

PLAY AS SYMBOL
OF THE WORLD
AND OTHER WRITINGS

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Oasis of Happiness

Thoughts toward an Ontology of Play {1957}

IN OUR CENTURY that is plagued by the racket of machines, insight into the great significance of play within the structure¹ of human existence is on the rise for the leading intellects of cultural criticism, the pioneers of modern pedagogy, and academics of anthropological disciplines. It permeates the self-consciousness of the contemporary human being to an astounding degree, a consciousness that is reflected in literature. And it is documented in the passionate interest of the masses in play and sport. Play is affirmed and cultivated as a vital impulse of independent worth with its own status. It is thought to be a remedy for the harms of a contemporary technocratic civilization. And it is extolled as a rejuvenating, life-renewing power—like a plunge back into a morning-fresh primordiality and plastic creativity. Certainly there were times in human history that bore the mark of play more than our own, times that were more cheerful, more relaxed, more playful, times that knew more leisure and had closer contact with the heavenly Muses—but no age had more objective play-possibilities and play-opportunities, because none had at its disposal so gigantic a life-apparatus. Playgrounds and sports fields are part of urban planning. Customary games in all lands and nations are brought into international contact. Toys are manufactured through industrial mass production. But the question remains open as to whether our age has achieved a deeper and more compelling understanding of the *essence* of play, whether it has at its disposal a comprehensive perspective on the manifold manifestations of play, whether it has adequate insight into the *ontological sense* [Seinssinn] of the phenomenon of play, whether it knows philosophically what play and playing *are*. With this, we touch on the problem of an ontology of play.

In what follows, I will attempt to *reflect* [Besinnung] on the curious and peculiar ontological character of human play, to formulate its² structural moments conceptually, and to indicate the speculative concept of play in a preliminary manner. To some, this may appear to be a dry and abstract affair. Such people would prefer to immediately feel a breeze of the wafting lightness of playing life, of its productive fullness, its effervescent richness and its inexhaustible charm. The witty essay, which plays with the listener or reader to a certain extent, and which elicits the enchanting subtlety of words and things in surprising word-plays, appears to be the appropriate stylistic element for a treatise on play. For,

to speak *seriously* about play, let alone with the grim seriousness of the word-quibbler or concept-splitter, in the end stands as a bald contradiction and a terrible corruption of play. To be sure, philosophy has, in the case of Plato,³ for instance, ventured the light, winged course even for great thoughts and contemplated play in such a way that this thinking itself became an elevated play of the spirit. But to this belongs Attic salt.⁴

The course of our simple and sober reflection is divided into three parts: 1. the preliminary characterization of the phenomenon of play; 2. the structural analysis of play; 3. the question concerning the connection between play and Being.

I

Play is a phenomenon of life that everyone is acquainted with firsthand. Each person has already played at some point and can speak from experience about it. Thus we are not dealing with an object of research that must be first discovered and laid bare. Play is universally known. Each of us is acquainted with playing and a multitude of forms of play, indeed from the testimony of our own experience. Each was already at some point a player. Familiarity with play is more than merely individual; it is a collective, public familiarity. Play is a well-known and common fact of the social world. One lives from time to time in play; one engages in it, enacts it; one is acquainted with it as a possibility of our own activity.⁵ In this way, the individual is not encapsulated or imprisoned in his solitude. In playing we are certain of our social contact with our fellow human beings in an especially⁶ intense way. Every kind of play, even the stubborn play of the loneliest child, has an interpersonal horizon. That we thus live *in* play, that we do not come upon it as an extrinsic occurrence, points to the human being as the “subject” of play. Does he alone play? Doesn’t the animal also play, doesn’t the surge of life’s exuberance arise in the heart of every living creature? Biological research offers amazing descriptions of animal behavior, behavior that resembles human play in its mode of appearance and in the motor forms of its expression. But the critical question emerges as to whether that which appears similar in external form is similar *ontologically*. I am not here contesting that a biological concept of the behavior of play can be established on good grounds, such that the human being and the animal appear related. Nevertheless, it is not yet⁷ decided which mode of Being has in each case the similar-looking behavior. This problem could be plausibly resolved only when the human being’s ontological constitution and the animal’s way of Being are ontologically elucidated and determined beforehand. We are of the opinion that human play has its own genuine sense—only in illicit metaphors could one speak of animal play or even of the play of the ancient gods. Ultimately, it comes down to precisely *how* we use the term “play,” which fullness

of sense we mean by it, which contour and which conceptual transparency we are able to give to this concept.

We are asking about human play. And in so doing, we are first of all inquiring into precisely the everyday familiarity with this phenomenon. Playing does not simply occur in our life like the vegetative processes; it is always an occurrence that is luminously *suffused with sense* [sinnhaft], an enactment that is experienced. We live in the enjoyment of the act of play (which, mind you, presupposes no reflexive self-consciousness). In many cases of intense abandonment to play we are far removed from any reflection—and yet all play is maintained in an understanding self-association of human life. The everyday, accessible take on the matter, a generally accepted “interpretation” that has come to predominate as self-evident, belongs to the familiarity with play as well. According to this interpretation, play is considered to be a *marginal* phenomenon of human life, a peripheral appearance, a possibility for existence that only occasionally lights up. Clearly, the great emphases of our earthly existence lie in other dimensions. To be sure, we see how prevalent play is, the vigorous interest that human beings have in play, the intensity with which they carry it out—but we nevertheless commonly contrast play, as “rest,” as “relaxation,” as cheerful idleness, with the serious and responsible activity of life. One says that the life of the human being is fulfilled in rigorous struggling and striving to attain insight, in striving for virtue and competence, for reputation, dignity and honor, for power and prosperity and the like. In contrast, play has the character of an occasional interruption, of a *break*, and is related to the genuine, serious carrying out of life in a sort of analogous manner to the way in which sleep is related to wakefulness. The human being must occasionally unharness the yoke of drudgery, get loose from the pressure of incessant strivings, disencumber himself from the weight of business, release himself from the confinement of organized time into a more casual relation with time, where time becomes expendable, indeed even so ample that we drive it away again with a “pastime.” In the economy of managing our lives we alternate between “tension” and “relaxation,” between business and diversion; we follow the well-known prescription of “hard weeks” and “joyous feasts.” Thus, in the rhythm of conducting one’s life, play appears to assume a legitimate, albeit limited, role. It is valid as a “supplement,” as a complementary phenomenon, as a relaxing break, as a recreational activity, as a holiday from the burdens of duties, as something that cheers us up in the severe and gloomy landscape of our life. Ordinarily, one determines what play is by contrasting it with the seriousness of life, with the obligatory ethical disposition, with work, with the sober sense of reality in general. One conceives it more or less as trifling and amusing nonsense, as an unbounded roaming in the airy realm of fantasy and empty possibilities, as a running away from the resistance of things into a dreamy, utopian realm. But precisely in order to not fall captive to the Danaidean daemon of the modern

world of work, in order to not unlearn laughing as a result of ethical rigorism, in order to not fall captive to mere factuality, play is recommended to contemporary human beings by cultural diagnosticians—as a therapeutic aid for the sick soul, as it were. But “how” is the nature of play understood in the case of such well-intended advice? Does it still count as a marginal phenomenon⁸—in contrast to seriousness, genuineness, work? Do we suffer, so to speak, merely from an excess of work, from an extremely manic frenzy for work, a gloomy, unbrightened seriousness? Do we need a little of the divine sense of lightness and the joyous levity of play, in order to again come close to the “birds of the sky” and the “lilies of the field”? Should play loosen up only a mental tension from which the contemporary human being with his immense life-apparatus suffers? As long as, in such trains of thought, one still naïvely operates within the popular antitheses of “work and play,” of “play and the seriousness of life,” and so forth, play is *not* understood in the content and depth of its Being. It remains stuck in the contrasting shadow of the putative counter-phenomena, and is thereby obscured and distorted. It is considered to be something non-serious, non-obligatory, and in-authentic, to be caprice and idleness. In positively recommending the curative effect of play, it becomes evident that one still considers it a marginal appearance, a peripheral counterweight, a seasoning for the heavy meal of our Being, as it were.

Whether, however, even the phenomenal character of play is grasped appropriately by such a perspective is more than questionable. On the face of it, admittedly, the life of adults no longer shows much of the elated charm of playful existence; their “games” are too often techniques of passing the time that have become routine and that betray their origin in boredom. Seldom are adults able to play without inhibition. However, play in children still appears to be an intact sphere of existence. Play is considered to be an element of childhood. But soon the course of life drives out such a “sphere,” shattering the intact world of childhood, and the rougher winds of unprotected life take the upper hand: duty, care, and work tie down the life-energy of the young, adolescent human being. The more obvious the seriousness of life becomes, the more obviously, too, does play disappear in regard to its scope and significance. It is extolled as an upbringing “suitable for children” when this metamorphosis from a playing to a working human being is brought about without hard and brusque ruptures, when work is brought before the child almost as play—as a sort of methodical and disciplined play—when one lets the heavy and pressing weight come to the fore slowly. In this way one wants to preserve as much of the spontaneity, the fantasy and initiative of playing as possible. One wants to achieve from child’s play an uninterrupted transition to a sort of creative joy in work. Behind this well-known pedagogical experiment we find the common view that play belongs, above all during childhood, to the psychic constitution of the human being and then increasingly recedes in the course of development. Certainly, child’s play

more clearly reveals certain essential characteristics of human play—but it is also at the same time more harmless, less enigmatic and less concealed than the play of adults. The child still knows little about the seduction of masks. The child still plays innocently. How hidden, disguised, and secretive play is even in the so-called “serious” business of the adult world, in its honors and titles, in social conventions—what a “scene” in the encounter of the sexes! In the end it is not at all true that it is the child who predominantly plays. Perhaps the adult plays just as much, only differently, more secretly, in a more masked manner. Taking the guiding principle of our concept of play from childlike existence alone has the consequence that the uncannily enigmatic, ambiguous nature of play is misjudged. In truth, the breadth of play reaches from a little girl’s puppet show [*Puppenspiel*] all the way to tragedy. Play is not a marginal manifestation in the landscape of human life, nor a contingent phenomenon only surfacing from time to time. Play belongs essentially to the ontological constitution of human existence; it is an existentiell, fundamental phenomenon. Certainly not the only one, but nevertheless a peculiar and independent one, one that cannot be derived from the other manifestations of life. Merely contrasting it with other phenomena still fails to achieve an adequate conceptual perspective. Nevertheless, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the decisive fundamental phenomena of human existence are interwoven and entwined. They do not occur next to each other in isolation; they permeate and pervade one another. Every such fundamental phenomenon thoroughly determines the human being. Shedding light on the integration of the elementary aspects of existence—its tension, its conflict, and its backward-turning harmony—remains an open task for an anthropology that does not merely describe biological, psychological, and spiritual-intellectual facts, but rather, understanding the matter at hand, penetrates into the paradoxes of our lived life.

The human being is, in the entirety of his existence, and not merely in one domain of it, determined and marked by a death that intrudes and stands before him, a death which he encounters wherever he goes. As an embodied, sensuous being, he is just as wholly determined by his relation to opposition as to the generous boon of the earth. The same thing holds for the dimensions of power and love in his being with [*Mitsein*] his fellow human beings. The human being is essentially a mortal being, essentially a worker, essentially a fighter, essentially a lover and—essentially a player. Death, work, ruling, love, and play form the elementary structure of tension and the outline of the puzzling and polysemous character of human existence. And when Schiller says, “man only fully is when he plays,”⁹ it also remains valid that he only fully is when he works, struggles, holds out against death, or loves. This is not the place or occasion to set forth the fundamental style of an interpretation of existence that inquires back into the fundamental phenomena. As an indication, however, we may observe

that all the essential fundamental phenomena of human existence shimmer and appear enigmatic in an ambiguous way. This has its more profound basis in the fact that the human being is simultaneously exposed and secure. He is no longer held within the ground of nature, like the animal, and is not yet free like the incorporeal angel—he is a freedom steeped in nature. He remains bound to an obscure impulse that occupies and pervades him. He *is* not simply and naïvely; with understanding, he takes an interest in his own existence—but he cannot, on the other hand, fully define himself through the actions of his freedom. To exist as a human is, through this entanglement of exposure and security, always a tense comportment of oneself to oneself. We live in unending self-concern. Only a living being “which in its Being has this very Being as an issue” (Heidegger)¹⁰ can die, work, struggle, love, and play. Only such a being comports itself to surrounding beings as such and to the all-encompassing whole: to the world. The threefold¹¹ aspect of self-relation, understanding of Being, and openness to the world is perhaps less easy to recognize in play than in the other fundamental phenomena of human existence.

The enactment-character of play is spontaneous activity, active doing, vital impulse; play is existence that is moved in itself, as it were. But the character of being moved that pertains to play does not coincide with any other movement of human life. All other activity—in everything that is done in each case, whether it be simple praxis, which has its goal in itself, or whether it be production (*poiēsis*), which has its goal in a construct of work—fundamentally points ahead toward the “ultimate goal” of the human being: felicity, *eudaimonia*. We act in order to pursue a successful existence in the proper course of life. We take life as a “task.” At no moment do we have, so to speak, a peaceful abode. We know ourselves to be “under way.” We are always torn away from and driven beyond each present moment by the force with which we project our life toward the proper and successful existence. We all strive for *eudaimonia*—but we are in no way agreed as to what it is. We are not only affected by the unrest of the striving that carries us along, but also by the unrest of having an “interpretation” of true happiness. It belongs to the profound paradoxes of human existence that, in incessantly chasing after *eudaimonia*, we do not reach it, and that, in the full sense of the term, no one is to be counted happy before death. As long as we breathe we are caught up in a precipitous decline of life. We are enthralled by the urge to complete and fulfill our fragmentary Being. We live in the prospect of the future. We conceive the present as a preparation, as a station along the way, as a way of passage. This remarkable “futurism” of human life is intimately connected with our fundamental trait, namely that we are not simply and plainly like plants and animals, that we are concerned with the “sense” of our existence, that we want to understand why we are here on this earth. It is an uncanny passion that drives the human being to an interpretation of his earthly life—the passion of spirit. In this passion, we have

the source of our greatness and our wretchedness. The subsistence of no other living being is disturbed in such a way that it would ask about the obscure sense of its being-here. The animal cannot, and God need not, ask about itself. Every human answer to the question of the sense of life entails the positing of a “final end.” For most human beings, to be sure, this does not happen explicitly, but a fundamental representation of what the “highest good” is for them always governs everything they do and leave undone. All everyday purposes are architectonically secured in aiming toward a final purpose—all particular professional purposes are united in the putative final purpose of the human being in general.

In this structure of ends, all human work bestirs itself, the serious life bestirs itself, genuineness bestirs and proves itself. The *fatal* situation of the human being, however, is revealed by the fact that he cannot become absolutely certain of his final purpose by himself, that he staggers in the dark when it comes to the most important question of his existence if no superhuman force helps him. For that reason we find among human beings an utter¹² confusion of language, as soon as it is a matter of saying what the ultimate purpose, the destiny, the true happiness of the human being is. For that reason we also find unrest, haste, and agonizing uncertainty to be characteristic features of the human being’s projective manner of life.

Play does not fit into this manner of life in the way the other activities do. Play is conspicuously set apart from the whole¹³ futural character of life. Play does not allow itself to be incorporated without further ado into the complex architecture of purposes. It does not happen for the sake of the “final purpose.” Play is not worried and disturbed, as our acting otherwise is, by the deep uncertainty in our interpretation of happiness. In relation to the course of life and to its restless dynamic, to its obscure questionworthiness and its forward-rushing orientation toward the future, playing has the character of a pacified “present” and self-contained sense—it resembles an “oasis” of happiness arrived at in the desert of the striving for happiness and Tantalus-like seeking that is otherwise our condition. Play *carries us away*. When we play, we are released for a while from the hustle and bustle of life—as though transported to another planet where life seems lighter, more buoyant, easier. One often says that playing is a “purposeless” or “purpose-free” activity. Such is not the case. It is purposively determined as a comprehensive activity and in the individual steps of the course of play has in each case particular purposes that are linked together. But the *immanent* purpose of play is not, as with purposes in the rest of human activities, projected out toward the highest ultimate purpose. The activity of play has only internal purposes, not ones that transcend it. And where, for instance, we play “for the purpose” of training the body, of martial discipline or for the sake of health, play has already been distorted into an exercise for the sake of something else. In such practices play is guided by foreign goal-setting, and then clearly does

not happen for its own sake. Precisely what is purely self-sufficient about play, the self-enclosed, circular sense of the activity of play, lets a possibility of human sojourn within time appear, one that does not have the character of tearing away and driving forward but rather allows one to tarry and is, as it were, a glimmer of eternity. Because it is the child who predominantly plays, this feature of time is peculiar to the child most of all, concerning which the poet declares,

Oh hours of childhood,
 when behind each shape more than the past appeared
 and what streamed out before us was not the future.
 We felt our bodies growing and were at times
 impatient to *be* grown up, half for the sake
 of those with nothing left but their grownupness.
 Yet were, when playing by ourselves, enchanted
 with what alone endures; and we would stand there
 in the infinite blissful space between world and toy,
 at a point which, from the earliest beginning,
 had been established for a pure event.

Rilke, Fourth Duino Elegy¹⁴

For the adult, on the other hand, play is a strange oasis, a dreamy resting point for restless wandering and continual flight. Play gives us the present. Not, to be sure, that present where we, having become still in the depths of our essence, hear the eternal breath of the world and behold the pure forms in the stream of transience. Play is activity and creativity—and yet it is near to eternal and tranquil things. Play “interrupts” the continuity and context of our course of life that is determined by an ultimate purpose. It withdraws in a peculiar manner from the other ways of directing one’s life; it is at a distance from them. But while it appears to *escape* [entziehen] the standard flow of life, it *relates* [bezieht] to it in a manner that is particularly imbued with sense, namely, in the mode of portrayal [Darstellung]. If one defines play, as is usually done, only in opposition to work, actuality, seriousness, and genuineness, one merely places it, falsely, *next to* other phenomena of life. Play is a fundamental phenomenon of existence, just as primordial and independent as death, love, work and ruling, but it is *not* directed, as with the other fundamental phenomena, by a collective striving for the final purpose. It stands *over and against* them, as it were, in order to assimilate them to itself by portraying them. We play seriousness, play genuineness, play actuality, we play work and struggle, play love and death. And we even play play.

II

The play of human beings, with which we all are intimately acquainted as an often already actualized possibility of our existence, is a phenomenon of existence

of an entirely enigmatic sort. It escapes from the intrusiveness of the rational concept into the polysemy of its masks. Our attempt at a conceptual structural analysis of play must reckon with such disguises. It will hardly offer itself to us as a crystal-clear structural edifice. All play is pleurably attuned, joyfully moved in itself—it is animated. If these stimulating joys of play are extinguished, the activity of play dwindles straightaway. This pleasure in play is a strange pleasure that is difficult to grasp, one that is neither merely sensuous nor yet merely intellectual; it is a creative, formative bliss of its own kind and is in and of itself polysemous, multidimensional. It can incorporate deep sorrow and abysmal grief; it can even pleurably engulf what is horrible.¹⁵

The pleasure that pervades the plot of the tragic play creates its delight and its trembling, beatifying convulsion of the human heart out of such an embrace of what is terrible.¹⁶ In play, the face of the Gorgon, too, is transfigured. What kind of amazing pleasure is that, which is in and of itself so expansive and can merge oppositions in such a way as to encompass horror and bitter heartache¹⁷ while at the same time still giving precedence to joy, such that we, moved to tears, can smile about the comedy and tragedy of our existence, which are brought to presence by the play? Does the pleasure of play contain sorrow and pain only in the way that a present memory, cheerfully attuned, is related to a past grief? Is it only the distance of time that makes the moments of bitterness that have since passed away easier, the pains that once were real? Not at all. In play we do not at all suffer “actual pains”—and yet the pleasure of play allows a grief to resonate in a strange way that is present and yet not actual—but seizes us, catches us, stirs us, shakes us. Sorrow [*Trauer*] is merely “played [*gespielt*]”¹⁸ and is, nevertheless, a power that moves us in the mode of the playful.¹⁹

This pleasure of play²⁰ involves taking delight in a “sphere,” in an imaginary²¹ dimension; it is not merely pleasure *at* play, but also taking pleasure *in* play.

It is now necessary to single out the *sense* of play as a further aspect in the structure of play. To every instance of play as such belongs a sense-imbued element. A merely bodily movement, of a limb-loosening sort, for instance, which we rhythmically repeat, is, strictly speaking, not play. In an unclear manner of expression, one all too often calls such relaxing behavior of animals or of small children a kind of playing. Such movements do not have a “sense” for the ones moving. We can first speak of play only when a specially produced sense belongs to bodily motions. And at the same time we must still distinguish the internal play-sense of a specific instance of play, that is, the sense-context of things, acts and relations that are played—and the external sense, that is, the signification that play has for those who first decide on it, who intend to do it—or even the sense that it may eventually have for spectators who are not participating in it. Of course there are many kinds of play in which the spectators themselves belong as such within the total play-situation (for instance, kinds of play resembling the

ancient circus²² or cultic kinds of play²³)—and on the other hand there are kinds of play for which spectators are not essential.

Here a third aspect of the constitution of play can already be stated: the fellowship of play. Playing is a fundamental possibility of social existence. Playing is interplay, playing with one another, an intimate form of human community. Playing is, structurally, not an individual or isolated activity—it is open to one’s fellow human beings as fellow-players. It is no objection to point out that frequently, though, the ones playing carry out their games “all alone,” apart from their fellow human beings. For, in the first place, being open to possible fellow-players is already included in the sense of play, and, in the second place, such a solitary person often plays with imaginary partners. The community of play need not consist of a number of real persons. However, there must be at least *one* real, actual player, when it is a matter of actual and not merely purported play. Furthermore, another essential aspect of play concerns the rules. Playing is maintained and constituted²⁴ by something binding. One cannot arbitrarily do whatever one wants. Playing is not limitlessly free. One cannot play at all without something binding being determined and adopted. And yet the rules of play are not laws. What binds does not have the character of the unalterable. Even in the middle of a game we can change the rules with our fellow-players’ consent; but then it is precisely the changed rule that counts and that binds the flow of the reciprocal activities. We all know the difference between traditional games, whose rules one accepts, which are publicly known and familiar possibilities of playing compartment, and improvised games, which one, so to speak, “invents”—where one first agrees on the rules in the fellowship of play. One might perhaps think that improvised games would have greater appeal, because in these games free imagination is given more room; because one can run riot in the airy realm of mere possibilities; because here one chooses what binds one; and because here invention, the unrestrained wealth of ideas, can be applied. Yet this is not unconditionally the case. For binding oneself to the already valid rules of play is often experienced pleasurably and positively. This is surprising but can be explained by the fact that in the games passed down it mostly has to do with the products of collective imagination and with what is self-binding in the soul’s archetypical foundations. Some children’s games that seem simple are vestiges of the most ancient magical practices.

To every game belongs also a toy or plaything [*Spielzeug*]. Each of us is familiar with playthings. But it remains difficult to say what a plaything is. It is not a matter of enumerating various types of playthings, but rather a matter of determining the nature of the plaything or rather of actually experiencing it as a genuine problem. Playthings do not delimit a self-contained region of things—as, for instance, artificially produced things do. In nature (in the broad sense of beings existing of their own accord) no artifacts are found—independently of

human producers. Through his work, the human being produces artificial things for the first time. He is the technician of a human environment. He cultivates the field, domesticates wild animals, shapes natural materials into tools, forms clay into jugs, hammers iron into weapons. A tool is an artifact that has been formed by human labor. Artificial things and natural things may be distinguished, but both are things within a common and encompassing actuality.

A plaything can be an artificially produced thing; however, it need not be. Even a simple piece of wood or a broken-off branch can serve as a “doll.” The hammer, which is a human meaning that has been impressed onto a piece of wood and iron, belongs, like the wood, the iron, and the human being himself, to one and the same dimension of the actual. The plaything is different. Seen, so to speak, from the outside, that is, observed from the perspective of the one who is not playing, it is obviously a part, a thing of the simply actual world. It is a thing that, for example, has the intended purpose of keeping children occupied. The doll is considered to be a product of the toy industry. It is a piece of material and wire or a mass of plastic, and can be acquired for purchase at a determined price; it is a commodity. But, seen from the perspective of a playing girl, a doll is a *child*, and the girl is its *mother*. At the same time it is in no way the case that the little girl actually believes that the doll is a living child. She does not deceive herself about this. She does not confuse something on the basis of a deceptive appearance. Rather, she simultaneously knows about the doll-figure and its significance in play. The playing child lives in two dimensions. The plaything’s character of being a plaything, that is, its essence, lies in its *magical* character: it is a thing within simple actuality and at the same time has another, mysterious “reality.” It is thus infinitely more than a mere instrument, more than an incidental, foreign thing that we use to manipulate other things. Human play needs playthings. Precisely in his essential, basic activities, the human being cannot remain free of things; he is dependent on them: in work on the hammer, in ruling on the sword, in love on the bed, in poetry on the lyre, in religion on the sacrificial altar—and in play on the plaything.

Each plaything is a proxy for all things in general. Playing is always a confrontation with beings. In the plaything, the whole is concentrated in a single thing. Every instance of play is an attempt on the part of life, a vital experiment, which experiences in the plaything the epitome of resistant beings in general. But human playing does not occur only as the aforementioned magical contact with the plaything. It is necessary to grasp the concept of the player more acutely and rigorously. For here there exists a very peculiar, though in no way pathological, “schizophrenia,” a splitting of the human being. The one who plays, who enters into a game, performs in the actual world a certain kind of activity that is well known in its characteristic features. Within the internal context of the sense of play, however, he takes on a *role*. And now we must distinguish between the real

human being who “plays” and the human role within the instance of play. The player “conceals” himself by means of his “role”; in a certain measure he vanishes into it. With an intensity of a peculiar sort he lives *in* the role—and, yet again, not like a person who is deluded, who is no longer able to distinguish between “actuality” and “appearance.” The player can call himself back out of the role. In the enactment of play, there remains a knowledge, albeit strongly reduced, about his double existence. It exists in two spheres—but not from forgetfulness or from a lack of concentration. This doubling belongs to the essence of playing. All the structural aspects touched on until now come together in the fundamental concept of the *playworld*. Every sort of playing is the magical production of a playworld. *In* it lie the role of the one playing, the changing roles of the community of play, the binding nature of the rules of play, and the significance of the plaything. The playworld is an imaginary dimension, whose ontological sense poses an obscure and difficult problem. We play in the so-called actual world but we thereby attain [*erspielen*] a realm, an enigmatic field, that is not nothing and yet is nothing actual. In the playworld we move about according to our roles, but in the playworld there are imaginary figures. There is the “child,” who indeed lives and breathes there—but in simple actuality is only a doll or even a piece of wood. In the projection of a playworld the one who plays conceals himself as the creator of this “world.” He loses himself in his creation, plays a role, and has, within the playworld, playworldly things that surround him and playworldly fellow human beings. What is misleading about this is that we imaginatively take these playworldly things themselves to be “actual things”; indeed, in the playworld, we even repeat the difference between actuality and appearance in various ways.

Nevertheless, it is not thereby the case that the genuinely and truly actual things of our everyday environment become so concealed by the playworldly features that they would be covered up, and thus no longer recognizable. That is not the case. The playworld does not present itself like a wall or a curtain in front of the beings surrounding us; it does not obscure or veil them. The playworld does not even have, strictly speaking, a position or duration in the actual context of space and time—but it has its own inner space and its own inner time. And yet we spend actual time playing and need actual space. But the space of the playworld never uninterruptedly coincides with the space that we otherwise inhabit. The same holds for time. The noteworthy interpenetration of the dimension of actuality and the playworld cannot be elucidated by an otherwise familiar model of spatial and temporal proximity. The playworld is not suspended in a mere realm of thought; it always has a real setting, but is, however, never a real thing among real things. Yet it necessarily requires real things in order to gain a foothold in them. This means that the imaginary character of the playworld cannot be explained as a phenomenon of a merely subjective appearance, nor determined to be a delusion that exists only within the interiority of a soul but

in no way is found among and between things in general. The more one attempts to reflect on play, the more enigmatic and questionworthy it seems to become.

We have specified a few fundamental features and come to draw a few distinctions. Human play is a pleurably attuned production of an imaginary play-world. It is a wondrous joy in “appearance.” Play is always also characterized by the aspect of portrayal, by its sense-imbued aspect, and it is in each case transformative: it brings about the “alleviation of life,”²⁵ a temporary, merely terrestrial solution, indeed almost a release from the burdens of existence. It carries us away from a factual state of affairs, from the confinement in a pressing and oppressing situation. It affords us a happiness of fantasy in the flight of possibilities, which remain without the agony of actual choice. In the enactment of play the human being manages to exist at two extremes. Play can at one time be experienced as a peak of human sovereignty; the human being then enjoys an almost unbounded creativity. He creates productively and without inhibition because he does not produce in the realm of real actuality. The player feels as if he were “master” of his imaginary²⁶ products. Playing becomes a distinguished—because it is scarcely restricted—possibility of human freedom. And in fact the element of freedom prevails to a high degree in play. But it remains a difficult question, whether the nature of play must be grasped fundamentally and exclusively from the power of freedom that belongs to existence—or whether completely different grounds of existence reveal themselves and are at work in play as well. And in fact we also find the opposite extreme of freedom in play. For sometimes a relief from real world-actuality can extend all the way to rapture, to enchantment, to succumbing to the daemonic character of the mask. Play can contain within itself the bright Apollonian aspect of free selfhood, but also the dark Dionysian aspect of panic-stricken self-abandonment.

The relation of the human being to the enigmatic appearance of the play-world, to the dimension of the imaginary, is *ambiguous*. Play is a phenomenon for which the appropriate categories do not easily and unambiguously present themselves. Its shimmering, inner polysemy may perhaps most readily be addressed by the cognitive resources of a dialectic that does not level out paradoxes. Great philosophy has always recognized the eminent essentiality of play, which the common understanding does not recognize, because play means to it only something that is idle, something neither serious, nor genuine, nor actual. Thus Hegel, for example, says that, in its indifference and great levity, play is the loftiest and only true seriousness. And Nietzsche puts it in *Ecce Homo* as follows: “I do not know any other way of handling great tasks than as *play*.”²⁷

Is it possible to shed light on play, we must now ask, if it is taken solely as an anthropological phenomenon? Must we not think beyond the human being? I do not mean by this the search for a comportment of play in another living being as well. But it is questionable whether play can be understood in its ontological

constitution without determining more closely the noteworthy dimension of the imaginary. Even supposing that play is something of which only the human is capable, the question still remains whether the human being as a player stays within the human realm or at the same time necessarily comports himself to a realm *beyond* the human one [*Übermenschlichen*] as well.

Originally play is a portraying symbol-activity of human existence in which the latter interprets itself. The earliest games are magical rites, the great gestures of cult, in which the archaic human being interprets his inner standing within the context of the world, where he “portrays” his fate, brings to presence the events of birth and death, of weddings, war, hunting, and work. The symbolic representation of magical games creates elements from out of the circuit of simple actuality, but it also creates from out of the nebulous realm of the imaginary. In primeval times play is not so much understood as the deeply pleasurable carrying out of life on the part of isolated individuals or groups that temporarily remove themselves from social connection and inhabit their small island of ephemeral happiness. Play is primordially the strongest *binding* power. It is community-founding—different, to be sure, from the community of the departed and the living, or from the system of rule or the elementary family. The early human community of play *embraces* all these stated forms and shapes of being together [*Miteinanderseins*] and brings the whole of existence to complete presence. It consolidates the circle of the phenomena of life as the play-community of the *festival*. The archaic festival is more than the merry-making of a people; it is the elevated actuality—the actuality that has been elevated to the magical dimension—of human life in all its relations. It is cultic dramatic play or spectacle [*Schauspiel*], where the human being feels the nearness of the gods, the heroes and the dead, and knows himself as having been placed into the presence of all the blessing and frightening powers of the world-totality. Thus primeval play also has a deep connection with religion. The community of the festival envelops the spectators, the initiates and epopts²⁸ of a cultic play, where the deeds and sufferings of gods and humans appear on the stage, whose boards in fact signify the *world*.

III

Our attempt up to now—to apprehend the structure of play under several conceptual forms: play-attunement, play-community, rules of play, plaything and playworld—repeatedly made use of the expression “the imaginary.” One can translate this word with “appearance.” But an eminent intellectual perplexity is concentrated therein. In general we understand the term “appearance,” especially in specific concrete situations, in this way. But it remains troublesome and difficult to express what we actually mean by it. The greatest questions and problems of philosophy are lodged in the most ordinary words and things. The concept

of appearance is as obscure and unexplored as the concept of Being—and both concepts belong together in an opaque, confusing, downright labyrinthine way, permeating one another in their interplay. The path of the thinking that engages them leads deeper and deeper into the unthinkable.

With the question of appearance, to the extent that it belongs to human playing,²⁹ we have touched on a philosophical problem. Play is creative bringing-forth, it is a production. The product is the playworld, a sphere of appearance, a field whose actuality is obviously not a very settled matter. And nevertheless the appearance of the playworld is not simply nothing. We move about in it while we play; we live in it—certainly sometimes lightly and airily as in a dream world, but at other times also full of ardent devotion and immersion. Such “appearance” has, from time to time, a stronger experiential reality and power of impression than the bulk of everyday things in their worn-out ordinariness. *What*, then, is the imaginary? Where is this strange appearance located; what is its status? Insight into the ontological nature of play depends, not least, on determining its position and status.

Usually we speak of appearance in multiple ways. We mean, for example, the outer semblance of the thing, the superficial aspect, the mere foreground and the like. This appearance belongs to the things themselves—as the shell to the kernel, as manifestation to essence. At another time we speak of appearance in regard to a deceptive, subjective ascertainment,³⁰ an erroneous view, an unclear representation. Then the appearance lies in us, in those who conceive falsely—it lies in the “subject.” In addition, however, there is also a subjective appearance that is not thought of from the relation between the truth or error of the one representing and the things themselves—an appearance that legitimately dwells within our soul, precisely as a construct of the power of imagination, of fantasy. We make use of these abstract distinctions in order to formulate our question. What kind of appearance *is* the playworld? A foreground of things? A deceptive representation? A phantasm in our soul? No one would want to dispute that in every instance of play, fantasy is especially at work and runs free. But are playworlds *merely* constructs of fantasy? It would be too cheap an explanation to say that the imaginary realm of the playworld consists exclusively in human imagination, or that it is an agreement of private delusional representations or private acts of fancy with a collective delusion, with an intersubjective fantasy. Playing is always in contact with playthings. Already with regard to the plaything, one can see that playing does not occur within psychical interiority alone and without support in the objective external world. The playworld contains subjective elements of fantasy and objective, ontic elements. We are acquainted with the imagination as a faculty of the soul. We are acquainted with dreams, inner intuitions, the colorful contents of fantasy. But what is an objective or ontic appearance supposed to mean? Now, there are, in actuality, entirely remarkable things that are themselves

indisputably something actual and nevertheless contain in themselves an aspect of “non-actuality.” This sounds remarkable and astonishing. But everyone is acquainted with such things, yet we do not customarily characterize these things in such a roundabout and abstract way. There are simply objectively present *images*. For instance, a poplar on the lakeside casts its mirror-image on the shimmering surface of the water. Now mirrorings themselves belong to the circumstances of how actual things exist in an illuminated environment. Things in light cast shadows, trees on the shore are mirrored in the lake; on smooth, shiny metal, things in the environment find a reflection. What is the mirror-image? As an image [*Bild*] it is actual, an actual reproduction [*Abbild*] of the actual, original tree. But “in” the image a tree is portrayed. It appears on the surface of the water, and yet in such a manner that it appears there only in the medium of the mirror-appearance, not in actuality. An appearance of such a kind is an *independent* sort of being and contains as a constitutive aspect of its actuality something that is in itself specifically “non-actual”—and, furthermore, in this way rests on another, simply actual being. The image of the poplar tree does not conceal the stretch of the surface of water on which it appears in the manner of a mirror. The mirroring of the poplar is, *as* a mirroring, that is, as a determinate phenomenon of light, an actual thing [*Sache*] and contains the “non-actual” poplar of the mirror-world in itself. That may perhaps sound too stilted—and nevertheless it is not a remote matter, but rather one that is universally known, which lies before our eyes every day. The entire Platonic doctrine of Being, which in large measure has determined Western philosophy decisively, operates again and again with models of reproduction like shadows and mirroring and thereby interprets the structure of the world.

The ontic appearance (mirroring and the like) is more than just an analog of the playworld; it occurs within the playworld for the most part as a structural aspect in its own right. Playing is an actual comportment that, as it were, contains a “mirroring” in itself: the playworldly comportment according to roles. Even the possibility on the part of the human being to productively engender a playworldly appearance depends in large part on there being an actual appearance already in nature in itself. The human being cannot in general only make artifacts; he can also produce artificial things to which an aspect of *existing appearance* belongs as well. He projects imaginary playworlds. By virtue of a production imaginatively carried out, the little girl designates the material body of a doll as a “living child,” and assumes the role of the “mother.” Actual things always belong to the playworld—but in part they have the character of ontic appearance, and in part they are clothed with a subjective appearance stemming from the human soul.

Playing is finite creativity within the magical dimension of appearance.

It is a problem of the greatest profundity and utmost difficulty for thought to unfold precisely how actuality and non-actuality pervade one another in human

play. The conceptual determination of the Being of play leads back to the cardinal questions of philosophy, to speculation about Being and nothing and appearance and becoming. Nevertheless, we cannot develop this here. But, in any case, one sees that the usual talk of the non-actuality of play remains inadequate when one does not inquire into the enigmatic dimension of the imaginary. What human and what cosmic sense does this imaginary dimension have? Does it form a demarcated³¹ region within extant things? Is the strange land of the non-actual the elevated site where the *essentiality* of all things in general is invoked and brought to presence? In the magical, playworldly mirroring, the individual thing (the plaything, for instance) that is singled out by chance becomes a *symbol*. It represents. Human play is (even if we no longer know it) the symbolic activity of bringing the sense of the world and life to presence.

The ontological problems that play presents to us are not exhausted by the questions indicated previously about the *way of Being* of the playworld and about the symbolic value of the plaything or play-activity. In the history of thought one has not only sought to grasp the *Being* of play—but also ventured the tremendous reversal of determining *the sense of Being from out of play*. We call this the speculative concept of play. In brief: speculation is the characterization of the essence of Being *in the metaphor of a being*. It is a conceptual *world formula* that springs from an *innerworldly* model. Philosophers have already employed many such models: Thales water, Plato light, Hegel spirit, and so forth. But the illuminating power of such a model does not depend on the respective thinker's discretion in his selection—it depends decisively on whether in fact the whole of Being repeatedly mirrors itself, of its own accord, in a single being. Wherever the cosmos metaphorically repeats its constitution, its structure and layout in an innerworldly thing, a key philosophical phenomenon is thereby indicated, from which a speculative world formula can be developed.

Now, the phenomenon of play is a manifestation that as such is already distinguished by the fundamental feature of symbolic representation. Does play perhaps become a metaphorical dramatic play or spectacle of the whole, an illuminating, speculative metaphor for the world? This audacious, bold thought has actually been thought before. In the dawn of European thought Heraclitus poses the aphorism: “The course of the world is a playing child, moving pieces on a board—a king's power belongs to the child” (Fragment 52).³² And after twenty-five centuries of the history of thought there is Nietzsche, who writes: “In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence”³³—“The world *is* the play of Zeus . . .”³⁴ (*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*).

The profundity of such a conception—but also its danger and power of seduction—urges us on to an aesthetic interpretation of the world that cannot

be unfolded here. But the strange world formula, which lets beings as a whole prevail as a game, may perhaps give rise to the notion that play is not a harmless, peripheral, or even “childish” affair—that we finite human beings, precisely in the creative power and mastery of our magical production, have “been put on the line [*aufs Spiel gesetzt*]”³⁵ in an abyssal sense. If the essence of the world is thought as play, it thus follows for the human being that he is the only being in the vast universe who is able to *correspond* to the prevailing whole. Only in the correspondence to what is beyond the human may the human being then attain his native essence.

To the playful openness of human existence to the playing ground of the Being of all beings, the poet thus attests:

As long as you catch self-thrown things
 it's all dexterity and venial gain—;
 only when you've suddenly caught that ball
 which she, one of the eternal players,
 has tossed toward you, your center, with
 a throw precisely judged, one of those arches
 that exist in God's great bridge-system:
 only then is catching a proficiency,—
 not yours, a world's. And if you then had
 strength and courage to return the throw,
 no, more wonderful: forgot strength and courage
 and had *already* thrown . . . (as the year
 throws the birds, those migrating bird swarms,
 which an older to a younger warmth sends
 catapulting across oceans—) only
 in that venture would you truly join in.
 No longer making the throw easy; no longer making
 it hard. Out of your hands the meteor
 would launch itself and flame into its spaces . . .

Rilke, *Late Poems*³⁶

When thinkers and poets point in such a humanly profound way to the immense significance of play, we should also be mindful of the saying: we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven if we do not become as children.

66. *Eugen Fink: Actes du Colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle, 23–30 juillet 1994*, organized and edited by Natalie Depraz and Marc Richir (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997).

67. See, for example, *Bildung im technischen Zeitalter: Sein, Mensch und Welt nach Eugen Fink*, ed. Annette Hilt and Cathrin Nielsen (Freiburg: Alber, 2005); *Lebenswelten: Ludwig Landgrebe–Eugen Fink–Jan Patočka; Wiener Tagungen zur Phänomenologie 2002*, ed. Helmuth Vetter (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2003); Böhmer, ed., *Eugen Fink: Sozialphilosophie–Anthropologie–Kosmologie–Pädagogik–Methodik*; and Nielsen and Sepp, eds., *Welt Denken*.

68. For a description of the project, see Cathrin Nielsen and Hans Rainer Sepp, “Das Projekt einer Gesamtausgabe der Werke Eugen Finks,” in Böhmer, ed., *Eugen Fink: Sozialphilosophie–Anthropologie–Kosmologie–Pädagogik–Methodik*, 286–93.

69. For more on this term, see Stefan Deines, “Formen und Funktionen des Spielbegriffs in der Philosophie,” in *Spielformen des Selbst: Das Spiel zwischen Subjektivität, Kunst und Alltagspraxis*, ed. Regine Strätling (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 27.

Oasis of Happiness

1. TS 1: instead of “structure,” “total sense [*Sinnanzien*]” is written.
2. TS 1: after “its,” “categorical” is crossed out with ink.
3. TS 1: after “Plato,” “or Nietzsche” is crossed out with ink.
4. TS 1: after “salt,” “the subtleness of Zarathustra’s masks” is crossed out with ink.
5. Instead of “One” up to “activity,” in TS 1 is found: “Insofar as it is a possibility of the human being that one is acquainted with firsthand, we are much more familiar with play firsthand than with any phenomenon of the external environment or with the findings researchable by natural science regarding our own embodiment, {crossed out in ink: ‘inasmuch as these are withdrawn from the immediate testimony of our experience’}. Playing does not primarily signify processes that we become aware of, let alone first discover, but rather an activity that we engage in, that we enact spontaneously.”
6. Instead of “especially,” in TS 1 is found “obviously.”
7. TS 1: after “not,” “definitively” is crossed out with ink.
8. Before “in contrast,” in TS 1 and 2 is found “as a counter-phenomenon.”
9. Cf. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), Fifteenth Letter, 107: “For, to mince matters no longer, 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.*”
10. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 68 *passim*.
11. TS 2: “threefold” is interpolated.
12. Instead of “an utter,” in TS 1 and 2 is found “the Babylonian.”
13. TS 1: “whole,” written in ink, is a substitution for “otherwise.”
14. *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage, 1989), 171–73.
15. TS 2: Instead of the paragraph that begins section 2, there is written, “This warrants being grasped more precisely. In order to at all attain the approach to a sufficient concept of play, insight into the structure and the structural context of play as such is required. Initially we can characterize as an essential aspect the fact that play is ‘attuned.’ To be sure, every human activity and omission is attuned in some way, be it cheerfully or sorrowfully or submerged in the gray mist of indifference. Play, however, is pleasurably attuned on a fundamental level. The joy of play pervades and holds sway over the whole instance of play in each case, sustaining

and animating it. If the joy of play is extinguished, the activity of play dwindles straightaway. That does not mean, however, that, in playing, we are always cheerful and glad. The pleasure of play is a remarkable pleasure that is difficult to figure out. It does not resemble ordinary sensuous pleasure, which, for instance, accompanies unhindered corporeal movement, the bodily thrill of speed and the like; and it is also not a purely cerebral pleasure, a merely intellectual joy. It is a pleasure that belongs to a creative process of an entirely special sort, and is in itself polysemous: namely, it can precisely contain within itself profound sorrow and abyssal grief. It has such a breadth that it takes on its evident {TS 1: ‘apparent’} opposite as one of its aspects.”

16. TS 2: after “what is terrible,” there is written, “The portrayal of what is horrible excites in a pleasurable way.”

17. TS 2: “which is in and of itself” to “heartache” is an emendation in ink of “which so mixes and blends, so shoves the otherwise separated oppositions into one another.”

18. [This is an untranslatable word-play in which Fink is referring to German *Trauerspiel*, a form of tragic drama.]

19. TS 2: After “playful,” the following lines have been crossed out with ink: “But it is able to do that only as an ingredient of the encompassing pleasure of play. The pleasure of play belongs in a distinctive way to the enactment of play. It cannot be compared with other well-known ways of taking pleasure in performing a function. To be sure, everywhere that we do not accept our own lives passively, everywhere that we exist spontaneously therein, carry out our lives of our own accord and shape it through creative processes, we also always feel a pleasurable joy that need not at all be joy about something. The productive form of existence is in itself an ‘upsurge [*Aufschwung*].’ But playing production is pervaded by a pleasure that is incomparable with other joys of enactment and psychical upsurges.”

20. TS 2: “The pleasure of play is grounded not only in the aspect of productive spontaneity—it” was replaced in ink by “This pleasure of play.”

21. TS 2: “imaginary” is an emendation in ink of “objective.”

22. [*Zirzensischen . . . Spielen*. See n. 4, p. 334.]

23. TS 2: “or cultic kinds of play” is added in pencil.

24. “and constituted” is not found in TS 1.

25. [This phrase can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, II, “Auf den glückseligen Inseln,” in *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA) 4, new ed., ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1999), 110: “Schaffen—das ist die grosse Erlösung vom Leiden, und des Lebens Leichtwerden. Aber dass der Schaffende sei, dazu selber thut Leid noth und viel Verwandlung”; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, Second Part, “On the Blessed Isles,” ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66: “Creating—that is the great redemption from suffering, and life’s becoming light. But in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation.”]

26. TS 1: “imaginary” is a replacement for “magical.”

27. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols: And Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), “Why I Am So Clever,” §10, p. 99.

28. [See n. 10, p. 335.]

29. After “playing,” in TS 1 and 2 is found: “as a dimension.”

30. Instead of “ascertainment [*Erfassung*],” in TS 1 and 2 is found: “conception [*Auffassung*].”

31. Instead of “demarcated,” in TS 1 is found: “enclosed.”

32. Fragment 52 (in Diels/Kranz’s enumeration). Cf. Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1979), 71: “Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child.”

33. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1962), 62; Fink’s emphasis.

34. *Ibid.*, 58; trans. modified. Fink emphasizes “is,” rather than “play.”

35. [A more literal translation would be “put into play.”]

36. *Uncollected Poems: Rainer Maria Rilke*, trans. Edward Snow (New York: North Point, 1966), 139.

1. Play as a Philosophical Problem

1. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1.

2. [“You will be like God.”] Genesis 3:5.

3. Instead of “primordially,” TS has “more primordially.”

4. [*Zirzensische Veranstaltungen*. Fink probably means something broader than “circus” in its contemporary sense and intends something closer to the Roman circus as catchall for every manner of public spectacle and diversion, from musical and theatrical performance to sport and carnival. Context suggests that Fink is also pointing to attempts to organize, channel, and control the open and creative possibilities of play that public festivals such as the Olympics and circus represent.]

5. After “substance,” TS has “an event, what ‘inanimate’ and ‘living’ are, what artificial things are.”

6. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.*”

7. Fragment 30 (in Diels/Kranz’s enumeration). Cf. Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 45: “The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out.”

8. After “saying,” in TS is found “But there is also frequently a cheap modesty that relieves itself of making any effort on its own.”

9. Fragment 52 (in Diels/Kranz’s enumeration). Cf. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 71: “Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child.”

10. Instead of “brings all beings to pass,” TS has “lets all beings be.”

11. In Diels/Kranz’s enumeration. Cf. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 71: “Immortals are immortal, mortals immortal, living the others’ death, dead in the others’ life.”

12. *Laws* II 644d, VII 803c.

13. From Fragment 90 (in Diels/Kranz’s enumeration). Cf. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 47: “All things are requital for fire, and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods.”

14. From Fragment 32 (in Diels/Kranz’s enumeration). Cf. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 83: “The wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be spoken of by the name of Zeus.”

15. “above all” is not in TS.

16. [This rare term can also mean “thoroughly gives power to.”]