond its epistemological significance.

On Davidson's model, when a person interprets, she is like the field anthropologist. She makes sense of another person according to some (her own) standard of reason and translates those terms into her own. Describing this interaction, Davidson writes,

> We may think of it as a form of triangulation: each of two people is reacting differentially to sensory stimuli streaming in from a certain direction. Projecting the incoming lines outward, the common cause is at their intersection. If the two people now note each other's reactions (in the case of language, verbal reactions), each can correlate these observed reactions with his or her stimuli from the world. A common cause has been determined. The triangle which gives content to thought and speech is complete. But it takes two to triangulate.[204]

Davidson's point is that thought and speech require intersubjectivity. Furthermore, conversation always has to respond to the fact of the world. The world is not merely the projection of the subject. We get closer, he suggests, to the fact of the matter through triangulation. We can make sense of another person's behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs by observing how she relates to shared stimuli and also through intersubjective exchange. The drawback of this account is that the subject's position in the intersubjective exchange is essentially little more than a third-person observer. As Habermas criticizes, "the communicative behavior of subjects capable of speech and action is entirely objectified; it

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where two friends disagree on what to call a boat. One friend refers to the boat as "ketch" and the other "yawl", but the point is that despite this disagreement of terms, both are talking about the same boat. For Davidson, this example works as well if the two speakers were to refer to the boat as "ketch" and "das Beiboot". It does seem to me that Davidson misunderstands what Gadamer means by presupposing a common language, particularly as Gadamer does not treat language as a tool for communication as Davidson does. I do not think that Gadamer believes that a shared understanding is possible only through the same language. Gadamer does not agree that translation is a part of every event of understanding, but only those where understanding is disrupted or made difficult. So, while every translation is an act of interpretation, not every interpretation is an act of translation as Davidson claims. Still, Gadamer would agree with Davidson that it is only on the basis of our having some shared understanding that we are able to notice or make sense of this difference.

[204] Donald Davidson, "Three Varieties of Knowledge," in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 213.

becomes an observable with no internal link to the subject."[205] This sets an unusual distance between a person, another person, and the world. The interpreter in Davidson's account finds herself in connection with others and the world and recognizes similarities, but does not fully share or belong with others unless some "mutual perspective-taking" is developed.[206] Furthermore, Davidson does not account for the fact that the subject already belongs to a particular world, such that when the subject does try to find what is common, there arises the difficulty that she cannot appeal to the prior understanding and commonalities already present. Davidson states that all our beliefs are derived from being in the world, that is, from empirical experiences. And since beliefs are then at the root of our language and interaction with others, human behavior, including linguistic practices, can be reduced to empirical events. The problem with this, however, is that the participant's perspective is diminished. That is to say, because the participant sees not only the position of her dialogue partner, but also her own position, as reducible to empirical events, what is missing is her own self-understanding and interpretation. Thus not only does she encounter the other as if she were an observer a field anthropologist, but she also encounters herself similarly.[207]

Habermas' criticism of Brandom runs similarly to that of Davidson. Brandom draws a parallel between the scorekeeping of games and the scorekeeping of giving and asking for reasons for commitments or assertions in linguistic practices. We expect our interlocutors to

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[205] Jürgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003). 113.

[206] Ibid., 119-20.

[207] I do not mean to suggest here that being an observer is not also being a participant. As we find in Gadamer, the spectator belong to play just as much as the actors "Thus watching is a genuine mode of participating" (TM 122). So, I believe that although Gadamer would locate more self-understanding and exchange with the other in Davidson's account, Davidson himself does not seem to recognize this feature. My criticism is thus leveled at the idea that Davidson believes there could be some sort of neutral bystander.

provide reasons and we expect ourselves to provide reasons for our beliefs as well.[208] Although Brandom advocates an intersubjective approach, he, like Davidson, does not establish a relationship between a first- and second-person, but between a first- and third-person. Habermas hints that this is obvious just by the examples Brandom uses to describe the nature of intersubjective communication: in the court of law, the judge and defendant perceive each other as responding to one another, but not communicating *with* one another. Similarly, in baseball, the team responds to the other team, but in a way like the relationship between performers and spectators, not as real participants.[209] In Brandom's case, the spectator maps her beliefs onto the speaker rather than engaging in dialogue within a shared common experience. Furthermore, this analysis of play set forth by Brandom misunderstands what play is. Rather than describing what occurs in play, namely that it is not simply a matter of response toward a stimulation, as his example of the baseball team seems to suggest, but a joint venture where something beyond the two sides is created together, Brandom provides a more meta-level account of umpiring.[210] Play is not, except on the meta-level, the appeal to rules or serving as an umpire of the actions of other people. Brandom thus leaves no room in play for transformation, development, or even dialogue. As was argued in the previous chapter, play cannot be reduced to the actions of any one player, but rather grounds itself only through the players' play and thus always marks something that

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[208] Robert B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). 183-6. Brandom does claim that there are ways in which the scorekeeping in both is the same and not at all the same. Baseball, for example, only ever has one score, whereas in dialogue, the interlocutors both keep score for and by one another, so "linguistic scorekeeping practice is *doubly* perspectival (185)."

[209] Habermas, *Truth and Justification*: 163.

[210] It could be argued that discussions of rules and umpiring is itself a form of play, as play does allow us the opportunity to call into question the boundaries of the practices in which we engage. I take Brandom's mistake to be, however, that this calling of balls and strikes in the utterances of others does not require any actual encounter with the other. Again it returns us only to a first- and third-person interaction.

exceeds any one participant. Brandom, however, does reduce play to the independent actions of the interlocutors.

Habermas argues that what both Davidson and Brandom are missing is the idea of mutual understanding that is at the very heart of communication: "Communication is not some self-sufficient game in which the interlocutors reciprocally *inform* each other about their beliefs and intentions. It is only the imperative of social integration—the need to coordinate the action-plans of independently deciding participants in action—that explains the point of linguistic communication."[211] Although Habermas believes that he avoids the pitfalls of both Davidson and Brandom by appealing to the idea of mutual understanding, which returns us to an I-We relationships, Habermas does not go far enough as he still treats conversation as a tool for communication. While it is certainly true that language is used for communication, I believe it would be a mistake to see it merely as a tool for that communication. Moreover, if we think of conversation only as the integration of independently deciding participants, then we lack an account of interdependence. We find again a relationship *to* the other that occurs only insofar as our needs run up against one another. We do not find here a relationship *with* the other, except in coordinating practices. I suggest that so long as language is conceived of as the exchange of information or tool of communication, even if it is to coordinate action, then we are left only with a thin account of intersubjectivity. So long as the intersubjective is seen as something external to the participants, even if it is described as having been created by the participants, then the possibility of the participants to belong to language, to be with each other in a robust sense, and thus have the possibility of responsibility, seems problematic.

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[211] Habermas, *Truth and Justification*: 164.

Like Habermas, John Rawls maintains that members of communities work together through public reason to achieve particular ends, although Rawls understands public reason more narrowly than Habermas. Rawls clams in *A Theory of Justice*[212] that because all citizens are free and equal, all citizens have the same claims to basic liberties and ought to cooperatively ensure that political liberties are available to all and benefit the least well-off of the society. Rawls establishes these two principles of justice through appeal to the thought experiment of the original position. In the original position, citizens are placed under equal and fair conditions, abstracting from particular situations under a veil of ignorance,[213] and thus establish certain principles of fairness that would benefit any free and equal citizen. Behind the veil of ignorance, parties have no knowledge of their socio-economic status, education level, race, gender, etc., or even his or her conception of the good, but do know general facts such as that their society is subject to circumstances of justice. Rawls makes clear, too, that the original position is not an event that actually exists somewhere in time and is not a gathering of all possible persons. Rather, it is a perspective that one could take up. Because those behind the veil of ignorance have no knowledge of their actual position, they cannot bargain for certain goods that would benefit them. Instead, they would unanimously choose principles that would benefit them at any position, and thus allows a society to determine its preferred version of justice. Rawls writes, "Guided by the theory of the good and the general facts of moral psychology, their deliberations are no longer guesswork. They can make a rational decision in the ordinary sense", where a rational decision means one has coherent preferences when faced with a set of possibilities.[214]

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[212] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[213] Ibid., 118.
[214] Ibid., 123-24.

At first glance, it seems like Rawls provides us with a good picture of the relationship between play and ethics. Indeed, the original position takes shape as a play space. Rawls' description of members bargaining behind the veil is informed by game theory and Rawls frequently uses examples of players abiding by rules and conceptions of fairness to describe the principles of fairness in morality. Members of a society in the original position distance themselves from the everyday in order to catch sight of their everyday lives in a new way and to take up perspectives other than their own. There is perhaps a sense, too, in which risks are acknowledged insofar as members of a society behind the veil of ignorance gamble about what would benefit them most and acknowledge a fundamental vulnerability to existence in ensuring minimal rights and liberties for the least advantaged.

Rawls' conception of justice as fairness and his description of the original position in particular have faced a number of criticisms. Opponents such as Martha Nussbaum challenge that Rawls cannot account for power differentials, particular situations or contexts, or the participation of individuals, such as children or those with disabilities, in establishing social contracts. Rawls modifies his position between the appearance of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 and *Political Liberalism* in 1993, so as to allow for the consideration of more concrete practices. Ronald Dworkin suggests, in a lengthy appeal to Gadamer's hermeneutics, that we might be able to take up Rawls' principles without presupposing an abstract Archimedean point.

While I agree with Nussbaum's and Dworkin's objections, and potential correction to Rawls, I would like to take a slightly different tack. Despite the playful dimension of Rawls' theory, I suggest the same criticisms offered to Davidson, Brandom, and Habermas might also be leveled at Rawls' version of social contractarianism. I believe we are faced here again with rather thin conceptions of both recognition and intersubjectivity. With

Rawls, too, we find a conception of the subject with the intersubjective appearing like an afterthought. He jettisons any kind of community that has a life of its own beyond the members and declares that any conception of community must be individualistic. I agree with Rawls that we should be concerned about any idea of community that presumes an "organic whole"[215] since such a whole would obscure any sense of difference or alterity. However, in anchoring a conception of community on a population of individuals, Rawls fails to recognize the way that self-understanding is possible through communities and the ways in which we participate in and through others.

In response to a charge from Nozick that Rawls divorces the subject from her body, Michael Sandel explains, "Rawls conceives the self as a subject of possession, bounded in advance, and given prior to its ends, and he assumes furthermore that the bounds of the subject unproblematically correspond to the bodily bounds between individual human beings."[216] Yet, Sandel continues, this conception is not one that Rawls has himself necessarily explicitly espouses, but is instead assumed in his descriptions. Although Rawls is clear that human society necessarily involves a plurality of ends and positions, Sandel continues, "this can establish only that *some* principle of plurality or differentiation is essential to an account of the human subject."[217] Thus the difficulty of Rawls' account, and the reason why I think we ought to reject it, is that not only does Rawls seem to tacitly reject any kind of intersubjectivity as well as embodiment, but because his version of community is only a plurality of individuals, and even then, we are unsure in what such plurality would consist. It seems that intersubjectivity comes into play only to the extent that we might need others to ensure our own rights. As Sandel illustrates, Rawls does not even recognize a plurality within

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[215] Ibid., 232.
[216] Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 80.
[217] Ibid.

the subject, an account of intrasubjectivity. Even though Rawls admits that it might very well be the case that no one has ever entered into the original position, a central feature of his account seems to be that we unanimously agree to things out of concern that others might violate us. Again, while harm towards others is a concern, it need not be an exclusive factor in determining our relationships.

We do not experience the world as an object over against us or as an object to be placed under our control, but as a place we can come to understand and live in. In the pursuit for objectivity and the equation of *logos* with *ratio*, modern thinking has misconstrued the ways in which language and knowledge are understood. Davidson, Brandom, Wittgenstein, and to a slightly lesser degree, Habermas, continue this tradition of the modern subject and so cannot account for our lives in the world and with others. I argue that because conceptions of the ethical subject frequently depend on one depicted by modern thinking, namely that of a rational, autonomous being, then we are left with only one half of the truth of the ethical subject. I argue not that we should give up the role of reason or autonomy. Instead, we must account for the way in which ethical life cannot be derived from scientific methods, but develops, as Gadamer explains, "in the praxis of social life itself" (GPMT 272).[218]

The Play of Language

Having presented several accounts of the relations among language, play, and community, I suggest these accounts do not go far enough in describing how we find ourselves in language and with others. What is missing is an understanding of how language is something greater than a tool for communication and, as such, entails an excess of meaning. If we turn instead to Gadamer's account of dialogue as play, then we find that the

[218] Gadamer, "Greek Philosophy and Modern Thinking," 272.

play of language is not an intersubjective project created external to the players, but a space in which the players belong to that play and to each other. Furthermore, when we consider these elements in the dynamics of friendship, we are able to find a more robust account of intersubjectivity and responsibility.

Writing in response to David Hoy's claims that Gadamer and Davidson have similar claims in resisting the Cartesian subject, Gadamer writes,

> I have certain reservations concerning further elaboration of the investigation of the relations between Davidson's efforts and my own. There we can entirely disregard the supposed difference between utterances and text. . . . The problem lies rather in the fact that it still sounds as if conversation, and the structure of conversation in areas dealing with understanding, primarily only referred to the attainment of correct knowledge. But what is fundamentally at issue is not primarily science and epistemology but . . . the 'ontology' of life communicating itself through language.[219]

Thus for Gadamer, the conversation we have with others is not merely the transfer of factual knowledge, but a shared event of understanding. Whereas for Davidson, understanding is achieved though using a particular tool and maximizing the interpretation of the other, Gadamer sees understanding as being captivated by what we find meaningful. This understanding, particularly between players, draws them into itself. They do not stand opposite it and observe it neutrally, for even to be a spectator requires our participation.

It might seem that Davidson and others are engaged in a project fundamentally different from Gadamer, as Gadamer himself seems to believe, and so my criticisms are operating at the wrong register. Davidson is concerned with understanding the role of language in the triangulated relation of subjective, objective, and intersubjective, and in particular, how truth about the world is achieved through this triangulation. Thus Davidson's project is concerned with being able to assign beliefs correctly to our interlocutors, and both beliefs and the recognition of beliefs require language. Gadamer, on

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[219] ———, "Reply to David C. Hoy," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Edwin Lewis Hahn (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1997), 129.

the other hand, is concerned with language as such. For Gadamer, we cannot think without language and we cannot understand without language. We are reminded again that we do not possess language, but language rather possesses us. Thus while Davidson may be concerned only with determining the veracity of particular utterances, his project is misguided from the start if he forgets this point.

We might consider description of communication given by Merleau-Ponty, who suggests that our relations with others are not always as something for me, as in Husserl and Kant, but that the other penetrates my own world and being. He describes an encounter with his friend, Paul:

> My friend Paul and I point to certain details of the landscape, and Paul's finger, which is pointing out the steeple to me, is not a finger-for-me that I conceive as oriented toward a steeple-for-me; rather, it is Paul's finger that itself shows me the steeple that Paul sees. Just as reciprocally, by making some gesture toward some point in the landscape that I see, it does not seem that I trigger for Paul, in virtue of some preestablished harmony, some internal visions that are merely analogous to my own: rather, it seems to me that my gestures invade Paul's world and guide his gaze. When I think of Paul, I do not think of a flow of private sensations in relation to my own sensations that are mediated through some interposed signs; rather, I think of someone who lives in the same world as I, in the same history as I, and with whom I communicate through this world and through this history.[220]

In this example, Merleau-Ponty's description suggests that we do not experience the world as Davidson or Brandom claim by attributing certain beliefs about the world to our interlocutors and then asking for justifications for those beliefs or commitments. We also do not belong to some uniform, preexistent harmony that creates similar representations for us and others. We share a world together, and in sharing, communicate in and through one another. This world, too, is not strictly neutral, thus while the friends experience the same landscape, it is possible that it is colored in different ways or means different things for each of them. Thus language is not merely a tool to communicate facts, although language does

[220] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2011). 428.

sometimes take this role. Instead, it is what enables the two to undertake a shared project. Similarly, although Gadamer specifically emphasizes the verbal dimension of language in *Truth and Method*, he later clarifies that understanding need not be linguistic. Rather, "Language in words is only a special concretion of linguisticality [*Sprachlichkeit*]."[221] We can gesture or shrug, for example, or communicate through signs and symbols. In an interview with Gadamer, Jean Grondin characterizes Gadamer's understanding of linguisticality as "the quite general capacity to mean something by something and to communicate it."[222] The example Gadamer provides for this claim is that if someone were pointing at something, a human would look toward the object of pointing, whereas a dog would try to bite the pointing hand.[223] Furthermore, linguisticality is not merely the capacity to exercise reason, but also the capacity to make symbols or to dream. We always already find ourselves with this capacity, yet we also find ourselves incapable of identifying it fully.

This coming to an understanding is not the result of a procedural discourse or reciprocity of viewpoints. There is thus an important difference between Gadamer's account of coming to an understanding and what we find in Habermas' discourse ethics. Whereas Habermas suggests that in discussions of morality, "What is needed is a 'real' process of argumentation in which the individuals concerned cooperate. Only an intersubjective process of reaching understanding can produce an agreement that is reflexive

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[221] Gadamer, "A Look Back over the Collected Works and Their Effective History: Concluding Dialogue with Jean Grondin," 420.

[222] Ibid., 422.

[223] The human thus has the capacity for meaning and communication, whereas the dog does not. This description seems both surprising and unsatisfactory coming from Gadamer. First, dogs do in fact respond to hand signals or other forms of communication. Second, humans capable of language might still look only toward the finger while failing to realize what the gesture means. Although Gadamer's example seems misguided, we should not ignore the point he is rather trying to address is that linguisticality involves meaning something and communicating something. Yet, as the objections above indicate, it seems there must be something more to this capacity. I would argue that whereas a dog, for example, might respond to cues or signals, a dog will not experience, or at least does not have the capacity to experience, the superabundance or unsayable dimension that exceeds that signal. We might also say that such a capacity requires having a world, and not merely an environment, as well as dialogue with others.

in nature; only it can give the participants the knowledge that they have become convinced of something."[224] Habermas here discusses in particular conversations about moral norms, which reasonably might differ from other sorts of conversations. However, the difference still remains that for Gadamer, even conversations of the sort Habermas addresses do not follow norms or regulative ideals, but rather are much more a matter of *phronēsis*, of responding to the particular situations and claims made on us. As Gadamer explains,

> Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Something is placed in the center, as the Greeks say, which the partners in dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another. Hence reading an understanding on the subject matter of a conversation necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation. This is not an external matter of simply adjusting our tools; nor is it even right to say that the partners adapt themselves to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward (*Sichausspielen*) and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion (*Verwandlung ins Gemeinsame hin*) in which we do not remain what we were. (TM 371)

Thus while there must be some kind of preexistent language in order for a conversation to occur, this language is not a set of tools. Instead, the language, as an event of meaning, is such only through conversation. This is how conversation both presupposes and creates language. Furthermore, Gadamer insists that there can be misunderstanding or disagreement only because there is first common ground and shared meaning. The way in which the conversation develops is not dictated by particular rules, but is shaped by this common understanding. In conversation we do not simply take turns or proceed step by step. We also do not merely assert our point of view. Rather, we open ourselves both to the other and to the possibility of change.

What is particularly important in this passage is that Gadamer believes that coming to an understanding in any conversation leaves us changed, whereas for Davidson, this

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[224] Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*: 66.

transformation seems only to occur in special cases. For Gadamer, not only is it the case that conversation presupposes a common language, but even more strongly, each conversation "creates a common language" (TM 371). Through the to and fro of question and answer, the dialogue partners find themselves bound in a new community. While Brandom is right to suggest that there is a play to question and answering, or as he says, asking for and giving reasons, his account seems more a matter of getting it right or successfully reconstructing the beliefs of a dialogue partner. Such an approach treats the partner as an object before us to be understood. For Gadamer, however, to understand the Thou as Thou means "not to overlook his claim, but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs" (TM 355). To let the other say something to us is to let her address us, to lay claim on us, and to allow ourselves to respond. This illustrates as well the playful dimension of dialogue. Questioning and answering has a to and fro logic and as play, gives rise to something that could not be predetermined or preexistent. We are changed through this play; we create something and are created new.

As Habermas has criticized Gadamer, there does seem to be a real danger in Gadamer's insistence on the primacy of tradition, particularly if tradition is understood as monolithic and described in terms of the fusion or *Verschmelzung* of horizons. While we should be wary of dominant discourses and the tyranny of the majority, I think it is important to follow Gadamer, which Habermas does to a degree under the heading of detranscendentalization,[225] in asserting that the only possibility for criticism is within language and tradition. While tradition and community grant meaning and existence, neither conclusively prescribes or defines our relation to or identity through them.[226] Gadamer

[225] ———, *Truth and Justification*: 99.

[226] Makkreel suggests that there are resources in Kant that allow for a critical stance without abandoning the transcendental. Speaking about Kant's *sensus communis*, Makkreel writes, "As part of a critical

consistently begins with shared understanding and conditionedness, but as he explains in "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem", there can be no misunderstanding except for prior understanding. Even if we are to criticize tradition or practices, we can do so only within those very traditions. Furthermore, it may seem that our emphasis on openness and listening to the other through recognition ignores the very real power differentials, oppression, and struggle for recognition that occurs on most language. This is not the case. I would say instead that precisely because of this robust sense of recognition that places an awareness of vulnerability at its center, we are better able to grapple with these concrete situations than we would be if we conceived of recognition as an awareness of a generalized other. We see that Gadamer's insistence on the excess of a particular statement or the way in which there is always something left to be said resists the totalization of tradition.

There remains something fundamentally ungraspable that belongs to existence, says Gadamer, and against the modern sciences, our relation to life is not one of grasping. Gadamer writes,

> In the articulation of the experience of the world through the logos, in speaking with each other, in the communicative sedimentation [in language] of our world experience which encompasses everything that we are able to exchange with each

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hermeneutics, a theory of common sense seeks the conceptual clarifications of the conditions for not only the appeal *to* tradition, but also the equally necessary appeal *from* tradition neglected in the Gadamerian theory. The *sensus communis* provides a mode of orientation to the tradition that allows us to ascertain its relevance to ultimate questions of truth. It is transcendental, not in the sense of providing building blocks for truth, but in the sense of opening up the reflective horizon of communal meaning in terms of which the truth can be determined." Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). 158. I agree with Makkreel that Kant's *sensus communis* is about more about shared taste as it also provides this mode of orientation. However, I am unsure that the transcendental, even understood generously as a horizon of communal meaning, which sounds fairly Gadamerian, is necessary, for there is a risk that appeals to the transcendental covers over the very conditionedness of those horizons. Makkreel further suggests that this emphasis on the conditionedness of objects by their horizons loses the sense in which the subject also orients herself *to* those objects and horizons. He worries that something would be lost if we could not "touch base with those transcendental conditions of our sensibility and common humanity that make critical reflection possible" (Ibid., 159). He is right to worry about seeing tradition as overly determinative. For Gadamer, though, our orientation is always active. In play, the rules, even house rules or accepted forms of playing, give shape to the play, but they cannot strictly determine it. In playing, we could appeal to the rules or talk about other forms of play, but an appeal to a universal condition isn't necessary. This is what I take Gadamer to mean about tradition. Tradition gives rise to the self and demands an orientation to it, but this orientation cannot be assumed or prefigured by tradition.

> other, there comes forward a form of knowing that presents the missing other half of the truth, a truth that stands alongside the great monologue of the modern sciences and their growing collection of [unexploited] experiential potential. (GPMT 273)

So long as we rely only on the account given by the modern sciences, namely an account that seeks objectivity and data untarnished by human intervention, then we actually receive an incomplete picture of the world and what it means to be a subject in the world. Our experience of the world is not merely an exercise of reason, but experiencing through logos, that is, through language and with others. Furthermore, because language has this superabundant dimension, understanding, as the living out of language in community, is never static. Understanding is always in motion, a play of to and fro, or, as Nicholas Davey explains, "always restless, unquiet understanding."[227] While living in language is familiar, as restless and because of the excess of meaning, language, conversation, and tradition resist any sort of calcification or stagnation. This, too, is why Heidegger calls us to think of home in terms of becoming rather than being. Despite the deep familiarity we have at home, there is something that evades us. There is something uncanny, *unheimlich*.

The constant movement or restlessness is not only for the sake of movement, but always in response to the call of the other, to the address of another before us. If we return to a passage on friendship discussed above, we see more clearly how understanding resists stagnation:

> The other is like the mirror of self-knowledge. One recognizes himself in another, whether in the sense of taking him as a model, or — and this is even more essential — in the sense of the reciprocity in play between friends, such that each sees a model in the other — that is, they understand one another by reference to what they have in common and so succeed in reciprocal co-perception.[228]

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[227] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 100.

[228] Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics," 138-9.

Furthermore, through this reciprocal perception, the friends "cannot remain concealed from each other."[229] Here Gadamer continues that "Friendship leads to an increase in one's own feeling of life and to a confirmation of one's own self-understanding, as implied in the concept of arête."[230] Through the mirror play, the friends cannot remain self-same. They are challenged by the address of the other.

Gadamer establishes a strong parallel between play and imitation. If we think back to Plato's *Republic*, we can recall that Plato wanted the children to learn by play and imitation for, as Gadamer writes, in play and imitation the child is "affirming what he knows and affirming his own being in the process" (TM 113). Even the child who imitates her mother at work is not simply aping, but expressing what she knows. This knowledge, of course, is not derived from a set of principles, but in the application of what is familiar in new situations. Thus Gadamer's understanding of imitation, *mimesis*, resists being reduced to simple copying. Instead, it has more to do with recognition: "The cognitive import (*Erkenntnissinn*) of imitation lies in recognition (*Wiedererkennung*)….to what extent one knows and recognizes something and oneself" (TM 113). Imitation and representation draw us to recognize that which we already know, to rediscover what we have forgotten, and to recreate ourselves in the transformation. Imitation and representation "are not merely a repetition, but a 'bringing forth'…. They contain in themselves an essential relation to everyone for whom representation exists" (TM 114). Although what is imitated is like a mirror, what is mirrored is not simply the form of something, but the truth of something. Heidegger, too, speaks of the mirror play of gods, mortals, sky, and earth in "The Thing", stating that "Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own way into its own, within the simpleness of the four. This mirroring does not portray

[229] Ibid., 134.
[230] Ibid.

a likeness."[231] For Heidegger, too, mirroring is a bringing forth and not a mere copying. Furthermore, the mirroring and reciprocal play bind the four to each other. Heidegger's discussion of the fourfold frequently fails to account for the mortals' own interactions with one another, but he is right in claiming that in the mirror play, something is uncovered, revealed to us, in this presentation that simultaneously is a presentation of the itself and of ourselves.

Our experiences of mirroring, especially in friendship, present us with an experience both of recognition and responsibility. We let the other say something to us and also present ourselves to the other. Gadamer explains,

> …encounters in the mirror of the friend are, as always, not experienced as a demand, but rather as a fulfillment. What one encounters there is encountered not as a duty or a command; it is a living counterpart (*ein leibhaftes Gegenüber*). Because this other, this counterpart, is not one's own mirror image, but rather the *friend*, all powers come into play of increasing trust and devotion to the 'better self' that the other is for oneself, and that is something more than good resolutions and inward stirrings of conscience. All of it flows into the full stream of self-forming commonalities in which one begins to feel and recognize oneself. What is thus communicated is not just sentiment or disposition; it signifies a real embedding in the texture of communal human life.[232]

Gadamer notes that mirroring is laden with normative elements as mirroring may involve both narcissism and the alien. Mirroring itself is not something static, but binds the mirrored sides into something new that is not external to the two, but created in and through them.

Although not all of our relations to others are friendships in the sense described, this mirroring still holds between self and other in other situations. Gadamer goes even further to suggest that for Aristotle, all perception and thought belong to *Mitsein*. We recognize the other as other not out of duty or general good will, but because of her participation in communal human life. Through this mirroring, too, we recognize a responsibility we have to

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[231] Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2001), 177.
[232] Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics," 139.

ourselves. Thus for Gadamer, it is no accident that both Plato and Aristotle place *philia* and *arête* alongside each other. We conclude, then, with the sense that a more robust sense of recognition and responsibility must allow for the development of community out of community, meaning that while our selves are constituted in concrete social practices, we cannot remain unchanged by the address of the other or of ourselves. Our experiences of ourselves and others are shot through with superabundance. That is to say, there is always something inexhaustible and unfathomable about our relations with others and ourselves. The play is never complete as we are constantly tasked anew with responding to the movement. To be vulnerable, then, is not only to remain open to possible harm or care from the other, but to our awareness that we must change our lives.

Chapter Four: Poetic Education

WE play at paste,
Till qualified for pearl,
Then drop the paste,
And deem ourself a fool.
The shapes, though, were similar,
And our new hands
Learned gem-tactics
Practising sands.[233]
-- Emily Dickinson

In his lectures on pedagogy, Kant suggests that "Human beings can become human beings only through education (*Erziehung*). They are nothing save what education makes of them."[234] There Kant suggests that through this process of education and enculturation, animal nature is turned into human nature. Whereas animals need no cultivation and act on their powers and instincts, humans need care, discipline, and instruction to become fully human. We must ask, though, in what such a human being and what such an education consist. Kant sees education as the mode of moving toward the perfection of humanity, not only at the individual, but also at the species level. Furthermore, Kant sees this perfection through education as part and parcel of progress toward moral perfection, and therefore also toward freedom and autonomy. Kant and Schiller both point to the significance of art and aesthetic experience, as well as play, in education and moral development. Both also situate the education of the individuals squarely within the community. We find that education is central for Kant to the *sensus communis* or kingdom of ends, and for Schiller to political participation and citizenship. These thinkers further emphasize the importance of community by highlighting the relationship between education and play. For example, Kant writes, "In addition, the expressions 'to *know* the world' and 'to *have* the world' are rather far

[233] Emily Dickinson, "We Play at Paste," in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R.W. Franklin (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[234] Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy," in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9:443.

from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* [*mitgespielt*] in it."[235] Pragmatic knowledge, which is more than theoretical knowledge, requires participation, citizenship in the world. While these accounts go far in helping us understand the relationship between education and communities, they do not go quite far enough as they view development and freedom as the distancing or overcoming of the animal dimension of humans. As such, their conception of education risks promoting liberation from, rather than freedom for the world. Furthermore, despite the emphasis on both art and play, aesthetic experience is frequently seen merely as a stepping stone to rational development, and play as a means of developing self-mastery. Yet if we are to understand ethical personhood not merely in terms of rational autonomy or mastery and domination, then we must have a better account of the interplay of art, education, and freedom that would ground such personhood.

Like their predecessors, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink do not reject the connection between education and ethics, but instead seek to preserve the way that in both ethical life and education, human beings develop out of themselves. That is, they return to the idea of humans as ethical beings, as having a particular stance in the world and with others, who develop not through reason alone, but through language and meaning. Development is not a linear progression merely toward adulthood or agency, but a deepening and broadening of meaning and relationships characterized by openness and vulnerability. Furthermore, each claims that art offers transformative, specific, and significant experiences central to the development of the ethical self. I argue that what we find in Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink, albeit in different forms, is not so much an appeal to aesthetic education, but rather an emphasis on what I would like to call *poetic* education. That is, we find education as a way of

[235] _____, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7:120.

being in the world and with others that is fundamentally poetic, meaning that education is a mode of cultivation and development of a comportment and responsiveness to the world and what is other. Although Kant speaks to this notion of responsiveness in his account of aesthetic judgment and education, my concern is that such education remains too much at the level of subjective feelings. I argue poetic education is a move away from aesthetic education to education as shared tasks and relationships of vulnerability rooted in shared traditions and *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Instead of the cultivation of taste, we find education here as the cultivation of tact. Thus, while concerned with knowledge, this poetic education should be seen primarily as a mode of understanding.

In the following, I will first examine the accounts aesthetic education in Kant and Schiller, before turning to the suggestion that we understand education as development, cultivation, and transformation of persons. In each of these accounts of education, play maintains a central role. What is significant for play in poetic education, as opposed to aesthetic education, is that play is not supplanted by reason. Furthermore, I suggest that experiences of art, as forms of play, give rise to development through the possibility of doing otherwise. That is to say, play and art provide opportunities for self-recognition and relations to the world, others, and ourselves in new ways. Because play, art, and education enable the possibility of otherwise, they are also essentially instances of freedom. Thus I will argue, third, that education is anchored in freedom, wherein freedom marks the creativity and self-formation of persons in the world and with others.

I. Education, Play, and Development

Many of the accounts of moral education leave a great deal to be desired, usually for two reasons. First, to be educated is equated with being a rational and autonomous person, which is usually equivalent to being an adult (and frequently an adult male). On such

accounts, little consideration is given to the process of development and those who have not yet achieved rational autonomy are seen as extra- or amoral. Yet if our everyday interactions are comprised of responsibilities to others while at varying stages of development, then this provides little basis for how to make sense of and cultivate those responsibilities. Some accounts, particularly those stemming from virtue ethics, do devote more attention to development, yet the early stages are seen merely as on the way to self-sufficiency and reason. These accounts then fail to account for the way that education occurs continuously throughout life. We need an account of education that allows for responsibility and community, which must thus allow for vulnerability and openness. This account is not in opposition to autonomy, for autonomy need not entail any sort of isolated self-sufficiency. Instead, I seek to supplement traditional accounts by suggest what, in addition to reason or autonomy, would be necessary for the education of an ethical self.

Education and Freedom in Kant and Schiller

To begin, I suggest we examine the accounts of education and development in Kant and Schiller. Both thinkers claim that education is fundamentally connected to freedom and that art plays a particularly central role in human development. Insofar as to be human is, according to Kant and Schiller, to be moral and rational, then human development is an essentially moral project. In the following, I will argue that while Kant and Schiller provide a more viable account of ethical personhood than is found in the traditional Cartesian subject, for example, their accounts do not go far enough for they still locate personhood almost exclusively in rational autonomy. Furthermore, freedom, on their accounts, is achieved when one becomes human, i.e., when one is no longer fettered by animal nature. Neither directly rejects the importance of the sensuous world, but so long as the human is seen as an

achievement of reason and an overcoming of nature, then possibilities of meaning and relationships anchored in conditionedness are hindered, if not foreclosed.

In Kant's writings we are frequently reminded that we have a duty to raise ourselves above our animality and move toward humanity, wherein we are capable of setting goals for ourselves (M 6: 387). He writes, for example, that "The human being is the only creature that must be educated [*erzogen warden muss*]. By education we mean specifically care (maintenance, support), discipline (training) and instruction, together with formation [*Bildung*]. Accordingly, the human being is first infant, then pupil, and then apprentice."[236] Because humans are "raw" when born, they require the help of others to develop reason. As each generation educates the next, the human race moves more and more toward perfection; education is guided by "the idea of humanity." This perfection can never be achieved by the individual, only by the race.

According to Kant, animals do not require education because they are endowed with instincts. Human beings, however, are not fully equipped by instinct and so must be educated and cultivated in order to become fully human. Kant recognizes here a tricky duality – humans possess reason, unlike animals, and yet they are also not beyond the bounds of nature. He writes, for example,

> But since education partly teaches the human being something and partly merely develops something within him, one can never know how far his natural predispositions reach….Perhaps education will get better and better and each generation will move one step closer to the perfection of humanity; for behind education lies the great secret of the perfection of human nature.[237]

Education must align itself with this nature; it must not work against nature. Education is meant to develop what nature has given. The one instinct humans do possess is the instinct for freedom. In order to attain this freedom, humans must discipline themselves against

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[236] ———, "Lectures on Pedagogy," 9:441.
[237] Ibid., 9:444.

caprice and instead subject themselves to the commands of reason, thus becoming autonomous. Kant suggests, moreover, that since children are more disposed toward the animal, they are incapable of being moral agents, and must be educated through a kind of moral midwifery so they can develop into humans.[238]

Johannes Giesinger argues that there is a tension between Kant's views on morality and pedagogy since in order to recognize herself as a moral being, a person must also recognize herself as noumenal, yet the child cannot have this knowledge in the natural world, so it is unclear how education would bring about this recognition. However, part of this tension is resolved when we recognize that insofar as Kant does believe there is an instinct for freedom, the child feels some pull toward autonomy. It is worth noting, too, that in Kant's pedagogical writings, the community seems to take priority, but in his writings on morality and judgment, despite his appeals to the kingdom of ends or *sensus communis*, this more robust sense of intersubjectivity is replaced by the more formal sense of community as hypothetical participants. So, as the human becomes autonomous, she creates greater distance not only from her natural, i.e., animal, self, but also from others.

The difficulty of this account of development in the writings on morality, then, is not only that it maintains the picture of humans as rational animals, where the rational part divorces itself from the animal through development, but also that it precludes contributions from those who have not achieved this level, such as children. Despite this, Kant does provide us with a clearer sense of the process of development. As he says regarding a being's duty to increase his moral perfection, "It is a human beings duty to *strive* for this perfection, but not to *reach* it, (in this life), and his compliance with this duty can, accordingly, consist only in continual progress" (M 6:447). Although Kant's point hinges more on the fact that

[238] Johannes Giesinger, "Kant's Account of Moral Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2011).

perfection is impossible in this world, he is still correct in illustrating that to be an ethical subject is not a kind of achievement, but a continuous process. However, so long as the ethical subject is understood primarily in terms of agency, possibilities of vulnerability seem foreclosed, for this subject as agent is characterized by self-control and reason, rather than openness and responsiveness.

Schiller opens *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* with a few remarks on his indebtedness to Kantian principles, particularly those of Kant's practical philosophy and the relationship between morality and freedom.[239] In the Second Letter, Schiller explains his motivation as seeking to understand what place an account of political freedom and reason has in the current political climate of upheaval and tyranny (AE 7). Part of the problem, he suggests, is that people have become alienated from themselves. As alienated, they cannot be free. On the one hand, a person finds herself compelled by reason alone, marked by the form drive. On the other, she finds herself ruled by her feelings, marked by the sense drive. Without a harmony between these two, she remains at odds. Furthermore, this tension prevents her from developing into a moral person. Schiller asserts the necessity of a third dimension, namely the aesthetic, characterized by the play drive, that will enable a person to achieve a totality of character. Schiller thus claims that the move to political freedom must first be aesthetic, "because it is only through Beauty that man makes his way to Freedom" (AE 9). Thus while Schiller draws on Kant's characterizations of reason and freedom, Schiller seeks to give even greater prominence to the role of beauty and aesthetic than Kant did.

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[239] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). 3. Hereafter referenced parenthetically as AE.

Schiller suggests in the Fourteenth Letter that the play drive "will exert upon the psyche at once a moral and a physical constraint; it will, therefore, since it annuls all contingency, annul all constraint too, and set man free both physically and morally" (AE 97). Thus, the play drive is able to mediate between those drives that cannot otherwise combine. We find in Schiller an account similar to Kant's insofar as he, too, suggests education is unique to humans, particularly as it is an education away from the natural or animal dimension. Reginald Snell suggests there is a particular difficulty in Schiller's notion of education, namely that Schiller describes the progression of education in two somewhat conflicting ways. On the one hand he suggests that education, which is the cultivation of taste and appreciation of Beauty through play, synthesizes the sense drive, governed by the laws of nature, with the form drive, governed by the laws of reason. Education performs a harmonizing and emancipatory function insofar as the human is thus freed from both perpetual variation and perpetual stasis. Play provides the equilibrium between sense and form. This is also what leads Schiller to state that, "man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays" (AE 107). Thus it seems that a human being is only such when the natural and rational parts are in equilibrium, when they resonate together. The parts must be in harmony. On the other hand, Schiller suggests that rather than harmonizing nature and morality through beauty, humans instead progress from nature through beauty to morality and freedom. Schiller does remark that that the physical stage cannot simply be passed over, for then there would be no possibility for rational stage. Instead, the movement is much more one of sublimation. Thus while the stages are seen just as that, stages, the moments remain preserved in the progression.

Despite the apparent preservation of the physical and the aesthetic, Schiller seems to cash human freedom and perfection out almost exclusively in terms of rational and moral perfection. Indeed, the first step toward becoming human is to recognize oneself as something other than the world, as a subject over against objects. It is here that freedom arises as the human can give shape to her life, while animals or other objects cannot. As Schiller writes, "Man gives evidence of his freedom precisely by giving form to that which is formless" (AE 185). He gives shape to and becomes the lawgiver of nature. He continues, "Man is superior to every terror of Nature so long as he knows how to give form to it, and to turn it into his object" (AE 185). Thus Schiller understands giving form to one's life not as a comportment in and through one's concrete life, but as an exercise of domination and mastery over nature. Thus while it seems that Schiller makes some inroads by introducing the importance of play and aesthetic experience, his account cannot separate itself from a conceptualization of the human as a Cartesian, bifurcated subject.

Schiller seems to make no clear distinction between his different senses of freedom and occasionally he seems to equivocate among them. At times he suggests that freedom is the acquisition of reason through education, and thus a product of the human. Freedom in this sense is anything without constraint, such as the free play of the aesthetic. At other times, freedom is seen as made possible by nature as giving the law. Although the passage above suggests that while nature enables freedom, it is by turning nature into an object for humans that humans become free. Insofar as Schiller views aesthetic freedom as enabling political freedom, then it seems he must have in mind beyond the free play of ideas. Yet it remains unclear in his text how these senses of freedom do or do not hang together. What thus remains consistent in Schiller's description of freedom is that education is emancipatory, for aesthetic education, as the productive tension of the formal and the

sensual, the rational and the natural, is emancipatory. He writes, for example, "As soon as two opposing fundamental drives are active within him, both lose their compulsion, and the opposition of two necessities gives rise to freedom" (AE 137). Freedom, then, here means not the dissolution of either drive, but rather the preservation of the composite. As we will see, however, the parts of this composite are not equally weighted. Instead, Schiller shifts the balance almost entirely to reason and form.

Aesthetic Education

Although *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* [240] does not specifically treat ethics, we find in this text an articulation of the quickening of moral life resulting from the free play of the faculties of imagination and understanding in aesthetic experience. Here the imagination is productive, spontaneous, and free, although this freedom still bears a lawfulness since it remains connected to definite forms. Kant writes, "It is this feeling of freedom in the play of our cognitive powers, a play that yet must also be purposive, which underlies that pleasure which alone is universally commuciable although not based on concepts" (C3 5: 307). This play yields a feeling of freedom, which, according to Dennis Schmidt, is what allows anything like an ethical subject to appear at all.[241] This play is not frivolous, but productive and meaningful. Furthermore, our judgment of taste always maintains a playful "as if." We judge *as if* everyone would assent to our judgment. We must interpret nature *as if* nature has a higher meaning and intention (C3 5: 302). Furthermore, our judgment of fine art requires that we see it *as if* it were free from chosen rules *as if* it were a product of nature (C3 5: 306).

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[240] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Hereafter referenced parenthetically as C3.

[241] Dennis Schmidt, *Lyrical and Ethical Subjects: Esays on the Priphery of the Word, Freedom, and History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). 1.

For Kant, a judgment of taste is subjective, but still universal. What provides this universality is the idea that a judgment of taste requires the agreement of everyone. Since only cognition can be universally communicable, it is the free play of the cognitive powers and their harmony that holds for everyone. Thus play is bound up with the capacity of imagining oneself as connected to something greater. In Kant's own language, this is the sensus communis: "a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (a priori) of everyone else's way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole" (C3 5: 293). This appeal to community is flawed since the relation to the community is only ever imagined, so it remains only at the level of the subject and her cognitive faculties. What is important, however, is Kant's acknowledgement that we must still recognize that which is other and which exceeds us.

As we saw, the presentations of the imagination exceed language and concept, but what's more, this movement of the free play is able to "quicken [*beleben*] the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations" (C3 5: 315). Furthermore, the spirit animates [*beleben*] the mental powers. As Rudolf Makkreel explains, "[Spirit] is not merely lively or playful, but enlivening in a creative way."[242] Thus aesthetic experience is enlivening; as creative it exceeds and intensifies, through this play of freedom and finitude, what the subject was before. Dennis Schmidt explains further that "At that point in the disclosure of the finitude of experience, Kant says that a sudden transformation takes place in the subject and that this experience of alterity, which is not the representation of otherness but the disclosure of alterity *in* and *as* one's own limits, imparts an alteration that is the 'quickening' of an ethical sense."[243] Schmidt locates this alterity as the subject's own, as one experiences her finitude and her limits, but it seems that recognition of others is also

[242] Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*: 99.
[243] Schmidt, *Lyrical and Ethical Subjects: Esays on the Priphery of the Word, Freedom, and History*: 17.

already implicit in the recognition of one's own alterity. Schmidt perhaps suggests more than Kant tells us, especially since for Kant the feeling of freedom and enlivening remain primarily on the level of mental life, yet the fact remains that in this text Kant locates key features of ethical life, namely the incalculability and the motivation of feeling that result from play. Unfortunately, however, Kant denies any cognitive import of play and leaves it as a merely subjective experience. Kant thus provides us with a good starting place in considering the relationship between play and ethics, particularly as play marks this feeling of life and is, as Makkreel, suggests, fundamentally responsive and interpretive.[244] However, Kant does not quite go far enough for play remains at the level of the subjective and cannot be seen as a substantive mode of understanding and being in the world.

Schiller follows Kant's discussions of play and freedom, especially in relation to beauty:

> But how can we speak of mere play, when we know that it is play and paly alone, which of all man's states and conditions is the one which makes him whole and unfolds both sides of his nature at once?...I, therefore, would prefer to put it exactly the opposite way round and say: the agreeable, the good, the perfect, with these man is merely in earnest; but with beauty he plays…Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays (AE 105-107).

The object of play is in fact Beauty, and it is here that Schiller draws the connection between the aesthetic and play. Beauty, like play, mediates between the distinct elements of a person since she contains elements of both. Thus it seems that Beauty does not prioritize form over matter, but seeks the harmony of these two distinct realms. This allows for sensuousness and reason to be active at the same time and thus achieve aesthetic determinacy that avoids the pitfalls of negative sheer indeterminacy or negative sheer determinacy. Still, however, Beauty remains much more closely aligned with form than content. Schiller writes, "In a truly

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[244] Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*: 94.

successful [*schönen*] work of art the contents should effect nothing, the form everything; for only through the form is the whole man affected, through the subject-matter, by contrast, only one or other of his functions [*Kräfte*]," (AE 155) or similarly put, "here resides the real secret of the master in any art: that he can make his form consume his material [*dass er den Stoff durch die Form vertilgt*" (AE 157). Thus although Beauty is supposed to achieve a harmony between form and content, it is achieved and motivates through form alone. The reason for this, according to Schiller, is that beauty is equated with freedom and freedom can never have sensual expression.

Schiller speaks, too, of the way in which such experiences of awaken us. For example, Schiller claims that we may "call beauty our second creatress [*Schöpferin*]. For although it only offers us the possibility of becoming human beings,...it does in this resemble our first creatress, Nature, which likelywise conferred on us nothing more than the power of becoming human, leaving the use and practice of that power to our own free will and decision" (AE 147-9). Schiller thus identifies beauty and nature alike as providing the capacity or condition for humanity. In his "Kallias" letter to Christian Gottfried Körner, Schiller more clearly articulates that freedom is the ground of beauty as the possibility for sensuous expression and freedom prescribes its own limits. This has some practical effect insofar as beauty is the symbol for how one ought to be: "For this reason, the realm of taste is a realm of freedom--the beautiful world of sense is the happiest symbol, of how the moral one shall be, and every beautiful natural being outside of me is a happy citizen, who calls out to me: Be free as I."[245] In this passage, Schiller seems to be suggesting that the aesthetic and the natural share the project of orienting the human toward moral freedom. This orientation is, moreover, made possible through the symbol. It seems here that Schiller is drawing on

[245] Friedrich Schiller, "'Kallias, or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner' (1793)," in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 143.

Kant's discussing of beauty as symbol of morality in §59 of *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant claims that beauty gives the law to itself and pleases without concept. Indeed, in discussing artfulness in relation to Kant in a later letter, Schiller writes, "the beautiful is merely a symbol of the completed and perfect, because it does not, as does the purposeful, require anything outside of itself, but commands and obeys itself for the sake of its own law."[246] He describes the beautiful moreover as that which "can thus not be recognized, but must be brought out – or *felt*."[247] Thus more than reason alone in the move toward morality, there remains a dimension that is primarily *felt*. There is a feeling of freedom, as well as a feeling of connection to those other citizens, natural and human, of the world, and ultimately, a feeling of life.

Prefiguring in a way Nietzsche's work on the will to power as art,[248] Schiller speaks of the feeling of life that occurs in experiences of art. He writes, "This lofty equanimity and freedom in the spirit, combined with power and vigor, is the mood in which a genuine work of art should release us, and there is no more certain touchstone of true aesthetic excellence" (AE 153). Similarly, he writes, "If…we have surrendered to the enjoyment of genuine beauty, we are at such a moment master in equal degree of our passive and of our active powers, and we shall with equal ease turn to seriousness or to play, to repose or to movement, to compliance or to resistance, to the discursions of abstract thought or to the direct contemplation of phenomena" (AE 153). Although here Schiller speaks of surrendering to beauty, of an opening of oneself to what surpasses and transforms, this vulnerability very quickly turns to a form of self-mastery and seems to have its resolution in reason, as mastery or domination over. This is even more the case as Schiller claims that

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[246] Ibid., 167.

[247] Ibid., 143.

[248] It is, however, precisely that emphasis on genuine Beauty, of the dominance of form over matter and the subjectivization of art, that prompts Nietzsche to distance himself from Schiller.

genuine Beauty and truly beautiful works of art are so because of form, not because of content, "for only through the form is the whole man affected" (AE 155). Indeed, the artist is the one who "can make his form consume his material" (AE 157). The triumph of form over matter may seem especially odd given Schiller's insistence on the aesthetic as the balance between matter and form, but if we recall that Schiller also sees the aesthetic as leading to the perfection of humanity and a possible future state, this makes more sense for two reasons. First, if we are concerned with the perfection of humanity and not merely the perfection of the individual, then what leads to this perfection must be universal. Matter or the sensuous cannot be universal, so it is form that speaks to all. Second, according to Schiller, beauty is equated with freedom and freedom can never have sensuous expression.

Again, Schiller believes that a person cannot become rational without first being aesthetic, which is why aesthetic education is so important, but it seems that the priority given to the aesthetic is quickly usurped by the rational. Schiller identifies beauty and nature alike as providing the capacity or condition for humanity, although it seems that while nature is a necessary condition, beauty is more a necessary and sufficient condition of moving humans toward reason. Nature is thus always prior to beauty, and beauty establishes distance between humans and their nature. Here again we have the idea that it is the mediating aspect of the aesthetic that allows for the necessary harmony between freedom and nature. Mihai Spariosu explains, "The play-drive occupies the same middle position in Schiller that the aesthetic judgment does in Kant, and for the same reason: while it is itself devoid of any cognitive value, it nevertheless helps Reason mediate between the realm of the concept of freedom and that of the concept of freedom."[249] Against Spariosu, I would say that while aesthetic judgment does not have any direct cognitive content, it does have cognitive value,

[249] Spariosu, *Dionysus Reborn: Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse*: 55.

for it does expand our thinking and enliven the imagination. For Kant and Schiller both, while play is not strictly creative, it does turn us to creativity. Aesthetic experiences bring with them the feeling of life, and thus a feeling of the ethical.

Schiller differs from Kant in that the work of play and the role of art are not secondary to science. He writes, "Man in his physical state merely suffers the dominion of nature; he emancipates himself from this dominion in the aesthetic state, and he acquires mastery over it in himself' (AE 171). Thus rather than receiving the law from Nature, Man becomes able to be the lawgiver: "Man gives evidence of his freedom precisely by giving form to that which is formless" (AE 185). Thus while it seems that Schiller surpasses Kant by insisting on a greater priority of play and the connection between play and freedom, nonetheless, his understanding of play suggests play is almost exclusively at the service of reason. Furthermore, there seems to be lacking any genuine sense of community aside from the state. Although I agree that reason and imagination are necessary for ethical life, my concern is that neither Kant nor Schiller admit the possibility of knowledge in play or of play and aesthetic education that is robustly transformative.

What is particularly striking about Schiller's text is how infrequently any reference to education actually appears. Indeed, any mention of *Erziehung* or *Bildung* appears fewer than a handful of times. In what then is an aesthetic education supposed to consist? On the one hand, it seems that aesthetic education is equated with unmediated aesthetic experience. That is, through aesthetic experience, we experience beauty, and thus a feeling of freedom, and are prompted to become rational and moral. Still, if education consists in something that is devoid of cognitive content, then this makes for a particularly paltry education. On the other hand, Schiller suggests something a bit more radical, namely that aesthetic education is self-education through a particular stance in the world. Education here is a self-cultivation

through a harmonizing of and attunement to our different drives, of giving shape to our lives. In this way, education becomes further concretized and substantial. He recognizes, too, that the cultivation of reason and morality is nigh impossible when a society prevents those very things from being developed. He writes, "the way to the head must be opened through the heart. The development of man's capacity for feeling is, therefore, the more urgent need of our age, not merely because it can be a means of making better insights effective for living, but precisely because it provides the impulse for bettering our insights" (AE 53). Although Schiller recognizes that we cannot flourish by reason alone, his alternative does not move beyond mere feeling and subjective experience. By insisting that education is a matter of training of sensibility, he robs education of substantial content, of a meaningful way of being in the world, being with others, and of transforming life. Furthermore, this cultivation of taste remains a fundamentally independent project. There is very little said about engaging with others or participating in such political communities. So long as education is understood as a matter of taste and self-mastery of a fairly Cartesian subject, then there remains little space of responsibility and vulnerability. Although such education is of subjective feelings, because these feelings are at the service of reason, cultivation leads to an almost exclusively intellectual pursuit. Our purpose here is not to jettison the role of feeling, but to substantiate it by demonstrating that feeling is not merely on the way to reason. What we find in Kant and Schiller is freedom as, in a way, freedom from the human condition, whereas Heidegger, Gadamer, and Fink see freedom as the condition of humanity. That is to say, that although while Kant and Schiller locate freedom through education and formation in the (near) perfection of human being the latter locate it in being human, in the capacity for engaging the world in meaningful ways, which occurs through self-formation.

The Playspace of Education

Kant and Schiller point us in the right direction by suggesting the role of the *sensus communis* and tradition in education. The difficulty, though, is that there is a tendency in these accounts to gesture toward hypothetical rather than actual relationships. We need a way to understand how the other is central to education. Nicholas Davey explains that the fundamental way we encounter others is through conversation, but this conversation is not just persons alternatively stating facts into the distance. Conversation is instead a matter of holding open a tension as two things come together, such that "In conversation and exchange, then, difficulty, distance, risk, and vulnerability are of the essence."[250] What is essential to ethical development, to the realization that we are not self-contained, is the space that is opened up with and through our recognition of others. This recognition is not merely the awareness that others exist or the recognition we experience, for example, when recognizing the monument that stands before us is the same we've seen in history texts, but is instead a recognition that is also a preservation. This is to say that the recognition of alterity preserves and holds the other in her otherness, not like a specimen to be examined, but in a way that enables a spanning of this distance and difference. This difference with the other might also be disruptive for our own sense of self, since it frequently challenges our self-understanding and points to the question that we remain for ourselves. This reminds us again that we are not finished projects, but participants in meaning and transformation.

As Davey indicates, the space created and preserved in our relation to others is complicated, and at times difficult and disruptive. The playspaces described by Kant and Schiller, however, seem rather two-dimensional and lacking much friction. In contrast, I think we must think of this space as very much textured. These expansions of meaning do

[250] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 242.

not happen without impediment or without some attention to the environment. Indeed, the contours of theses spaces demand our responsibility. One might think of the *Stolpersteine* placed by artist Gunter Demnig in many European cities.[251] The brass blocks, marked with "Hier wohnt…" followed by the name, age, and dates of deportation and murder (not merely death) of a victim of the Holocaust, are meant to serve as modes of preserving the name, and thus existence, of those victims. The blocks are meant to cause passersby to stumble, physically and intellectually, to recall what happened in that space. The blocks demand some sort of responsibility. The pedestrian might recall the horrors of the Holocaust and be troubled by rising anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-Semitism in the city. The cyclist might navigate her bike around the patch of brass, knowing the blocks are slippery in the rain. The blocks can be ignored or go unnoticed, but these, too, are responses elicited by the stones. There remains something that resists a covering over and yet, by the very sparseness of information on the stone, also resists treating the memory of that person as a specimen or mere fact of history. We are prompted to imagine where this person lived, what his relation to the others was, what profession she had. They remind us of our responsibilities, of history and context, and that the space of our responsibility is, at times quite literally, textured and fraught. By seeing the space of ethics as textured, we also recall the textual dimension of this space, which is to say that this space is shot through with meaning. In this way, we might also think of this space as more of a place, or *topos*. This is the insight yielded by an understanding of ethics as *êthos*, namely that ethical life concerns being in the world and with others not in any generic way, but in the way that we develop out of the world and can understand ourselves in our dwelling.

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[251] Gunter Demnig, "Stolpersteine," http://www.stolpersteine.eu/. Cf. Joseph Pearson to The Needle, November 12, 2010, http://needleberlin.com/2010/08/23/nazi-victims-and-stumbling-blocks-to-memory/.

The contribution play in particular makes to an account of ethics is that it enables us to see how fundamental relationships, vulnerability, creativity, and incalculability are to ethical life and the development of an ethical subject. Furthermore, as marked by its opening up in space, play draws our attention to the way in which these elements also occur within and open up spaces, often in playful ways. This, too, is what Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer tell us. It is not enough to think of morality only as the following particular rules, though one might well invoke principles, but rather of finding oneself situated in a particular space and time. Furthermore, despite the specificity that belongs to such conditionedness, there remains a fundamentally ambiguous element to that existence. That is to say, both despite and through the particularity of life, there remains an incalculability to life; there remains something that evades any attempt to grasp it, and indeed we are mistaken if we do try to grasp it. We see this in the way that being at home prompts feelings of homelessness or how the greatest intimacy requires the preservation of distance. This ambiguity does not render us paralyzed by its indeterminacy, but transforms us in our experience of what surpasses us.

II. Play, Poetry, and *Paideia*

Heidegger, Fink, and Gadamer each introduce discussions of ethics within larger discussions of education. I suggest this is not accidental, for each insists the ethical self is constantly developing and not merely something that is achieved. What distinguishes the accounts of education of Fink, Heidegger, and Gadamer from those discussed above is that what is at stake in education is neither the attainment of knowledge, although this is an element, nor a form of self-mastery. Rather what is at stake is self-cultivation that develops out of the person and is oriented toward the world and others. Moreover, these three thinkers also establish parallels between the approaches of contemporary pedagogy, which they argue embraces the scientistic mindset that pits theory against practice and prizes

mastery, and moral theory, which place humans as rational animals at the center, such that both pedagogy and ethical theory champion an adult, rational, autonomous agent. In the following I aim to show we should follow Fink, Heidegger, and Gadamer in seeing education and cultivation as fundamentally poetic. On such an account, education is not concerned so much with matters of correct knowledge, but is rather itself a mode of being in the world and a mode of freedom. This returns us to the understanding of freedom advanced in the first chapter, namely that freedom is characterized by a comportment to the world and a responsibility both to the self and to others. To be educated, *gebildet*, is to have a comportment of responsibility to others and the world. Thus the development of the person through education is understood as a deepening and broadening of meaning and relationships characterized by openness and vulnerability. Furthermore, while education is always self-education, as Gadamer explains, this education is fundamentally communal and is best characterized not merely as a teacher-learner dynamic, but as a form of friendship and conversation.

Development as Physis

Fink draws on Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" in is text, *Natur, Freiheit, Welt* based on a lecture course at Freiburg in the Winter Semester 1951/52. At first glance, it might seem odd that the text is in fact a treatise on contemporary pedagogy and the German higher education system, for it seems unlikely that an account of educational institutions would have very much to do with ethics. Fink sees pedagogy, and more importantly upbringing,[252] as inextricably connected to nature, the world, and freedom. Pedagogy, as the

[252] The German here is *Erziehung*, which has a variety of different connotations including education, upbringing, parenting, and breeding. I am choosing to translate it as upbringing to distinguish it from both *Bildung* and *Pädagogik*, which entail a more formal sense of education, and to emphasize both the natural and social dimension that Fink associates with the word. *Bildung*, as Gadamer understands it, is not especially

science of education, has to do with what humanity is and how it should be. Since humans are, according to Fink, world-beings, i.e. *ens cosmologicum*, pedagogy must also give an account of being in the world as well as a being's relationship to itself. Fink's concern, like Heidegger's in the "Letter on Humanism", is that while pedagogy and humanism do provide many different accounts or images of the human, we have lost sight of what the human actually is. The primary reason for pedagogy's shortcoming is its insistence on becoming a science of children or education rather than seeing itself as a philosophical practice. By practice, Fink intends the sense of *praxis* wherein theory and practice are not opposed, but where thinking itself is a kind of practice. Too often pedagogy sees itself rather as a kind of *technē*, thus as concerned with bringing about some sort of product, namely the educated individual, rather than a kind of *praxis*, where the behavior has itself as its goal. Gesturing also to *euboulia*, sound judgment, Fink hearkens back Aristotle in establishing a connection between education or upbringing and *phronēsis*.

As a science pedagogy is "technic, is a mode of oppressive action against the being, which it does not leave what and how it is, rather it reifies, constrains under certain specifications. Upbringing, as the technical science of upbringing, amputates human being precisely where religion and philosophy occur in it, that is, at the living questions of meaning in it" (NFW 27).[253] The science of education and upbringing attempts to assert its independence and self-sufficiency as a science, but in so doing, it removes the possibility of accounting for those things that provide any meaning. In this way, Fink sees contemporary pedagogy as fundamentally nihilistic. Furthermore, contemporary pedagogy hinges on a

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different from Fink's account of *Erziehung*, although Gadamer does not emphasize the natural dimension, i.e. relation between *Erziehung* and *physis* as much.

[253] "…Technik, ist eine Weise des gewaltsamen Vorgehens gegen das Seiende, welches es nicht läßt, was und wie es ist, sondern es vergegenständlicht, unter bestimmte Bedingungen zwingt. Erziehung als Erziehungswissenschaft amputiert das menschliche Dasein gerade um die in ihm geschehende Religion und Philosophie, d.h. um di in ihm lebendige Sinnfrage."

distinction between the theoretical and the practical. True pedagogy, that is, pedagogy that understands itself as a practice and as philosophy, cannot be a science: "Pedagogy is greater than every science, not in the formal sense of an identifiable hierarchy; it is greater because it is a mode of the movement of human freedom" (NFW 40).[254] Science, which can deal only in particulars and decisions, has no space for this movement of freedom. Pedagogy, on the other hand, must concern itself with the understanding of the world if it is to avoid nihilism. In this sense, then, upbringing and philosophy stand in a mutual relationship. Not only can we have a philosophical upbringing, but we are also brought up, educated, through philosophizing, as Plato suggests in the coupling of philosophy and *paideia*.[255] Fink insists that not only must pedagogy be rooted in philosophy, but also that philosophy must itself be rooted in the world.

The upshot of Fink's analysis is evident when we consider the moral dimension of upbringing. As he states, "All upbringing moves itself in the space of customs (*Sitte*)," (NFW 60)[256] such that all upbringing has to do with morality. For Fink, no longer can we consider morality as something conceivable apart from the world. Looking back to the Greeks, he argues that they did not make such a distinction. Fink writes, "The 'moral' means, according to Plato, not a mere human concern, any figuration of human things, but rather ultimately a *cosmic fate*" (NFW 62).[257] Morality involves a response, an orientation toward the world, the cosmos. When philosophy begins to conceive of the human as a rational animal, which Fink

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[254] "Pädagogik ist mehr als jede Wissenschaft, nicht im äußerlichen Sinne eines feststellbaren Rangverhältnisses; sie ist mehr, wel sie eine Weise der Bewegung der menschlichen Freiheit ist."

[255] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 293. This is especially articulated in the *Republic*: "As youths and children, they should put their minds to youthful education [*paideia*] and philosophy and take care of their bodies at a time when they are growing into manhood, so as to acquire a helper for philosophy." Plato, "Republic," in *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 498b1-3.

[256] "Alle Erziehung bewegt sich im Raum der Sitte."

[257] "Das 'Sittliche' bedeutet bei Platon also nicht eine bloß menschliche Angelegenheit, irgendeine Gestaltung der menschlichen Dinge, sondern letztlich eine *kosmische Fügung*.

deems a 'centaur', this relationship to the world is lost. The human half, which is the rational half, is the side associated with morality, particularly since morality is associated with rational autonomy and so goes beyond merely acting on animal desires. The animal half is associated with impulses, urges, and basic desires. Thus to become a fully moral person is to seek to rid one's self of the animal component, to rid one's self of the relation to nature. Nature is neutralized. While Fink's criticisms are aimed at the whole history of Western metaphysics, he targets Kant in particular. Fink's relation to Kant is complicated, as he praises Kant for returning philosophy to questions of the world, but he is also extremely wary of Kant's subjectivisim and is concerned that Kant's emphasis on reason deemphasizes the human as a conditioned world being. However, Kant's position is not necessarily as extreme as all that. For example, Kant speaks in the *Anthropology* of how the physical and the moral must be joined, harmonized, in proportion to one another. He recognizes, moreover, that this harmony has its locus in social relations.[258] Fink's concern is that Kant sees the two dimensions as requiring harmony, and thus as separate, and so tends toward the human as centaur. For Fink, however, the human is necessarily already whole as a cosmologic being. This does not mean that the human is simply a homogenous admixture. The human is multidimensional and those dimensions need development, to be sure.

For Fink, then, to separate the human from nature and the world is to get rid of the human. Humans are world beings, so to develop ethically is to understand one's self in relation to the world. Rather than *animal rationale*, the human is *ens cosmologicum*, a cosmological or world being. As he explains,

> Ethics is fundamentally grounded in physics. This grounding means neither a foundational coherence of moral phenomena in neutral facts of nature, nor a

[258] He suggests, for example, that "There is no situation in which sensibility and understanding unite in one enjoyment that can be continued as long and repeated with satisfaction as often as a good meal in good company." Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," 7:242.

> biologistic naturalism, nor the analysis of morality as a type of sublimation, e.g. as the blocking and perversion of drives – or as the reflex of masked instinctual tendencies. Ethics is grounded in physics, because human being relates itself to *physis*, to being in totality. (NFW 64).[259]

The reason for this is because the human is a world being. To understand one's self as a world being is to understand one's particular place in the world. Here Fink traces *Sitte* to *Sitz* or *Wohnsitz*, meaning that morality concerns how one lives and dwells in the world: "…humanity determines itself as a whole in the way, like the human in the totality of being, dwells in the world. Such dwelling we deem '*Sitte*'" (NFW 69). Again, this also points to the relationship between morality and the community, as *Sitte*[260] suggests both customs and morals. To relate oneself to the world is to relate to others.[261] Furthermore, ethics is grounded in physics, for physics, understood as *physis*, is also self-development in the sense that the ethical subject develops out of herself. This is echoed in Gadamer's essay, "Education is Self-Education" where he suggests that education is always self-education or self-cultivation. Educators do not bestow knowledge upon us. Instead, we each try out new things that we do not yet fully understand, we learn language and form communicative relationships, and, perhaps most basically, we find ourselves in the world. Thus ethics, as self-development, is not a matter of norms and rules being bestowed on an individual, but is instead the subject's self-development.

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[259] "Die Ethik gründet wesentlich in der Physik. Deise 'Gründung' bedeutet keinen Fundierungszusammenhang moralischer Phänomene in neutralen Naturtatsachen, bedeutet keinen biologistischen Naturalismus, nicht die Deutung der Moral al seiner Art von 'Sublimierung', z.B. als Triebstauung und Triebperversion—oder als Reflex gar maskierter Triebtendenzen. Die Ethik gründet in der Physik, weil menschlices Dasein sich zur *physis*, zum Seienden im Ganzen verhält."

[260] Fink draws quite heavily on Hegel, particularly in this turn toward *Sittlichkeit*. He sees in Hegel a move toward the power of the earth and realms of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), particularly in Hegel's discussions of the tragic. Although wary of the tendency in German idealism to reduce everything to spirit, he also credits Hegel with returning to a conception of the human as a world being and seeing ethical life as a world form of humanity, but only as consciousness (NFW 63).

[261] Homan, "The Play of Ethics in Eugen Fink," 294.

Bildung

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer devotes significant attention to *Bildung*, which he understands as cultivation or education. Like Fink, Gadamer identifies a particular nihilism as belonging to education modeled on the natural sciences. He explains that science attempts to achieve certainty by organizing its knowledge of the world, rejecting any knowledge or methodology that does not achieve this certainty. Such a universalization of method or achievement of absolute certainty is untenable. This is particularly nihilistic for it rejects any sort of received or encountered meaning for a fictional meaning-in-itself. Furthermore, as Nicholas Davey explains, methodological invincibility is dehumanizing for it fails to confront what it is to be human.[262] By this Davey means that methodological invincibility rejects not only that fallibility belongs to being human, but also the very capacities for relationality, meaning, and tradition that give rise to understanding. He writes that Gadamer responds to this dehumanization in his discussion of *Bildung*. Gadamer "invokes the term *Bildung* for a strategic purpose: to demonstrate that alongside scientific and technical knowledge there exists another body of knowledge that is not the result of proof and demonstration but is laid down by tradition, received wisdom, and practical experience."[263] *Bildung* thus points to the other half of the truth that is missing from the account given by modern thinking. It reminds us that "the molding of our consciousness really does not take place through the methods of modern science" (GP 273) but through participation in social life and practice.

Bildung is cultivation, but more in the sense of self-transformation and self-formation. This transformation is done by the self, but in response to the world and others. Gadamer, quoting Herder, remarks that *Bildung* is "the rising up to humanity through culture" (TM 10). *Bildung* is thus always a movement between the individual and the

[262] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 22.
[263] Ibid., 41.

community. As Gadamer explains in *Truth and Method*, "It is not accidental that in this respect the word *Bildung* resembles the Greek *physis*. Like nature, *Bildung* has no goals outside itself" (TM 10). Like Fink, Gadamer suggests that education is not a rejection of the animal through the perfection of the human, but is rather the cultivation of the self out of the self. Thus Gadamer resists the idea that through education we become human through an overcoming of the animal by instead suggesting that we become more ourselves. Here Gadamer appeals to Hegel's account of *Bildung* as the development and formation of the self. Gadamer also draws significantly on Hegel's account of the speculative and being in language. Furthermore, for Hegel, the cultivation of the self avoids self-alienation as it is a movement of remaining open to what is other while having this cultivation as its goal.[264]To suggest that *Bildung* has no goal outside of itself is to suggest that *Bildung* is not rendered complete by a particular achievement, but that cultivation is itself a goal. There is something autotelic, too, about education. What is significant here, however, is that while education does has itself as its goal, it is not autotelic in the sense of being fully self-contained or of being separable from the rest of life. Like play, *Bildung* is itself its own goal as it develops out of itself.

As Gadamer further explains, there belongs to *Bildung* a kind of appropriation. He continues, "In Bildung…that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own…In acquired Bildung, nothing disappears, but everything is preserved" (TM 10). In Bildung, what is gained is my own. It would not be false to hear something like Heidegger's description of *Ereignis* here. *Bildung* understood as *Ereignis*, as en-ownment or appropriation, reminds us of the eventual nature of education. That is to say,

[264] Hegel is perhaps Gadamer's primary resource in his analysis of *Bildung*, although insofar as Hegel suggests that *Bildung* is the movement of the immediate and natural to the rational and universal, it seems he's still holding on to the picture of the human as rational animal.

Bildung as *Ereignis* shows that education remains unfinished. This is not to say that education is thus rendered meaningless or appears like some Sisyphean task. Instead, this is to say that the event is something that endures, that something that increases in meaning and transforms. It calls us anew to respond to it. This is evident by how education is a historical event, an event of tradition. Tradition and culture are not static, monolithic entities, but processes of handing over (*Überlieferung*) and, as Gadamer would state, historically effected consciousness (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). In education, we develop out of ourselves and are transformed. Our understanding increases and is ever more meaningful, but there is no final interpretation or understanding to which we can appeal. As such, there remains something beyond us, something fundamentally other.

Gadamer writes that the general characteristic of *Bildung* is "keeping oneself open to what is other" (TM 15) in that we recognize the particular limits of our viewpoints, yet also recognize something familiar in that other. For Gadamer, the individual finds herself in a culture, but she cannot merely be absorbed into it. Instead, she must learn how to relate to it and make it her own by remaining open to what is other. He explains, "In Bildung…that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own…In acquired Bildung, nothing disappears, but everything is preserved" (TM 10). The parallels between *Bildung* and play crystallize especially here. Sean Gallagher, for example, suggests that play is always oriented toward the world, wherein "The possibility of losing oneself or transcending oneself in play is attractive or alluring only because of the possibility of finding oneself again…Play is productive for the self rather than destructive."[265] In this way, the movement of *Bildung* is indeed the movement of play as the possibility of self-appropriation and openness, and thus also a movement of freedom.

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[265] Sean Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). 50.

This, Gadamer describes, is the movement between alienation and return to the self. In "Education is Self-Education" Gadamer provides a personal example to make this point:

> I had to [swaddle my daughter] myself on one occasion and in my wife's view – certainly she was right – what I had contrived was quite frankly a kind of straitjacket. But consider this, the child beamed and then fell asleep. So it is with communication, about which we still have no inkling, but which still accompanies this process of feeling at home, which I cannot emphasize strongly enough as the key idea of any kind of education (*Erziehung*) or cultivation (*Bildung*).[266]

In Gadamer's story, the unease and subsequent feeling at home is experienced by him as well as his daughter. She finds herself flailing about, anxious in a new situation, and yet as she becomes wrapped tightly, both literally by the blanket and metaphorically by the surrounding world, she settles down. Like being in a straitjacket, there is no escaping that surrounding world, yet this restriction is not suffocating but calming. Gadamer seems to have no idea how to swaddle a baby, yet soon finds himself at home as well. His straitjacketing of her is more of an embrace than a kind of tying down or violent force against her. Furthermore, Gadamer sees this as mirrored in communication.

We belong to the world and with others through language, but never in a totalizing, definitional way. Rather, to communicate is to develop into a relation with what is other through the speculative element of language, that is, through never coming to a final word or end of the conversation. *Bildung* enables us to preserve what is other so that we neither master nor ignore it. To be *gebildelt* is to be at home in the world.[267]

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[266] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Education is Self-Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35, no. 4 (2001): 531.

[267] Gadamer seems in general less explicitly disturbed than Heidegger by being at home in the world, which has prompted a number of critics to suggest that he is overly conservative or that his understanding of tradition overdetermines members of that tradition. It would be incorrect, however, to think that Gadamer conceives of being at home in the world as without disruption or anxiety. Indeed, because there is no final interpretation of the self, no final viewpoint, there could be no being at home that would not also be a feeling of homelessness. Thus to be at home in the world is always already to have this sense of the uncanny. So when we hear Gadamer speak of being at home, we should also hear this homelessness.

The parallels between *Bildung* and play crystallize especially here. Sean Gallagher, for example, suggests that play is always oriented toward the world, wherein "The possibility of losing oneself or transcending oneself in play is attractive or alluring only because of the possibility of finding oneself again…Play is productive for the self rather than destructive."[268] In this way, the movement of *Bildung* is indeed the movement of play as the possibility of self-appropriation and openness, and thus also a movement of freedom. In *Bildung*, as in play, we are able to return to a transformed version of ourselves, to which we have a particular responsibility.

Poetic Education

Poetic—as opposed to aesthetic—education is rooted in an orientation of the self rather than the refinement of subjective feelings. To speak of this poetic stance toward the world is to resist the idea of a cultivation of subjective feelings. In the account of poetic education that I provide below, what is essential to poetic education is the cultivation of an active relating to limits, whether it be as a recognition and preservation of the other, the inarticulable, or our own finitude. For it is the direction of the self toward the limits that supplies meaning and also freedom, for it is through the experience of limits and our capacity to respond to them that we have the freedom to do otherwise. What art teaches us, then, is how to remain open to what stands before and beyond us and to preserve what is other. Furthermore, art teaches us what it is to be ourselves.

Gadamer suggests in "The Relevance of the Beautiful" that we understand the play of art as movement, and as such, a phenomenon of excess. This excess occurs in two ways. On the one hand, the work, in this movement, is never fixed or static. The work cannot be captured through conceptualization. On the other hand, this play has a leeway, a playspace,

[268] Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education*: 50.

for the spectator to participate, to be transformed through the experience. In his essay, "The Play of Art", Gadamer remarks that "'Art' begins precisely there, where we are able to do otherwise" (PA 125). As this possibility to do otherwise, art is a moment of freedom. The work of art presents us with a world that both is and is not our own. Because we are able to engage the work, to participate in the playspace opened up by it, we have the possibility of doing otherwise.

This freedom, however, is not because art releases us from the everyday or provides some sort of escape. Freedom enters in precisely there where we have a responsibility to the artwork. The work of art addresses us and provides us with a task, which is, at the very least, simply to take seriously what presents itself to us, to listen to what speaks to us. Gadamer speaks of this as the player being absorbed into the play. He distances himself even more from Kant by declaring that play has primacy over the players, such that play is not contingent on the players' mental activities. This does not mean, however, that the player is dissolved in the play, but rather that the play is for no other purpose and the player such only insofar as she plays. Just as play and players are mutually constitutive, so is art and the spectator: "[The work] is not simply what it is, but rather something that it is not – not something we can simply use for a particular purpose, nor a material thing from which we might fabricate some other thing. On the contrary, it is something that only manifests and displays itself when it is constituted in the viewer" (PA 126). Neither is this participation fixed or calculable.

What is significant about Gadamer's account is that through our participation with the work, we catch sight of ourselves in new and different ways, and it is this that allows the experience of art to be so singularly transformative. The play of art for Gadamer is ultimately mimetic. Here he does not mean that art is a matter of copying or imitation; rather the play

of art always involves self-recognition. He writes, "For imitation enables us to see more than so-called reality. What is shown is, so to speak, elicited from the flux of manifold reality" (PA 129). We recognize that the artwork shows us something as it presents itself to us. It provides us the possibility to imagine the experiences of others, not only through the work's content, but also through the work's historicity. Because there remains the leeway for our participation, what is shown in the attunement and play with the work is also ourselves. We catch sight of ourselves through the superabundance of the work by holding open what is other and what surpasses us. Furthermore, this presentation marks a transformation: "It is a kind of transformed reality in which the transformation points back to what has been transformed in and through it. It is a transformed reality because it brings before us intensified possibilities never seen before."[269] Similarly, he writes, "The play of art is a mirror that through the centuries constantly arises anew, and in which we catch sight of ourselves in a way that is often unexpected or unfamiliar: what we are, what we might be, and what we are about" (PA 130). Thus art for Gadamer is fundamentally transformative. It demands that we take this transformation into account. At the end of "The Play of Art", Gadamer references Nietzsche when he writes,

> Insistence on the opposition between life and art is tied to the experience of an alienated world. And failure to recognize the universal scope and ontological dignity of play produces an abstraction that blinds us to the interdependence of both. Play is less the opposite of seriousness than the vital ground of spirit as nature, a form of restraint and freedom at one and the same time. It is precisely because what we encounter in the creative forms of art is not merely the freedom of caprice or of the blind superabundance of nature, that their play is capable of penetrating all the dimensions of our social life…. For these our forms of play are forms of our freedom (PA 130).

For Gadamer, then, the freedom of play has important consequences for our daily lives. Indeed, he references Rilke in saying that the work of art commands us, "You must change

[269] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Festive Character of Theater," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64.

your life" (RB 34). That is, if we stand before the work and participate in it, we, in some sense, have no choice but to allow ourselves to be transformed.

Although Gadamer largely distances himself from Dilthey and resists Dilthey's conception of lived experience, *Erlebnis*, in favor of experience as *Erfahrung*, Dilthey does provide an apt description of the experience of art, particularly poetry, and the feeling of life it awakens. He writes, "This *to and fro of life at its fullest*, of perception enlivened and saturated by feeling, and the feeling of life shining forth in the clarity of an image: that is the essential characteristic of the content of all poetry [emphasis added]."[270] This to and fro of life, which is itself a movement of play, shines forth in the poem. Dilthey's focus here is on the creation of poetry by the poet, so he focuses primarily on the way in which the poet, in a vital mood, brings lived experience into relation with other lived experiences and meaning. Importantly, "lived experience can never be reduced to thoughts or ideas."[271] Lived experience cannot dwell at the level of the concept. Poetry, as the articulation of lived experience, thus also cannot. Poetry fills the reader with the feeling of life and with vigor and intensity and allows for a way to encounter and appreciate life and the world in a transformed way. Dilthey describes this as "awakening this sense of life in us" and as "a holiday from ordinary experience."[272] We can see here Dilthey bridging between Kant and Schiller on the one hand and Gadamer on the other in an important way. Dilthey maintains that experience of art awaken the feeling of life, as do Kant and Schiller, but for him, this feeling is more than one prompted by the play of faculties. It is a feeling prompted by the recognition of lived experiences and their relations, of the poet as well as of the reader, presented in the poem

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[270] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience*, trans. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). 59.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid., 60.

that allows for transformation. In this way, too, the feeling is less one of subjectivism and one that already reaches out and responds to others in the world.

Like Dilthey, Gadamer holds that the experience of art, particularly in the recognition and truth at stake, cannot be conceptualized, but this does not mean it is devoid of any cognitive content. Gadamer writes, "Works of art possess an elevated rank in being, and this is seen in the fact that in encountering a work of art we have the experience of something emerging—and this one can call truth!"[273] We experience the emergence of truth, but only because we let the work be and show itself in its facticity. Gadamer describes this emergence of truth as one characterized by speculative awareness. It is not that we see the true as if the scales have suddenly fallen from our eyes. Rather we always already belong to this truth, but we do not always recall it. The encounter with the work, then, is a remembrance. Such a remembrance is possible only because of some forgetfulness, as "an unknowing *ekstasis*."[274] Gadamer here references *Mnemosyne* as ruling over this movement from forgetfulness to recollection, as a move through re-creation, re-cognition, and re-collection. In this way, *Mnemosyne* is fundamentally connected to *aletheia*.[275] In this way, we cannot think of approaching the work to gain knowledge of ourselves like we would by placing a slide under a microscope or by analyzing archival records. This approach would treat the work as merely instrumental and would treat knowledge only as calculative. The knowledge at stake here is one of understanding, one of an event of meaning. The work,

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[273] Gadamer, "The Artwork in Word and Image: 'So True, So full of Being!'," 207.

[274] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 119.

[275] Heidegger also refers us in multiple places to this connection between *Mnemosyne* and *aletheia*, especially in relation to Hölderlin's poem, "Mnemosyne". Heidegger suggests in "What Calls for Thinking?", much the same as Gadamer, that memory is more than a simple psychological act. It is instead "the gathering of recollection, thinking back" and ultimately poetic, for poetry, too, is this thinking back to the ground and source and wells up only in recollection. Martin Heidegger, "What Calls for Thinking?," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 376.

through play, makes a claim on us, but it is not one merely of reason. Furthermore, it is only through this experience of art that we have the possibility of such a transformation.

As Gadamer takes himself to be offering a response to the aesthetic education put forth by Schiller,[276] I suggest we turn also consider Friedrich Hölderlin's attempt at a new aesthetic education. Present at the Jena debates between Schiller and Goethe and critical of Schiller's reinscription of the Enlightenment's subject-object dualism, Hölderlin proposed his own account in response to Schiller's letters. In a letter to Immanuel Niethammer, Hölderlin writes that he wishes to identify the principle that would both explain and dispel the divisions of subject and object, self and the world, reason and revelation. He writes, "For this we need an aesthetic sense, and I will call my philosophical letters 'New Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man'."[277] What Hölderlin thus seeks to advance is not the aesthetic education of Kant and Schiller that relies on this dualism and subjectivization of art. Furthermore, Hölderlin is also resistant to the idea that such an education would be a release from the everyday, as is suggested in the play of faculties or drives in Kant and Schiller. What is required is not merely an aesthetic education, but a *poetic* education. Hölderlin writes,

> So much has already been said about the influence of the fine arts on the education of man, but it has always sounded as though no one took it seriously, and this was natural, for no one gave any thought to what art, and in particular poetry, is according to its nature. One simply viewed it in terms of its undemanding exterior, which admittedly cannot be separated from its essence, but is taken to constitute nothing less than the entire character of poetry; it was regarded as play, because it appears in the modest guise of play, and thus, consequentially enough, no other effect could arise from it than that of play, namely, distraction—almost the very opposite of the effect that it has when it is present in its true nature. For then the human being gathers himself in its presence, and the poetry bestows a sense of repose—not some empty repose, but that living, vital repose in which all our forces

[276] Schiller is certainly not Gadamer's sole or even primary interlocutor. It would be quite misguided to think that Hegel, for example, did not play a critical role, both in terms of *Bildung* and art, for Gadamer. Indeed, Gadamer does identify Hegel as an important corrective to Schiller. Rather his criticism is of aesthetic consciousness as such, which I take to be particularly embodied in both Kant's and Schiller's philosophy. Thus for the sake of the argument, I focus primarily on them.

[277] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays And Letters On Theory*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988). 132.

> are at work, and yet we do not take cognizance of them as active, simply on account of their intimate harmony. *Poetry brings humans closer and brings them together, not like play, in which they are united only by each forgetting himself, so that the living peculiarity of no one comes to the fore.*[278]

Poetry awakens us to ourselves; it is not a departure from the self. This vitality is repose. He speaks, too, of an expansion of the individual's horizons. Poetry unites people together in a harmony that preserves the strife, hope, joy, suffering, and so on. As we see as well in Dilthey, this repose is not described as one into forgetfulness, but as a very dynamic mode of being in the world. It is a sense of being at home in the world that is not without homelessness. Furthermore, it is not a repose that turns inward, but one that always already calls forth a community.

Heidegger takes this passage up in *Hölderlins Hymnen,"Germaninen" und "Der Rhein"* as a clue to the essence of poetry. He writes,

> Poetry – not play, the relationship to it is not the playful relaxation making us forget ourselves, rather it is the awakening and the pulling together of an individual's ownmost essence, through which she reaches back into the ground of her being. If each individual proceeds from there, then already in advance the true gathering of individuals in an originary community has occurred. The rough interconnection of the all too many in a so-called organization is only a provisional arrangement, but not the essence (GA 39: 8).[279]

Here Heidegger reaffirms the dynamic quality of poetry and the way in which this vitality awakens our essence, but Heidegger also interprets this a step further by highlighting that the community belonging to the poetic is not merely a population of individuals, but a community that is always already present. In this way, poetry is always already within the sphere of responsibility. The individual is not the product of the community, but proceeds

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[278] Ibid., 138. Emphasis added.

[279] *Dichtung – kein Spiel, das Verhältnis zu ihr nicht die spielerische, sich selbst vergessen machende Entspannung, sondern die Erweckung und der Zusammenriß des eignesten Wesens des Einzelnen, wodurch er in den Grund seines Daseins zurückreicht. Kommt jeder Einzelne von dorther, dann ist die wahrhafte Sammlung der Einzelnen in eine ursprüngliche Gemeinschaft schon im voraus geschehen. Die grobe Verschaltung der Allzuvielen in einer sogenannten Organisation ist nur eine behelfsmäßige Vorkehrung, aber nicht das Wesen.*

from it. For Heidegger, as for Hölderlin, the poetic must be pursued not as mere play, but with "lucid seriousness" [*helle Ernst*] (GA 39:8). Heidegger thus maintains Hölderlin's rejection of play.

What is curious about Hölderlin's, as well as Heidegger's, discussion is the way in which poetry is pitted against play, seriousness against frivolity. This opposition is at odds with the thrust of the argument I have been advancing, and, indeed, at odds with Heidegger's own analyses of play in *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, "The Origin of the Work of Art", and *The Principle of Reason*, to name a few. There he speaks of play positively as a fundamental mode of Dasein. It seems, then, that what is actually at stake hinges on what is here to be understood by play. If one means merely a feeling or a flight away from the everyday, then it is true that such play is at odds with the seriousness of poetry. If one means the spontaneity of mental faculties, then this is also not play. If one means the dissolution of oppositions, then this is not play, or at least not the understanding of play at work in our discussion. Play is not a flight from, but a return to ourselves, to our being. As a return to ourselves, play cannot be any sort of escape the self. As in Gadamer's description of *Mnemosyne*, to forget is not to turn away from, but to return to through recollection. It is serious business, not mere frivolity. There is often joy, the *Heiterkeit* of Nietzsche's artist, involved, but even this joy in play cannot be equated merely with feeling. To reiterate Gadamer's point above, "Play is less the opposite of seriousness than the vital ground of spirit as nature, a form of restraint and freedom at one and the same time." Hölderlin's point, however, that previous conceptions of aesthetic education are inadequate still stands; what is necessary now is a new aesthetic education, a poetic education. Such an education would indeed be playful, but in this more robust sense. It would characterized by this responsibility to our being and to others.

Throughout Gadamer's analysis, he returns consistently to the main idea that the experience of art is rooted in language. This does not mean that our language mediates immediate feelings when viewing a work, nor is it to say that Gadamer precludes any space for feelings Gadamer refers to the poetic word in particular, and language in general, as corporeal. By this Gadamer means that language is neither instrument nor object, but has a life, a being and materiality, of its own. Language is a living voice. This is also what is at stake when Heidegger speaks of language has the house of being. As Gerald Bruns explains, "poetry is a response to the uncanniness of ordinary language, where (again) what is uncanny is not simply the corporeality of language as such but the way in which this corporeality reorients our relation to language (not to say the world) by turning us into listeners rather than speakers. In poetry the corporeality of language addresses us."[280] As turning us into listeners, the poetic work calls us to responsibility, to openness and hearing. As corporeal and resisting monologue, the poetic word remains external and other. It is thus resistant to any kind of mastery, cognitive or otherwise. Gadamer explains that "The fact that it exists, its facticity, represents an insurmountable resistance against any superior presumption that we can make sense of it all" (RB 34). As resistant to totalization, "the poetic work is a corrective for the ideal of objective determination and for the hubris of concepts" (PA 190). The significance of the poetic word,[281] then, is that it reminds us that all language, not merely that of poetry, resists the hubris of calculative thought. It reminds us that all relationships, as made possible in and through language, are likewise resistant to full conceptualization or mastery.

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[280] Gerald L. Bruns, "The Remembrance of Language: An Introduction to Gadamer's Poetics," in *"Who am I and who are you?" and Other Essays*, ed. Richard Heinemann and Bruce Krajewski (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 8.

[281] In an effort to free the art object from the subjectivism of philosophical aesthetics and to resist the psychologism of some approaches of philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer frequently emphasizes the createdness of the work, the fact of the work, over the creator.

The main point of Gadamer's discussion of the insurmountability of works of art and poetry is not that the work stands before us as inaccessibly other, as impenetrable in this alterity, but that as other, the work invites us into conversation with us. The way we engage the work is fundamentally dialogical; we are in conversation with it. We feel the task issued by the work and feel the disruption as we are called out of ourselves because the work is meaningful, because it, too, speaks. The work fundamentally resists the monologue. Instead, it stands forth in its concealment and calls us to it. Gadamer writes, "Thus the experience of the artwork is not only an emergence from hiddenness, but at the same time is something really there in its seclusion. It dwells in the work as if in security. The work of art is an assertion, but it is one that does not form an assertive sentence, although it is telling in the highest degree."[282] How is it, though, that we could have such a conversation with the work? We remain open to, oriented to, the work. In Gadamer's language, we tarry with it: "To tarry is not to lose time. Being in the mode of tarrying is like an intensive back-and-forth conversation that is not cut off but lasts until it is ended. The whole of it is a conversation in which for a time one is completely 'absorbed in conversation,' and this means one 'is completely there in it'."[283] To be completely there in it, to be absorbed in the conversation does not mean that we are lost in it, but that the relation is not one of disinterestedness. Furthermore, the conversation is there; it has a place.

What seems to be behind Gadamer's claim that we are absorbed into the conversation is his wariness of aesthetic consciousness. We do not stand at a disinterested distance from the work, but are gathered into it. We belong to (*gehören*) the conversation as listeners (*Hörer*). As we will see, what belongs most essentially to a poetic education is this learning to listen. Our participation as listeners is not, however, arbitrary, as we are

[282] Gadamer, "The Artwork in Word and Image: 'So True, So full of Being!'," 212.
[283] Ibid., 211.

fundamentally at stake in the conversation. Gadamer centers around this in his writings on Paul Celan, framed by the question, "Who am I and Who are You?"[284] Gadamer's analysis of Celan's poetry is a prime example of what it is to tarry with a work as he seeks to "decipher" Celan's texts, which he describes as "bearing witness here to an extended acquaintanceship."[285] To enter into conversation with a work, with a text, with another is to enter at the very least into a sort of acquaintanceship and at the very most into a friendship.

In his *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, Heidegger highlights this mode of poetic conversation. Here his focus is more on the poet rather than spectator, but as he has suggested in other places, the poet or artist is also spectator, preserver. Heidegger dwells on a fragment of Hölderlin's poetry where he speaks of the "unpoetic" (E 148). The unpoetic would be, says Heidegger, something unrestrained, unpeaceful, or unbound. The poetic, however, is finite and recognizes itself as such.[286] It engages limits but does not seek to surpass them. The poetic marks a kind of dwelling and letting be. Heidegger writes,

> Poetic conversation exercises the language in the presentation of what is abiding, and thus bestows on the poet the free use of his capacity, so as to remain in what is proper to him. Such conversation is good. In it, one kind of remembrance encounters another. In their encounter, the harmony of the same thoughts, and thus their belonging together, is experienced as an enduring friendship. (E 149)

This friendship is marked by a belonging together, a resting in the other, a harmony of remembrances. Such conversation is good. It is joyful. What is proper to the poet is this kind of orientation to the other, yet it is not a covering over. Insofar as there is peace, rest, and harmony, there is also strife, unease, and disruption. The poetic, though, is to remain with this.

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[284] _____, *"Who am I and who are you?" and other essays*, trans. Richard Heinemann and Bruce Krajewski (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

[285] Ibid., 63.

[286] In "…Poetically Man Dwells…", Heidegger states that "Dwelling can be unpoetic only because it is in essence poetic…Thus it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take the measure,

In "…Poetically Man Dwells…" Heidegger draws from Hölderlin to assert that "Dwelling occurs only when poetry comes to pass and is present, and indeed in the way whose nature we now have idea of, as taking a measure for all measuring."[287] Similarly, in *Elucidations* Heidegger explains, "the poetic is the finite, which submits itself to the limits of its destiny. The poetic is what is peaceful in thoughtful rest which bans all strife. The poetic is the bond which binds together all that is unbound. The poetic is what is retained in the bond and the measure, that which is full of measure. In whatever direction it goes, the poetic does not want to surpass the limits, the rest, the bond, the measure" (E 149). What would be such measuring? Heidegger tells us that "The taking of measure is what is poetic in dwelling. Poetry is a measuring."[288] This poetic measuring is not the coffeespoons of Prufock. The nature of measure is not calculation, is not even number. It is, though, an orientation toward limits. Heidegger explains that the first measure-taking of the human occurs as the human is mortal, finite. A clue to this measure-taking lies in that humans dwell in building. In "Building Dwelling Thinking" we are told that building is the letting-dwell.[289] Building is the preservation of the fourfold through the production of locations, as the holding open of disclosure. Thus the mortal's dwelling rests in that mortality and allowing the disclosure.

A poetic education, we might say the building of *Bildung*, would be the cultivation of this attunement, this sort of letting be in friendship, the holding open of what is other. Furthermore, Heidegger explains, "man is capable of poetry at any time only to the degree to which his being is appropriate [*vereignet*] to that which itself has a liking for man and therefore needs his presence. Poetry is authentic [*eigentlich*] or inauthentic [*uneigentlich*]

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[287] Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." 224.
[288] Ibid., 219.
[289] ———, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 156.

according to the degree of this appropriation [*Vereignung*]."[290] Thus poetic dwelling is related to what is appropriate, to what is one's own, but not as a property might be one's own. It is not the case that we *have* a poetic education, but that we are educated, we undergo something, and we are such only insofar as we active attune ourselves to this.

Although Heidegger writes little explicitly on education, this sense of a poetic education permeates much of his work, especially the later works. In the 1931/32 essay, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," we have an early glimpse of the relationship between education, *paideia*, and being. In his analysis of the allegory of the cave, Heidegger explains that the key to the allegory lies in *paideia*, i.e. "the process whereby the human essence is reoriented and accustomed to the region assigned to it at each point."[291] Heidegger suggests the coupling of truth and knowledge in the allegory prompts Plato and his inheritors to espouse a mistaken conceptualization of truth as *adequatio* and education as correct knowledge. This is seen especially in the tradition of humanism, which Heidegger identifies in some ways as the pinnacle of metaphysics, where beings are defined as *animal rationale* and their souls are saved through liberating them from their animal nature. Heidegger addresses this again in the "Letter on Humanism" where he claims that humanism has forgotten to ask the question of being.

The sense of *paideia* that Heidegger wishes to recover, however, is one connected to truth as *alētheia*, but wherein *alētheia* is not understood as in opposition to truth or knowledge, but where knowledge is a development arising from the play of concealment and unconcealment. This is closely mirrored by the German *Bildung*, although Heidegger resists the "misinterpretation to which [*Bildung*] fell victim in the late nineteenth century."[292] *Bildung*,

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[290] _____, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." 226.
[291] _____, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," 166.
[292] Ibid.

in its original sense means "impressing a character on someone and guiding someone by paradigm."[293] In this sense, *paideia*, and likewise *Bildung*, is not "pouring knowledge into the unprepared soul", but rather it "lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in its entirety by first of all leading us to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it."[294] There are echoes here of Socrates' characterization of himself in the *Theatetus* as midwife, helping people to give birth to what is in their soul. Education, then, helps one to develop out of herself. For Heidegger, this is marked by a particular turning toward the space where beings appear, which points toward the connection between *paideia* and *alētheia*. In an essay on ontological education, Iain Thompson suggests that this education is essentially one of *Gelassenheit*, meaning that education as the move away from *apaideiusa* toward *paideia* is a move toward a receptive spontaneity, a releasement. Thompson describes it as an "attentive and responsive way of dwelling in one's environment."[295] As Heidegger describes in "Ἀγχιβαίη" in GA 77, the formation of *Bildung* is not the impressing of the human on the human, but as is, the essence of the human receives its mold (*Geprägung*) "from what we call the open-region and its enregioning" (GA 77: 91). Humans, as mortals, are gathered into to the space of the open region that allows for things to appear. As such, education is never complete. We do not one day complete comporting ourselves toward the world, nor do we wake up one day knowing exactly how to attune ourselves. Education has less to do with the achievement of knowledge, of the overcoming of ignorance, and more to do with learning how to respond and dwelling. To dwell is to find ourselves in the in-between, in the space of that which regions. To dwell is to tarry with something.

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[293] Ibid.

[294] Ibid., 167.

[295] Iain Thompson, "Heidegger on Ontological Education, or How We Become What We Are," in *Heidegger, Education, and Modernity*, ed. Michael Peters (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 136.

In "What Calls for Thinking?", Heidegger returns this connection between *Gelassenheit* and education in his description of teaching and learning: "Teaching is even more difficult than learning. We know that but we rarely think about it. And why is teaching more difficult than learning? Not because the teacher must have a larger store of information, and have it always ready. Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. Indeed, the proper teaching lets nothing else be learned than—learning."[296] Gadamer makes a similar point in "Education is Self-Education", writing that education is really the allowing of responsibility for self-education, thus the parent or instructor allows, enables, the young person to perceive her own shortcomings and strengthen her own resources.[297] To be educated is to develop into autonomy, but not where autonomy means the capacity for self-direction, the capacity to respond to one's environment and others.

There remains a concern that such a poetic education, stemming from a German academic culture and emphasis on classic works of art and poetry, remains at bottom fundamentally elitist. Indeed, the tradition of Bildung has quite often gone part and parcel with traditional bourgeois values of culture and education. John Caputo suggests, for example, that Gadamer remains much too Hegelian and is overly concerned with defending some version of a tradition or culture to ask the fundamental questions. There is a concern, too, that such appeals to great Germans or the valorization of Greek art and thought reinscribes structures of oppression and marginalization. I agree that these are real and pressing concerns. However, some of this concern is reduced if we draw a distinction between *Bildung*, understood in a particular way, and becoming *gebildet*. If we take *Bildung* to be a process of enculturation that is dependent on something like aesthetic education and

[296] Heidegger, "What Calls for Thinking?," 379-80.
[297] Gadamer, "Education is Self-Education," 535.

the cultivation of taste, then it seems that these criticisms hold, for the cultivation of taste has often been associated with elitism. Moreover, such a cultivation of taste precludes those without access to or the material conditions for the experiences of great works of art (the definition of which is itself considerably fraught). Furthermore, if we take *Bildung* to be the development of a rational, autonomous, self-determining individual (read, perhaps, bourgeois male), then the problem still remains.

However, if we instead understand *Bildung* as a mode of being in the world, as a mode of remaining open to what is other, of becoming not only speaker but also listener, then we need not espouse such elitist principles or hierarchies of taste and culture. In the Afterword to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes, "Art is not merely a tool of the sociopolitical will; art documents a social reality only when it is really art, and not when it is used as an instrument. In my work, I brought 'classical' concepts such as 'mimesis' and 'representation' into play not in order to defend classical ideas but to transcend the bourgeois conception of the aesthetic as cultural religion" (TM 580). For Gadamer, then, art that is merely used as an instrument, for moralizing or political gain, is no longer art. It is true that Gadamer, although quite taken with Duchamp's ready-mades, very seldom references art that does not belong to the Western, particularly Greek or German, tradition. It would be reasonable to suggest, then, that Gadamer does in some ways perpetuate norms that are exclusive. What is key, though, is that Gadamer sees these examples not as pinnacles of cultural achievement, but as loci of particular significant transformative experiences within a particular tradition. Nicholas Davey explains, "limiting the spontaneity of [becoming *gebildet*] by restricting it to a *specific* educational program weakens the central ethical claim of philosophical hermeneutics regarding keeping oneself open to the other and

to the different."[298] What is fundamental to becoming *gebildet* and to *Bildung*, precisely in its various cultural manifestations, is the spontaneity and openness to what is other. To have this sort of open stance in the world is made possible by being in a particular and culture, for otherwise there would be no possibility for meaning.

Here a practical example may help. In an essay on democratic citizenship and education, Martha Nussbaum provides a story of a literacy group for young girls in India.[299] The girls, mostly poor rural villagers, gathered to present a play they had written about the institution of dowry in which they emphasized the inherent injustice of the institution by having the female lead refuse to be given in marriage with dowry. The groom, played by one of the girls, likewise refused the dowry. The marriage still took place, but under more just conditions. The play was met with enthusiasm from the other villagers and the girls were proud of their contribution. Borrowing from Rabindranath Tagore, Nussbaum uses this example to point to three central capacities for democratic citizenship, namely critical thinking and examination of one's self and traditions, the ability to recognize oneself as bound to other human beings, and narrative imagination or the ability to imagine another person's story and beliefs. These same three capacities are named in Nussbaum's earlier text, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, as the cornerstones of liberal education and as necessary for cultivating humanity.[300] At bottom, she claims, these three capacities are anchored in freedom, namely the freedom to engage critically, the freedom to imagine oneself as belonging to something greater, and the freedom to imagine another person's experience. Furthermore, these freedoms can be neither achieved nor

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[298] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 44.

[299] Martha Nussbaum, "Education and Democratic Citizenship: Capabilities and Quality Education," *Journal of Human Development* 7, no. 3 (2006): 386.

[300] ———, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). 10.

fostered on the basis of factual education alone. Rather, they need the arts, creativity, and a robust sense of education as cultivation and development.[301] Moreover, the students educate the town members not by asserting a series of facts, although there is no reason why some appeal to statistics might not be appropriate, but by allowing the concerns surrounding dowry to make themselves apparent, by allowing the town members to listen and to learn.

As Nussbaum's example demonstrates, *Bildung* retains a critical stance toward that culture. That is to say, *Bildung*, as characterized by openness, has in itself the resources necessary for critical inquiry and practices. Adorno, for example, claims that *Bildung* today has become pseudo-culture (*Halbbildung*) by failing to recognize its own conditionedness. He writes, "Any culture [*Bildung*] which proceeds otherwise, which posits itself autonomously and absolutizes itself, has thereby become pseudo-culture [*Halbbildung*]."[302] This problem arises when *Bildung* is seen to save a culture from itself, to save a culture from any kind of barbarism or feudalism. But to insist on this role of *Bildung* is to develop *Bildung* into ideology and culture is commodified as something one must possess. To see *Bildung* only as a specific and narrow iteration is mistakenly to see *Bildung* as ahistorical and also mistakenly to see the pupil merely as the receptacle for knowledge. If *Bildung* is itself seen as historical and as conditioned, then the possibility for development and critical engagement remain, although Adorno is right to see these elements as always at risk of totalization.

As rooted in poetic language, however, a poetic education resists instrumentalization and totalization. We find, too, that education is much more than the cultivation of taste. Whereas Kant and Schiller see education as emancipatory, and thus autonomy as the product of education, I suggest we understand freedom instead as the grounds for education, for the development of responsibility. We are ethical, *gebildet* persons precisely as we develop in,

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[301] ———, "Education and Democratic Citizenship: Capabilities and Quality Education," 392.
[302] Theodor W. Adorno, "Theory of Pseudo-Culture (1959)," *Telos* 1993, no. 95 (1993): 17.

through, out of, with, and because of our being in the world. It is the orientation toward what surpasses us and possibility of our embodied being and responsibility, and thus of our ethical being.

Conclusion: Conversation, Play, and Freedom

It was suggested at the outset that an original ethics must respond both to the conditionedness of human life as well as its own conditionedness. Original ethics is characterized by groundlessness and incalculability. However, while the content of ethics exceeds conceptual knowledge, it remains meaningful through our orientation of practical understanding and playful holding open the space for superabundance. In conclusion, I suggest that drawing together the threads of conversation, education, and freedom discussed in the previous chapters gives greater shape to an understanding of original ethics.

For Gadamer, as well as Heidegger and Fink, education is made possible through the movement of question and answer. Education is rooted in conversation, and each instance of understanding, or movement toward understanding, is educative. In being addressed, we re-cognize something that is beyond us, that there is something that resists any self-sameness. To respond to this address requires, however subtle, a shift in perspective. Each address prompts us to ask "Who am I and who are you?" Because each conversation is an event of understanding and each event of understanding an event of meaning, education—as the expanding of meaning and a responsibility to one's place—is conversation.

Conversation is ultimately a form a friendship. Gadamer follows Aristotle in seeing friendship as central to the ethical self, for "Friendship leads to an increase in one's own feeling of life and to a confirmation of one's own self-understanding, as implied in the

concept of arête."[303] Through mirroring one another, through recognizing the self in the other, the friends cannot remain self-same. They are challenged by the address of the other. Friendship is also, says Gadamer, what enables wisdom. Insofar as wisdom is the "awareness of not-knowing,"[304] then friendship, as this challenge, calls us to wisdom. Discussing Socrates' conversations, Gadamer suggests that through dialogue, Socrates becomes aware of what he does not know and "this means that something dawns on him about himself and about his living with only pretended knowledge."[305] Yet this awareness of not-knowledge is not like factual knowledge. It requires responsibility. Thus the conversation, as a mode of friendship, is not simply an exchange, but a challenge.[306] What is so central to friendship is that friendship is not possible through following rules or the establishment of particular institutions. Rather, friendship, as solidarity, is prior to these institutions or legal orders. It is a form of shared practical understanding (GPMT 271). Gadamer reminds us that the virtues on Aristotle's account are intelligible only against the background of *met'aretes*, shared values (PPE 287). We are, says Gadamer, essentially conversation. Our knowledge of ourselves does not arise through distanced reflection, but through the play of dialogue with others.

The significance of friendship and conversation is present as well in Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's poem, "Remembrance", in *Elucidations*. Hölderlin writes, "But/ a Conversation is good and to say/ The hearts intention, to hear much/ About days of love/ And deeds which occurred" (quoted in E 105). Heidegger asks what a conversation is, and replies that it must be the thinking of mortal thoughts. Furthermore, the conversation is not merely two parties together. Rather, saying and hearing unfold in the conversation.

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[303] Gadamer, "Friendship and Self-Knowledge: Reflections on the Role of Friendship in Greek Ethics," 134.

[304] _____, "Autobiographical Reflections," 30.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Gadamer also suggests that it is no coincidence that the height of hermeneutics, as in Schleiermacher, occurs during the Romantic age that was "outstanding in its glowing cultivation of friendship." Ibid., 50.

Heidegger describes this as an enduring friendship (E 149). We recall, too, Hyperion's friendship to Bellarmin in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*. Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei suggests that it is Hyperion's friendship that on the one hand allows Hyperion to experience the unity of nature and the inaccessible, but on the other hand, reminds him of his own mortality and the inaccessibility of nature becomes foreign and strange.[307] What friendship, as poetic conversation, allows is an orientation to the self that is both foreign and familiar. It reminds us of what do not know, even of ourselves.

Heidegger explains that saying and hearing spring from the original conversation, which is the wordless address sent to us, an original claim. Heidegger continues, "To stand under such a claim means to be able to hear. That is the essential ground of genuine saying. Saying is originally a hearing, just as a genuine ability to hear is an original re-saying (not a mere mechanical repetition) of what has been heard." To say, then, is to hear. It is to be receptive and responsible. When Heidegger suggests that in "What Are Poets For?" that the poets, as the most venturesome, are those who venture to say, I read him as suggesting that hearing is at the core of poetic saying. He tells us there that such saying is not assertion, which does not hear and is a form of willing, but a song that belongs to "the precinct of beings themselves."[308] Thus such saying is not a self-assertion, but an active receptivity toward the open, toward being. It is true that Heidegger says that only the most venturesome are capable of saying and that our time is a destitute time, but I do believe that our time still calls for this attunement of receptivity.

As open to what surpasses, as open to the other, poetry is an orientation toward freedom. In *The Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger reverses the traditional relationship

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[307] Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *Heidegger, Hölderlin, and the Subject of Poetic Language: Toward a New Poetics of Dasein* (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2004). 113.

[308] Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?," 135.

between humans and freedom: "Human freedom now no longer means freedom as a property of man, but *man as a possibility of freedom*. Human freedom is the freedom that breaks through in man and takes him up unto itself, thus making man possible."[309] Freedom grounds the possibility of existence. As such, freedom allows for the disclosure of beings. Thus, "*Freedom is the condition of the possibility of manifestness of the being of beings, of the understanding of being.*"[310] Freedom is not a thing among things, but this possibility of relation. Bruns points out that Celan sees poetry as oriented toward freedom, for "freedom is the outside, the region of the other…the movement of poetry is toward this region, or toward 'the 'otherness' which it can reach and be free'."[311] First, poetry is understood here as a movement, Bruns explains, not as on a quest, but a move of releasement, of *Gelassenheit*. Poetry is the movement of openness toward what is other. Thus poetry is essentially a releasement into responsibility. Second, this responsibility is a mode of freedom. As holding open the possibility for what is other, it is free. This poetic freedom is without ground, without why.

Poetic education, itself a movement of freedom, is likewise oriented toward the other, toward the limit. This orientation is characterized by tact. Gadamer draws our attention in *Truth and Method* to Helmholtz's appeal to tact in understanding the human sciences. Tact is a sensitivity to and knowledge of how to act in particular situations. To be tactful is to pass over something, not "to avert one's gaze from it, but to keep an eye on it in such a way that rather than knock into it, one slips by it" (TM 14). Tact is more than a feeling; it is "a mode of knowing and a mode of being" (TM 14). To be tactful is not to handle a person or to avoid anything disruptive by employing different social niceties, but to

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[309] ———, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2005). 94.

[310] Ibid., 207.

[311] Bruns, "The Remembrance of Language: An Introduction to Gadamer's Poetics," 39.

hold open that space of alterity, "to slip by it rather than knock into it" (TM 14). Davey explains, furthermore, "The courteous formalities of greeting, of allowing the other to be other and to be comfortable in that otherness, establishes not a cold distance but a space that enables intimate exchange."[312] Thus to treat a person tactfully is to recognize her as vulnerable and to preserve that alterity, but as such, requires engagement with her. To treat a person with tact is to leave her intact.[313] Thus tact is an appropriate orientation toward a situation. Furthermore, the language of tact returns us to this understanding as embodied. Tact, from *tactus*, always bears with it this notion of touching and feeling. This is even more so the case in German, where *Takt* refers both to the sort of tact discussed here as well as beat or pulse in the musical sense. To keep the beat requires hearing, feeling, that beat and responding accordingly. The mode of knowing of tact is, I would argue, one of *phronēsis*, of understanding, and is ultimately a form of friendship.

Ultimately a poetic education is a learning to hear, to listen, and thus to belong. It is to be able to respond to what is other in a meaningful way. It is important, too, that we hear the embodied language that belongs to this orientation. We touch the limits, we hold open the space for others, this freedom is "bursting", as Jean-Luc Nancy describes it,[314] language itself is corporeal, the poet sings and dances, and education is giving shape. This returns us to the argument put forth in the second chapter that the space of ethics must be seen as concrete and textured. What this also suggests is that the friendship and conversation are characterized by Fink's sense of darkness. While friendship and play allow us access to knowledge we might have otherwise, they also preserve that which cannot be contained.

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[312] Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hemeneutics*: 244.

[313] This is taken from a remark made by Stanley Cavell in a seminar at Duke University's Center for Philosophy, Art, and Literature on October 13, 2009.

[314] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). 57-8.

This is, I would suggest, a form of love. Love comes to us unbidden. Love can be neither surmounted nor calculated. Love attunes us. As Hölderlin writes, "Love fixes/the eyes" (quoted in E 164) so that the beloved is held in our gaze, not in a scientific way, but is remembered and allows us to see in new ways. What Socrates reminds us is not only the love of wisdom, but also the wisdom of love.

As a final word, I suggest we turn to a Rilke poem[315] referenced both by Fink in *Oase des Glücks* and Gadamer in *Truth and Method*:

> As long as you catch what you've thrown yourself, it's all
> just clever agility and venial gain;
> but when you suddenly come to catch a ball
> an eternal playmate has thrown
> at you, at your center, has exactly set
> in mastered motion, in an arc
> out of God's great bridge-building –
> then what you catch is real power:
> not yours, the world's. And when you even
> have the strength and courage to throw it back,
> no, better yet: have forgotten courage and strength,
> and thrown it back *already*…(the way the year
> throws birds, the flocks of migrating birds
> hurled over the ocean from an old to a new
> warmth -- then, that gamble, is the first moment
> you too can be said to play. You
> unburden yourself of the throw no longer; you burden
> yourself with the throw no longer. Out of your hands steps
> the meteor and it races into its skies.

To catch only what we've thrown ourselves is to see the world as a product of our reason or as something to be controlled and mastered. Such power is artificial. When we attune ourselves to the tension of the world, to the great bridge-building, and respond to what the world throws, only then do we have power, and only then do we play. Real power, then, requires vulnerability. Furthermore, the response is not calculated. It is something done *already*, not thoughtlessly, but in out very attunement and openness. This relation to the

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[315] Rainer Maria Rilke, "As long as you catch what you've thrown yourself," in *Inner Sky: Poems, Dreams, Notes*, ed. Damion Searls (Jaffrey David R. Godine, 2010), 9.

world is itself the goal. Upbringing, *Erziehung*, as this mode of freedom is to play in and with the world, always to ground anew our belonging to the world in the playful and productive tension of the world. The universality that we would demand of an ethical theory is not achieved by abstraction or scientific deduction, but in the very living in language and in the world. It occurs through the holding open of what is different to us. To be ethical is to attune ourselves and remain open to the world, to play. This does not mean, however, that play is merely responsiveness, like turning only when someone calls our name or resigning ourselves to a particular fate. Rather, there must be activity and initiation on the part of the subject. Even in such initiation, she must always hold open the possibility for what is other so as to catch not only what she's thrown herself. This requires the active responsibility of throwing back what one has caught, as well as preserving the otherness of the other and the world while still maintaining a relation to them. Reason is important, but not the last word. Instead of "I think" or "I feel", ethics becomes a matter of "We play."

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