UNDERSTANDING A WORK OF ART THROUGH PLAY AND AGREEMENT

UNDERSTANDING A WORK OF ART THROUGH PLAY AND AGREEMENT: A STUDY OF GADAMER'S CENTRAL NOTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING A WORK OF ART

BY
TANYA DITOMMASO, B.A.
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AUTHOR: Tanya DiTommaso, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: G.B. Madison, Professor of Philosophy, B.A. (St. Joseph's College, Ind.), M.A. (Marquette), Ph.D. (Paris)

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Abstract

This thesis is devoted to a study of Gadamer's work on play and truth. I shall begin with an analysis of Gadamer's notion of play. Since it is presumptuous on my part to assume that I could possibly give an all-inclusive account of Gadamer's notion of play, I shall at this point inform my reader that I cannot help but discuss play in a particular spotlight, highlighting certain aspects which are relevant for the next phase of my thesis. Upon the completion of my exposition of Gadamer's play, I shall then discuss the feature of agreement in Gadamer's notion of truth. After describing Gadamer's notion of play in agreement, I shall then introduce Mary Devereaux's work on Gadamer to my discussion.

Upon the entrance of Devereaux, I shall offer a brief outline of Devereaux's interpretation of Gadamer. In discussing her position, I intend to identify Devereaux's misinterpretation of Gadamer's own stance. Through the course of my analysis, it will become clear how Devereaux has gravely misinterpreted Gadamer's notion of agreement and how she has not, therefore, taken into account the full implications of Gadamer's notions of play and truth.

After dealing with Devereaux's misunderstanding of Gadamer's work on agreement, I shall insist that Devereaux's interpretation arises out of a lack of attention to the subject of play. It will be shown that what Devereaux is talking about is more akin to a 'consensus' than to an 'agreement'. To illustrate this, however, I must draw the necessary distinction(s) between these two concepts.

My purpose in this thesis is to clearly outline Gadamer's notion of agreement in truth and, consequently, this task requires me to defend Gadamer from an interpretation such as Devereaux's. However, if one might still ask, 'if Devereaux's work is such a painful misinterpretation, then why bother to use it in a thesis?', my reply would be: 'I am using Devereaux's work simply because it offers itself as an opportunity where a necessary distinction between agreement and consensus must be constructed and, further, I find that Devereaux's own pessimistic and cynical position - born from the failure to draw such a clear and important distinction - is an unfortunate result of a view which disregards the highly significant role of play in interpretation.

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Lastly, I owe *many* thanks to Adrian Grah. Through the merging of our disciplines, the symposium of *aletheia* no longer remains concealed.

- *Ditto*

Contents

Abbreviations

TM Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975).

RB Hans-Georg Gadamer, The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays, translated by Nicholas Walker and edited by Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] and New York: Cambridge University Press,1986).

PH Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, translated and edited by David E. Linge (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1976).

INTRODUCTION

When we begin to assess Gadamer's comments on aesthetics, we find that we are immersed in a discussion which stresses the significance of the *process* of our encounter with a work of art. When Gadamer speaks of our encounter with a work, he discusses it in relation to his notion of play. What the aspect of play makes us realize, is that every time we speak of the 'what' (which is encountered or said in and by a work of art) we must never forget that it is said *to*, and encountered *by*, the one who playfully enters into a dialogue with the work. When we emphasize the playful dialogue between the player and the work, we find that the significance which art may have for us cannot be spoken of as something separate and distinct from this dialogical encounter. It would, therefore, be inexcusable (after a reading of Gadamer) to find the significance of a work of art to lie independently and intrinsically in either the work of art or the subject.[1] This last point will be a key factor to take into account when Gadamer's notion of agreement is addressed.

I begin my thesis with the topic of play because it is an essential element needed to properly understand the agreement and truth which Gadamer is talking about. Since Gadamer's use of play describes what happens when we understand a work of art, I shall therefore, explore this use of play in order to tease out what Gadamer means when he speaks of understanding another in such a way that an agreement is allowed to be born. It is not so much 'what' is

played around with that is important, rather it is 'how' one does the playing that is the sole focus of my first chapter on play. When I later speak of truth and/or agreement, what will become crucial to the course of this discussion is the sense in which the process of play affects what can be said about truth as an agreement. Thus, to discuss play before agreement or truth is merely to give the recipe before tasting the mixture.

Since I have now swirled through an outline of my first two chapters, I shall apologize for any dizziness that my reader might have sustained, and I shall offer a more linear outline of what is to follow in all of the chapters of this thesis. I shall begin my first chapter on play with a brief introduction which explains the significance the subject of play has in relation to art. I shall then proceed to summarize Gadamer's main position in relation to play. In this chapter, I shall make considerable reference to the two primary sources The Relevance of the Beautiful and Truth and Method. Through my emphasis on certain aspects of play, the stage will be set, so to speak, for the introduction of my second chapter.

In my second chapter, I shall begin with a short evaluation of why play is so vital a part of our understanding the notion of an agreement. I shall then speak of agreement as being Gadamer's position on truth. Because the matter of truth is not explicitly and directly addressed by Gadamer in the two primary sources which I am using, I shall therefore, make full use of the material found in the secondary literature on this point. After both the first chapter and the introduction to the significance of the second chapter, it will be my intention to highlight the *process* of an agreement.

The discussion in my first and second chapters is more or less prompted by Mary

Devereaux's article "Can Art Save Us?". But before I start to address the reasons why Devereaux's article caught my interest (and brought me to want to outline Gadamer's notions of play and agreement) I shall draw a distinction between the notion of a consensus and that of an agreement. We must become attentive to the *processes* involved in the consensus and the agreement in order to illustrate the differences between the two. Beginning with my own common-sense distinction between consensus and agreement, I shall then summarize the content of Devereaux's article in order to show that Devereaux's discussion inadvertently accepts, and develops out of, the concept of a consensus, while Gadamer's position, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in the notion of an agreement.

The significance of my preceding discussion of play and agreement (in chapters 1 and 2) will become apparent simply through my analysis of Devereaux's misconceptions, which, I shall argue, stem from either a misreading of or an inattentiveness to the notions of play and agreement. My conclusion will clearly point out where Devereaux's interpretation of Gadamer is misled. In this conclusion, it will be apparent that Devereaux is guided to a cynical and pessimistic position simply because she has not taken into account the full import of play and agreement in Gadamer's work. And finally, we may in fact avoid Devereaux's pessimistic conclusion altogether if only we reconstruct her interpretation in such a way that it no longer misconstrues the tenets of Gadamer's own position (which are outlined in the body of my thesis).

One word of caution: I shall be highlighting how the nature of our encounter with a work of art cannot be reduced to mere subjectivity. In my first chapter, we will find that Gadamer's attempt to free play from the shackles of subjectivity is most important for uncovering the

status/perspective of the player in relation to play.[2] While I place a great deal of emphasis on the lack of subjectivity in play, I do not, however, mean to ignore Gadamer's insistence on the point that the work of art is not an object which carries all significance of meaning in and by itself. Throughout my focus on the lack of subjectivity, I would like my reader to know that I am not assuming that the work has all of its significance independent of its interpreters. If this is the case, then it goes without saying that I do not mean to imply that the work of art has a meaning bestowed upon it by its creator, and that the whole point of interpretation is merely to try to uncover the significance that the author intended.

It is clear that Gadamer does not maintain that the object of interpretation is a single, objective meaning which is identical with what the artist intended.[3] Although I may speak of the lack of one fixed, significant meaning in interpretation, it is an unfortunate consequence of the scope of my thesis that I am not able to completely delve into Gadamer's critique of objectivity in interpretation.[4] Consequently, I shall not be focusing on the role of prejudice in play and interpretation. To get where I am going in this thesis, I must remain preoccupied (or at the very least, I shall have to pay more attention to) Gadamer's attack against subjectivity.

At this point, I would like to clarify some of the terms that I have employed for this thesis. Whenever I speak of 'meaning', I am using this term without making a split between the notions of meaning and significance.[5] When speaking of meaning, I am always speaking of a meaning that *has significance* for the being who interprets the meaning in some way. In not distinguishing between meaning and significance, I thereby always remain in the realm of interpretation. There is no meaning in and of itself; meaning is only meaningful *to* or *for*

someone.

Another point which I would like to clarify is how I shall be using the words 'player', 'spectator', and 'interpreter' interchangeably. What this amounts to is as much as saying that there can be no spectator who is not actively involved in an interpretive play; insofar as we are genuinely encountering a work, we are interpreting it.[6] There is no absolute distance between the spectator and the work of art. We cannot 'coolly' grasp the 'form' of the work through some high-powered lenses off in some lofty place. We are, rather, involved with the work; to encounter a work is to get our hands dirty, so to speak.[7] All of what I have said is not unreasonable, for it is Gadamer himself who puts the matter of interpretation/encounter in this light. Consider the following:

> No one can avoid playing along with the game. Another important aspect of play as a communicative activity, so it seems to me, is that it does not really acknowledge the distance separating the one who plays and the one who watches the play. The spectator is manifestly more than just an observer who sees what is happening in front of him, but rather one who is a part of it insofar as he literally 'takes part'.[8]

Before we get caught up in the movement of all of this, I should mention how my own thesis - responding to the circularity of Gadamer's own writings - will evolve as, and from, a circular reading of Gadamer. For example, some of what I say in the first chapter may not be completely understood until the next chapter. What will be said in the second or third chapter, on the other hand, may influence the reader's opinion as to what should be taken from the first chapter as being more fundamental for an understanding of my thesis. As new things are brought to the surface in each chapter, the significance of the previous chapters may, in fact, have

altered.[9] We may find that parts of what I had previously quoted will have been quoted again in a different context in order to shed some more light on the significance that they may have for this thesis. I say all of this as a way to explain how, even in this brief introduction, I have managed to refer to play by speaking of understanding. However, what is *meant* by understanding, the significance of its relation to play, or what I have said in this introduction for that matter, must remain in the dark until the whirling nature of this thesis has taken its course. To do this, we must now turn our attention to what Gadamer says about the nature of play.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. I am taking this 'either/or' as being an exclusive disjunction.

2. With this, I do not mean to suggest that Gadamer completely does away with the notion of subjectivity. What I am stressing is the sense in which Gadamer attempts to make the encounter with art 'less' subjective than it can, or has been, dogmatically thought to be. This exact point is made by Gary Madison in his work, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", Hermeneutics of Postmodernity (Figures and Themes) (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 117. Madison makes this point by saying that Gadamer is only trying to develop a *new* sense of subjectivity (less subjectivistic than previous accounts), and that Gadamer does not wish to eradicate the notion of subjectivity altogether.

3. Gary Madison, "A Critique of Hirsch's *Validity*", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity (Figures and Themes) (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 5-7, 12-22. Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics", PH, pp. 95, 100.

4. Although I am unable to pursue the topic of objectivity, there is considerable talk of this issue in Bernstein's work. For more on this matter, see Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), pp. 1-4, 16-20, 32-37, 126-131, 219-231.

5. For more on what this distinction would amount to, see: Mark Wilson, "The Blending of Meaning and Significance", De Philosophia, No. 4, 1983, pp. 32-74.

6. We cannot understand without, at one and the same time, interpreting. In fact, "understanding and interpretation are ultimately the same thing". TM, p. 350.

7. Detsch comments on this, in a fashion similar to that of my own remarks, when he says, "for Gadamer, the human being does not approach play from a more clearly defined area outside of play but is always involved in play by the very fact of being human. [This is evidence of] Gadamer's objection to 'subjective internalization'." Richard Detsch, "A Non-Subjectivist Concept of Play - Gadamer and Heidegger versus Rilke and Nietzsche", Philosophy Today, Summer 1985, p. 167.

8. RB, p. 24.

9. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 31. My point of how our reading of one thing can alter our understanding of the entire text is mentioned by Bernstein when he quotes

Kuhn: "When reading the works of an important thinker, look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, I continue, when those passages make sense, then you may find that more central passages, ones you previously thought you understood, have changed their meaning".

CHAPTER 1

PLAY

1.1 Introduction

Although it may not be self-evident at the outset, a discussion of play is quite relevant for determining the process and nature of our encounter with a work of art. Whenever we understand a work of art, we are already - or should I say, we have already been - immersed in play.[1] It is this process of play which I would like to sketch for my reader. With this sketch, we will find that we can draw further lines which will allow us to remark on the nature of *our* encounter with art.

After some difficulty with actually beginning this chapter, I decided that any fancy introduction simply would not do. I have subsequently chosen to introduce the topic of play in the light that Gadamer himself does. There are a few reasons why Gadamer actually speaks of the encounter we have with a work of art, as something which is playful. To begin with, Gadamer uses the concept of play in order to ascertain the nature of understanding in general.

In his depiction of the characteristic nature of play, we find that Gadamer has used play as a way to describe the *process* of understanding.

Application now becomes one of the reasons for Gadamer's acceptance of play into his philosophy. Not only does Gadamer claim that application is necessary for understanding to occur, he further indirectly affirms this through his *own* application of the concept of play to understanding.[2] I only mention the notion of application - without wishing to delve into all that is involved in such a notion - so as to point out how Gadamer would acknowledge that his utilization of the concept of play serves as an application for understanding the process of understanding itself.[3] In using the work of art to describe the mode of being of play, Gadamer will also be depicting the mode of being of understanding and truth.[4]

Gadamer speaks of our encounter with art as a linguistic event.[5] In fact, Gadamer's primary ontological position lies in his belief that all being is language, which as self-presentation is "...revealed to us by the hermeneutical experience of being".[6] What this then points us towards is the structure of all understanding as an event.[7] If we must *apply* something like the concept of play (or something else for that matter - for example, our prejudices or our own context) in order for us to understand something else, nothing could be understood without our being involved in applying things to other things. If I am to understand x, then I must interpret x into my own context, by applying something else to x. When Gadamer speaks of understanding, he is not referring to our finding and reaching a final verdict regarding x. When understanding is spoken of, the end result is not being conjured up, but rather, Gadamer is referring to the *event* of the *process* of understanding. Play is therefore incorporated into Gadamer's philosophy, since

it shows itself to be such that it describes (and itself can be described only in terms of) the processes involved in an event of understanding.

The concept of play that Gadamer is working with is described as an ontological event, where *in* play, being becomes 'meaningfully visible'.[8] I shall have to leave aside, at this particular point in my thesis, the relation between play and meaning-becoming-visible; for the moment, we must continue with our discussion of the event of understanding. Not only is the process of play invoked in a process of understanding, but we can also learn a great deal about the stance/perspective of the individual who encounters a work of art through an understanding of the nature of play. In the discussion of play in Truth and Method, we might at first find that Gadamer is certain to inform his reader that his concept of play - unlike previous subjective schemes designed for play - directs us towards determining the nature and being *of play*, rather than towards an aesthetic attitude that a perceiver may entertain.[9] Gadamer offers the following statement of his intention at the start of his attempt to determine the nature of play;

> I wish to free this concept [play] from the subjective meaning which it has...if, in connection with the experience of art, we speak of play, this refers neither to the attitude nor even to the state of mind of the creator or of those enjoying the work of art, nor to the freedom of a subjectivity expressed in play, but to the mode of being of the work of art itself.[10]

Imbedded in Gadamer's comments on play, we find a critique of subjectivity. Through focusing on the nature of play, Gadamer attempts to make it evident that whatever is arrived at *by* this play, is not a product of sheer, subjective whim. It is through the notion of play that Gadamer can free us from thinking of works of art only in relation to whatever subjective fancy we have

for them. This preoccupation - to deny that play comes about, and is furnished by, merely a subjective attitude - lies at the heart of Gadamer's discussion of play, as well as his analysis of the event of understanding.[11]

To understand why our encounter with art is not reduced to subjectivity, we first need to turn briefly to language. As we recognize our human condition, we begin to see that our encounter(s) with language never begin, remain, or end in our subjective consciousness. Rather, our human condition renders us less than god-like in our conscious reflections on language. So, the next issue becomes: what is this state or condition of being human which results in our having a not-so-subjective encounter with language? To adequately address this question, we must focus on our condition of 'being-thrown'.

Initially, we are 'thrown' into a world. As a result, we are thrown into the conversation which 'we belong to before it belongs to us'. In a most important sense, we, as finite beings, can never escape our 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*). The ongoing conversation, which we are thrown into, shapes our prejudices; our 'fore-structure' of understanding[12] takes shape 'above and beyond' our willing. The conversation is the thing we are born into. This conversation is the 'pre-condition', and the material, from which we dynamically create a dialogue.[13] As a result, all of our linguistic encounters will take place without our having total control over the entire situation. When we exert our 'control', we take part in the 'conversation' by entering into a dialogue and thereby 'making language our own'.[14] However, when we enter into a dialogue, we are never (and indeed, we will never be) in full possession of the 'conversation'.[15] Essentially, 'being-thrown' means that the being of language is prior to our subjective

consciousness; "...we are situated in a world before we begin to think for ourselves, even before we are conscious of ourselves".[16]

Having a world is part of our 'fore-structure' of understanding. The 'world' that we have is not an object which stands before the subjective 'eye'. The 'world' is not a 'picture' or 'mental representation' upon which a subject deliberates. As we become conscious of our having a 'world' we are already situated in a 'world'. Our reflection on ourselves in the 'world' is grounded in our already having a 'world'; "wherever man opens his eyes and ears...he finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed...he merely responds to the call of unconcealment".[17]

It will be shown that our 'playful' encounter with art rests in something other than a subjective consciousness. This 'de-subjectivisation' of the concept of play will be one of the essential points to keep in mind throughout this entire thesis - for such a move away from subjectivity will entail certain things which will be essential for the subsequent chapters on agreement and truth.

After we find that Gadamer is interested in the mode of being of play, or more specifically, that he is intent on saying that play *is* the mode of being of works of art, we find ourselves slowly being seduced into Gadamer's sweeping discussion that takes us back to determining what can be said about the stance/perspective which one may occupy during an encounter with the work of art. The point of this chapter on play is to do precisely the same thing; that is, I wish to discuss the mode of being of the work in order to ascertain the part that the player plays in an encounter with the work.

1.2 On The Mode of Being of The Work of Art

We are told that the mode of being of the work of art is play. When Gadamer speaks of the 'mode of being' of the work of art he is referring to the *way* in which the work of art is what it most truly is. Rather than saying *'that* a work is', the 'mode of being' speaks of *how* the work of art is what it is (i.e., its essence). A discussion of the mode of being of a work of art is an inquiry into understanding how the work of art encounters man's understanding.[18] Gadamer maintains that the mode of being of the work of art does not refer to the subjective consciousness. If play is the mode of being of a work of art, does this then mean that the play exists in the work of art apart from its having-to-be-played by the player? The answer to this question is 'no'. However, to *understand* what this question and answer entails, we will first have to hear what Gadamer says about the nature of play in the work of art, then we will have to speak of the *rules* of the play-game (*das Spiel*).

Gadamer maintains that play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play, and moreover, that play is not 'limited' by a situation where there are no 'playful' subjects.[19] The players of play are, in a sense, passive in their 'playfulness'; Gadamer claims that "the players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation through the players".[20] What Gadamer is saying here is not that the play exists outside of the realm of it being played, but rather, that the play is more *fundamental* than the players.[21] In our encounter with art, the play takes precedence over the individual players; the play "happens to

us over and above our wanting and doing".[22] What is important in play is the fact that it occurs in a *playful manner.* It is not so important *who* plays in the game; Gadamer's focus in his discussion of play is on the *manner* in which the play-game is undertaken, and indeed, *must* be undertaken, in order for us to satisfy what the work demands. I shall move onto the 'demands' of the work when I discuss the rules of the game, but at the present moment, we still have to clarify the terms Gadamer is employing when he moves within the sphere of play in art.

We should not be easily swayed into thinking that the play exists all in the work of art, and that there is really no need for a human subject. There is a most fundamental role which the work of art 'requires' a subject to play. The work needs a player to 'play its game' - since it is only when the work is played that the work can find an 'outlet' for what is to be 'said' and 'heard';

> ...the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it. The 'subject' of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself...the players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation through the players.[23]

For the moment, I shall put aside the notion of transformation so that I can focus on Gadamer's critique of subjectivity. Although the work uses its players in order to 'reach its presentation', this presentation is not arrived at through the subjective consciousness of the player. What we achieve through play is an understanding of what the *work* says, rather than an understanding of what our consciousness has ordered.[24] The playful attitude of the player is not rehearsed, defined, and constructed by the player prior to the event of play; the player's stance is not one that is

controlled, designed, and formed by the subjective consciousness in isolation, or prior to, the act of play. When Gadamer speaks of play, he does not mean that the subject carries along a 'pre-fabricated', playful attitude which can be put on and taken off at will. Rather, when play is spoken of, we are reminded that what is essential to the mode of being of play is that we *are in* play, and that play lies somewhere among all the players. Gadamer speaks of the importance of our being *in* play, rather than our entering into play, when he says,

> Hence the mode of being of play is not such that there must be a subject who takes up a playing attitude in order that the game may be played. Rather, the most original sense of playing is the medial one. Thus we say that something is 'playing' somewhere or at some time, that something is going on (sich abspielt, im Spiele ist).[25]

At the end of the above passage, we find the words 'im Spiele ist', which translates 'is in the play [game]' or 'is at play'. Our being-in-play is what in part furnishes our playful attitude.[26] We might even say that *in* play, we *are* or *behave* in a certain way. The idea that the player has a playful attitude is not a question of the subject having prior and full knowledge of a certain 'state-of-mind'. Furthermore, when we think of play, we do not think of an independent subject who knows when, and how, to adopt the playful attitude. In play, there is not the cool, self-controlled manipulation of one's own attitude, but rather, insofar as we are *in* play, we *are* playful.[27]

One who encounters art 'plays along with' the play, and thereby *takes part* in the act of play. According to Gadamer, an absolute 'distance' between the work of art and the interpreter is an erroneous conception. The interpreter and the object always interact in their encounter with

one another. The encounter is described as a 'fusion' between the onlooker and the work. Gadamer maintains that to have an encounter with a work of art entails that one is not separated from the work. The play between the interpreter and the work signifies that "art...can never really be divorced from the con-geniality of the one who experiences it";[28]

> The concept of play was introduced precisely to show that everyone involved in play is a participant. It should also be true of the play of art that there is in principle no radical separation between the work of art and the person who experiences it.[29]

We should not think of this encounter as one wherein a fully complete subject stumbles across a fully complete object; the subject and the object properly are, and emerge out of, their encounter as players in play:

> ...the work of art is not to be considered, and analyzed, solely, or even primarily, as an independently existing object occasionally confronted by an aesthetically conscious subject...the work of art never fully comes into being as such until the viewer constructs, or constitutes, that work.[30]

In his attempt to get 'beyond' both subjectivity and objectivity, Gadamer understands and describes both the work and the interpreter in terms of, and in relation to, the other. Neither the work of art nor the human who encounters it is described in abstraction. Both the object and the subject are 'properly' discussed in terms of their relation to other things (e.g., in terms of each other, understanding, and language). Although we may *use* the words 'subject' and 'object', the concepts of both, as Gadamer explains, are abstractions from the encounter wherein the two are inextricably bound together.

Despite the great deal which can be said about Gadamer's fight against objectivity, I shall, for the present purpose of this thesis, remain tied to the battle Gadamer wages against subjectivity. It is in the subject's curious 'loss of self' that the player brings about a condition which allows the being of the work to surface into the encounter between the player and the work. Rather than thinking of the player as one who actively digs away at and uncovers the work, or who consciously constructs the work, the player should be thought of as one who, in playing (and even unknowingly), creates a situation which is most *favourable* to the work's being, and which thereby gives a context for the being of the work to be said and heard.

The subject's lack of control over the play is continuously spoken of by Gadamer in order to ensure that his reader has no mistaken impression about play as being something which lies in a purely subjective consciousness. We are told that the player has "a curious lack of decisiveness",[31] and that the play "fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in his play".[32] In play, one can become so engrossed in the game that one ends up having the game 'outplay' oneself.[33] The subject's attitude in play is not one of a complete master *over* the play, but rather, it is one of *servitude to* the play. There is always an element of *surprise* in play; one cannot always know the outcome of the play. Even in the case where one may wish or think to know of the outcome, if one is genuinely at play, one is always caught in the 'tide', so to speak, of play. On this exact point, Gadamer writes:

> ...all playing is a being-played. The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game tends to master the players. Even when it is a case of games in which one seeks to accomplish tasks that one has set oneself, there is a risk whether or not it will 'work', 'succeed', and 'succeed

> again', which is the attraction of the game. Whoever 'tries' is in fact the one who is tried. The real subject of the game...is not the player, but instead the game itself. The game is what holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there.[34]

Since the outcome of the play is unknowable, and perhaps even surprising, we can never have exact foreknowledge of the entire situation. Thus, we are not in a position of complete control. In describing the subject's inability to master the play, the above paragraph may also provoke our curiosity and desire to understand what it is about the nature of the work of art that engrosses the player into such a 'risky' play, wherein what is played is 'above and beyond' what one subjectively intends. To understand the way in which play tends to master and surpass the human subject, we must first turn our attention to the general type of movement in play, and then more specifically, we must address the structure of movement which is directed or encouraged by the work of art. Only then can we attempt to understand what Gadamer means when he speaks of an 'attraction' that the movement of play seems to exhibit over the player in play.

1.3 The Unceasing Movement of Play

Gadamer continually speaks of play as that which *moves*. In an encounter with a work of art, there is a "to and fro of constantly repeated movement".[35] This is a play which never ceases to move back and forth. In play, what we find is an activity which happens "over and above what

is strictly necessary and purposive".[36] What seems to take shape in play is the sense of an 'excess' of movement and play, for play's own sake: "play appears as a self-movement that does not pursue any particular end or purpose so much as movement *as* movement, exhibiting so to speak a phenomenon of excess, of living self-representation".[37] Insofar as the phenomenon of repetition of movement in play is apparent, there is a sense of 'self-sameness' which is 'desired'; what is 'desirable' is the "...self-representation of [the play's] own movement".[38] With all of this, we get a sense that there is no one, specific, end state which is intended in play. Rather than striving for the culmination of all movement, there is only a desire for continuous movement.[39] On the nature of play and movement, Gadamer says the following:

> Surely the first thing is the to and fro of constantly repeated movement - we only have to think of certain expressions like 'the play of light' and 'the play of waves' where we have such a constant coming and going, back and forth, a movement that is not tied down to any goal. Clearly what characterizes this movement back and forth is that neither pole of the movement represents the goal in which it would come to rest.[40]

The movement desires nothing other than itself. And to have itself, the movement needs players. Because the movement needs players in order to get the ball bouncing, so to speak, we can say that the movement desires players to play in, and continue, its movement. In connection with this unceasing movement, we again find Gadamer hinting at the primacy of the movement (the constant repetition of movement) over the who or what that performs this movement.[41] Neither 'pole' of the movement of play (i.e., neither the object nor the subject) "represents the goal in which it would come to rest".[42]

The movement of play seems to have a life of its own; it is never tied down to any specific goal. Although I have already mentioned this next point, it is crucial to always keep it in mind: the play is not play for the sake of the end that it may achieve, but rather, the movement of play is, to some extent, an end in itself. Gadamer refers to the significance of the *movement* of play, over the attainment of a final end, when he says,

> Every game presents the man who plays it with a task. He cannot enjoy the freedom of playing himself out except by transforming the aims of his behaviour into mere tasks of the game. Thus the child gives itself a task in playing with the ball, and such tasks are playful ones, because the purpose of the game is not really the solution of the task, but the ordering and shaping of the movement.[43]

For the present moment, what we should focus on is the sense in which the movement in play is desirable for something other than the *immediate* end that it could perhaps bring about. At this point, we need to think of the 'ordering and shaping of movement' as simply meaning the continuation and uninterrupted flow of the 'to-and-fro' of movement. In getting caught up, so to speak, in the movement of play, the player becomes absorbed into, and *played by*, the play. The movement of play, is "not only without goal or purpose but also without effort".[44]

Given all of what Gadamer has said about the nature of the movement in play, it is now *our task* to address the structure of the work of art, so that we may provide answers to the following questions: (i) what is it about the play with a work of art that attracts the players into the play? (ii) what task is involved in playing? (iii) what prevents the players from being complete masters over the play? and (iv) what does it mean, and how can it be, that the players

play without effort or tension? In setting up a framework which will answer the above questions, we will find that all the questions are interrelated. If we think of all these questions as being part of a diamond, we could then imagine every question diverging from a different angle or 'cut' from the *same* diamond. The *answers* to the above questions, furthermore, will shine forth from one and the same 'stone'. To put it another way, the answers to the above questions are all interrelated; they will 'radiate' out of our discussion of the structure of movement and the structure of the work of art.

1.4 The Structure of Movement

What the above four questions have in common is that they all point in the direction of the structure of the movement in play with a work of art. The answer to each question depends upon our recognition of both the nature of this movement, and the nature of the work of art. Our first clue in aiding us with our questions is the fact that Gadamer claims that the nature of the work of art is something which cannot be exhausted by representation. On this point, Gadamer says, "their [the works'] being is not exhausted by the fact that they represent; at the same time they point beyond themselves to the audience which is sharing them".[45] The work of art does not merely point to itself, as it were; it invites a player. Gadamer maintains that the work of art is 'intended', and 'calls', for an audience; "artistic presentation, by its nature, exists for someone".[46]

The structure of the work of art is such that it draws the spectator into play. Instead of thinking of a work of art, for example a ballet, as 'missing a fourth wall', Gadamer would insist that the audience makes up the final wall of the dance. The play happens back and forth between these walls, or to put it another way, the play moves between the work and the audience:

> Thus it is not really the absence of a fourth wall that turned the play into a show. Rather, openness towards the spectator is part of the closedness of the play. The audience only completes what the play as such is.[47]

The work of art is not a closed entity which is unaffected by the spectator. Instead, the work is open to, and can be affected by, the audience who comes into contact with it.[48] This is precisely the message Gadamer sends, when he says, "It is quite wrong to think that the unity of the work implies that the work is closed off from the person who turns to it or is affected by it".[49] The work's structure is such that it is open to, and *points* towards, the audience. If the work's 'pointing' in the direction of the audience is what invites (and to some extent holds) the audience's participation, what is it about, or in, the work of art that *points*?

Essentially, the act of 'pointing' leads us to the symbolic in the work of art. We must *interpret* the symbolic in art in order to make sense of what the symbol points towards. When we encounter a work of art, the meaning of the work is not readily apparent. We *must* search the work, walk around it, so to speak; the meaning of the work is not immediately given. No one meaning initially 'jumps out at' the spectator. We are invited into play (and remain in play) when we stumble across a work of art that does not at first offer or reveal its meaning. There is something mysterious about the work. At first, it may seem as though the work's speech is

too silent and/or our ears are too deaf. Without being 'spoon fed' by the work, we are left to take up for ourselves the task of interpreting, developing, and revealing the work's meaning.[50] We are left to question and interpret what seems to, at one and the same time, reveal and conceal what is meant, and what therefore aids and hinders our investigations.

The reason why we are forced to interpret the work's meaning for ourselves is partly a result of there being symbol in art. Gadamer claims that where there is a symbol, there is meaning; "the symbol represents meaning".[51] Although meaning *presents* itself in and through our encounter with the symbolic, this does not mean that we can encounter the symbol without *interpreting* its meaning. The meaning which the symbol in art may point towards will only *present* itself to, and in and through, the act of *interpretation.* We must always interpret to allow meaning to *be present.*

When we address the symbolic in art, we may understand how it is that a spectator is pulled into play with the work and, further, is given the task of interpretation. What is meaningful in an encounter with art is the act of meaning presenting itself, and also, how what is represented stands not merely for itself, but for all the meaning which is *possible.* In other words, in our encounter with a work, our interpretation of what is meaningful both is, and is not, pointed to by the symbolic in art. The meaning which emerges is only one of the possible meanings which could 'happen'. All of that which is symbolic in a given work of art does not point or direct the interpreter toward one and only one meaning. Essentially, the symbolic points to *openness*, *possibility*, and *plurality* of meaning:

> ...all interpretation points in a direction rather than to some final

> endpoint, in the sense that it points toward an open realm that can be filled in a variety of ways.[52]

There is no one, specific meaning pointed to by the work of art. Rather the work points to the interpreter and to our *task* of creating an interpretive situation which would be favourable for the meaning of the work to flourish. The interpretive act, from a stance which tries to appropriate meaning for its own present situation, brings forth meanings from "that which has a multiplicity of meanings".[53]

The task of seeking and interpreting meaning is what the play with art demands of its players. The symbolic in art, pointing to the direction of openness, does not 'close' the meaning of the work for the interpreter. The player is 'invited' to the work; the work's openness beckons the player. Given the latitude which the interpreter has in interpreting the encounter with the work, the interpreter must make sense of the meaning of the work in and through a 'playing' around with possibilities (which is permitted by the work's openness). The task of interpretation is indeed itself a play (movement back and forth) with possibilities:

> Thus we say of someone that he plays with possibilities or with plans. What we mean is clear. He still has not committed himself to the possibilities as to serious aims. He still has the freedom to decide one way or the other, for one or the other possibility.[54]

Our understanding, in an encounter with art, is achieved in and through our "playing around and about what is meant".[55] The linguistic event of playing around with the possibilities of what is meant, pulls the players into the current of the play, which, in turn, plays them.[56] At the very heart of this playful movement is the play of language itself. Rather than thinking of human

subjects as disinterested scientists playing *with* word games, Gadamer conceives of play, or more pointedly, all understanding, as the play *of* language; "the being that can be understood is language".[57] Understanding is always a linguistic event; it occurs *in* language.[58] The dialogue between the interpreter and the work of art is a dialogue carried in and by the 'waves' of language.[59] When we are confronted with such sweeping images of language we are again lulled into a current of thinking about art in a less subjective way.

With Gadamer's continual pull away from subjectivity in mind, we will now return to the subject of interpretation. Although there is a sense of infiniteness in interpretation - with the notion that the symbolic points to an open realm - this does not mean that absolutely anything is permissible. Our interpretive act is not a simple act of reading meanings *into* what we encounter, but rather, it is more akin to a "revealing of what the thing itself already points to".[60] There are restraints on what, and how, we can interpret a work of art; we cannot do just anything we like with the work.

The work resists some interpretations, yet gracefully accepts others. A work of art addresses us, makes a claim on us, and issues a challenge to us. One accepts this challenge when one plays with the work, and in doing so, one attempts to satisfy the work's request for an 'answer'.[61] Any answer is an answer to a specific question. A different question requires, and would generate, a different sort of answer. In engaging with the work, the interpreter's interpretation initially takes the form of some question. For example, the interpreter could ask, 'my god, what is that thing?', and then, perhaps, the following questions may arise, 'what is the meaning of this thing? Is this thing trying to speak to me, and if so, what could it possibly be

saying?'. As the questions which we pose to the work alter, so too does our interpretation of an 'answer' change. But it is not only questions which we put to the work, for in our encounter with the *challenge/task* that the work puts to us, we find that the work demands an interpretive answer from the viewer:

> The work issues a challenge which expects to be met. It requires an answer - an answer that can only be given by someone who accepted the challenge. And that answer must be his own, and given actively. The participant belongs to the play.[62]

We may ask ourselves, what does 'answer' mean here? The 'answer' which the work demands of us could arise at the moment when we enter into the dialogue with the work. Simply put, our answer could take the form of our saying 'yes' in accepting the challenge of the work, and playing with, and belonging to, the play. We can only begin to understand with our *wanting* to understand and, moreover, our *wanting* to allow and listen to what is 'said'.[63] We can further *answer* the work by anticipating and interpreting the answers that the work offers to us. In every question we ask, there lies our anticipation that the work will meaningfully speak to us and that we will receive some sort of answer; our very questioning implies that we have implicitly assented to listen to, and anticipate, an answer. It is in this process, or exchange of question and answer, that the meaning of the work flourishes.[64] As our questions and answers change, we will have new ways of understanding the work of art.[65]

As the interpretations of the work change, the work's *being* also *transforms* into something different.[66] When Gadamer speaks of identifying a work, he does not mean that we relate our interpretations to some corresponding reality. The meaning which we identify as

belonging to a work is inseparable from our act of interpretation. Gadamer fully recognizes the relation between the work and the interpreter when he states that the identity of the work "is not guaranteed by any classical or formalist criteria, but is secured by the way in which we take the construction of the work upon ourselves as a task".[67] The 'transformation' of the work's being should not be viewed as the work's slow, progressive movement to one teleological end. The work does not slowly 'change' into, or get closer towards, the greater reality to which it corresponds. Rather, the work 'transforms' into something new; it sets its own standards, so to speak.[68]

The movement between questions and answers never progresses in a linear manner; we do not read a book, for example, one word at a time. Rather, we get a sense of the whole; we interpret and construct a whole out of many parts. Every act of interpretation is guided by our anticipation. We anticipate a meaning and a whole. In interpreting a book, for example, we may use today's reading to ponder what we read yesterday.[69] Our interpretation constantly moves back and forth between possibilities, and between organizing certain parts into potential wholes. In interpretation, our anticipation of a meaningful whole is what breathes (at least to some extent) the spirit into the movement of play, and it is that which maintains the constant dialectic between the whole and the parts. In regard to the interpretive process of reading, Gadamer describes this as something which occurs in a non-linear fashion: "reading is not just scrutinizing or taking one word after another, but means above all performing a constant hermeneutic movement guided by the anticipation of the whole, and finally fulfilled by the individual in the realization of the total sense".[70] The movement between the parts and the whole, or between questions and answers, is

undertaken in a way which does not follow a linear, predictable progression. In this dialogue between the players, neither player knows the outcome (i.e., the answers to the questions, and the next question) prior to its becoming.

When we put questions to the work of art, we become engaged in a dialogue with it. What is significant in our thinking of the encounter with art, as a movement between question and answer is that this notion entails that *both* players (the interpreter and the work of art) have a say in the matter of meaning. In an encounter with a work of art, the work provokes, responds to, and answers our questions. The dialogue of questioning and answering (i.e., of bringing forth meaning) is exactly that: a *dialogue* not a monologue. In our encounter with the work of art, the 'other' (i.e., the work) responds in play, and bounces the ball of movement, so to speak, back to the other player:

> The movement to-and-fro obviously belongs so essentially to the game that there is an ultimate sense in which you cannot have a game by yourself. In order for there to be a game, there always has to be, not necessarily literally another player, but something else with which the player plays and which automatically responds to his move with a counter-move. Thus the cat at play chooses the ball of wool because it responds to play, and ball games will be with us forever because the ball is freely mobile in every direction, appearing to do surprising things of its own accord.[71]

The work of art responds to our questions with a 'counter-move', and sometimes this response is surprising. Once again, we should remind ourselves of the sense in which the players do not have complete, 'god-like' control over the course of the game. What we spoke of earlier as the playing out of possibilities of what is meaningful can now be seen as the playing out of

possibilities which occurs between the questions and the answers. The interpreter does not know what sorts of questions will be received, or dismissed, by the work of art. If the interpreter's questions do not fall on deaf ears, there is still the surprise of both the answer and the questions which may follow.[72] The play of possibilities lies between the questioner's trying to find 'fitting', 'suiting', or 'provoking' questions, and the work's hearing, and responding, in a 'provoking' way.[73]

The movement between the questions and answers takes a surprising turn - for there is always something ambiguous in play. This ambiguity lies in our not knowing the direction the dialogue's movement will take. How the other responds cannot completely adhere to our wishes, nor can it conform to our plans. In play, the response of the other is not subject to calculation and prediction. The meaning of the work can only be ascertained *in* play; it cannot be conjured up outside of play. What is found or taken to be meaningful is something that is both *found* and *taken*; it is not something that is single-handedly conjured up in the mind of the individual. Although we participate in the play and being of the work,[74] the work always remains somewhat elusive - it cannot be *completely* 'handled' by the interpreter. The work is, therefore, not subject to becoming the object of one's fancy or manipulation prior to play:

> As the play is ambiguous, it can have its effect, which cannot be predicted, only in being played. It is not its nature to be an instrument of masked goals that only have to be unmasked for it to be unambiguously understood, but it remains, as an artistic play, in an indissoluble ambiguity.[75]

The play and its consequences are ambiguous. Not only can this mean that the play cannot be

determined and predicted by its players, it also means that the play does not have, strictly speaking, one outcome. Every encounter with the 'same' work of art will have its own different ordering of movement, and consequently, each and every encounter will have a different result. The shaping of the movement of play is not such that it can be manipulated, processed, and churned out, as one might duplicate an assembly-line good. On this, Gadamer writes:

> In fact it is part of the reality of a work of art that around its real theme it leaves an area that is indefinite. A play in which everything is completely motivated creaks like a machine. A false reality would be presented if the action could all be calculated out like an equation.[76]

The shaping of the movement of play occurs *in* play, and this movement is never subject to strict algorithmic formulation prior to, and independent of, the event of play. How the play will be played, and further, the outcome or meaning of this play, are things that can only *be* in and through the act of playing itself: "such a definition of the movement of play means further that the act of playing always requires a 'playing along with'".[77]

It is in the indispensable act of play, in the movement and interaction between the players, in the *synergetic* effect of this interrelation, that meaning is possible. As we move in the world of play, we find that to be involved in play is to experience the play as something which is 'above and beyond' one's own wishes and plans. On this, Gadamer writes:

> We have seen that play does not have its being in the consciousness or the attitude of the player, but on the contrary draws the latter into its area and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him.[78]

In play, we are not overcome with our wanting one specific end, and therefore, we are not ready to try to grasp the reins, so to speak, of play itself. In play, we allow ourselves *to be played*; we are open to and concede to be carried along with the back and forth swaying motion of play.[79] As we engage ourselves in a movement of this kind, it would seem that play occurs without our effort or tension. There is an absence of tension because we no longer have to force our plans onto something that may not receive it as we had intended. In play, if we truly enjoy the to-and-fro movement, and if we are no longer worried about what people think of this play and/or who we can please or disappoint by it, then we play without the added irritation that we may usually find in our day-to-day pragmatic lives. Instead of groping around in a miserable way - trying to make a square fit the definition of a circle - we remain calmly open and flexible to the surprising turns the play may take. If we stand open to the other, and if we refrain from trying to impose grotesquely ridiculous things onto the beautiful, the more our encounter with the work will seem a natural one with little or no effort.

1.5 The Structure of The Work of Art

We have already seen how the interpreter is bound, at least to some extent, by the structure of movement in play. We will now turn our attention to another feature of our encounter with a work of art which prevents us from exerting complete dominance over the work; and that is, the

structure or the *rules* of the *game*. It is the structure or the rules of the game which points us in the direction of the distinct character of the work of art itself. We must briefly examine what Gadamer says about the structure or rules of the game.

Gadamer calls our attention to the fact that when he refers to the rules or structure of the play-game with art, he is describing the work ontologically rather than metaphysically. In his analysis of the rules which govern the game, we find that Gadamer is not as concerned with finding the causal origin of these rules as he is about discussing the nature and effects of such rules. On this, Gadamer writes: "Above all, where we are talking about art and artistic creation in the preeminent sense, the decisive thing is not the emergence of a product, but the fact that the product has a special nature of its own".[80] What is essential to Gadamer's account of the encounter with the work is the *nature* of a work of art in an encounter, or to put it another way, how the special nature of a work yields a unique relationship between itself and its interpreter. In understanding this encounter, we are forced to highlight the nature of play.

All play, although it may *appear* haphazard and free, is a highly structured and ordered process. We have already seen how structure and order lie in the dialectical questioning and answering between the work and the spectator. The notion of structure in play now forces us to focus on the fact that all games must have rules. The rules establish both the parameters and the judgement of the game; they regulate the game's movement. Rules are needed in order to make sense of what is being done. In play, one cannot judge an action without referring to, and judging it with and against, the rules of the game. The *significance* of either side's movement in play (i.e., of either the work of art or the interpreter), is determined (but not pre-determined)

by "observing the rules of the game".[81] The nature of the rules of the game that we play with art are such that we are bound by these rules which we ourselves did not intentionally create. We do not create the standard by which our *participation* in play will be judged; our part in play is adjudicated by a standard which *belongs* to the game. Consider the following:

> The playfulness of human games is constituted by the imposition of rules and regulations that only count as such within the closed world of play. Any player can avoid them simply by withdrawing from the game. Of course, within the game itself, the rules and regulations are binding in their own way and can no more be violated than any of the rules that determine and bind our lives together. What is the nature of the validity that both binds and limits in this way? Doubtless, the kind of directedness to the matter at hand that is unique to man also finds expression in the characteristic of human play to include binding rules. Philosophers refer to this as the intentionality of consciousness.[82]

The rules imposing on, and allowing for, our encounter with the work of art are such that they intend a *game-to-be-played.*[83] With reference to these rules, we can speak of our encounter with the work as a participation in the intention of the game. What the rules of the game intend is that the game be approached and played in a playful manner; the rules imply a certain type of intended behaviour.[84]

The play-rules of the work of art make it impossible for the player to do just anything to the work when encountering it. For example, when watching a ballet with three acts, we cannot help but encounter the dance as something which has a definite structure, three different scenes, and a beginning, middle, and end. This is an example of the form (or the structure) which a work of art possesses (regardless of whether we like it or not). Our encounters with certain parts

of the work (for example, where and what our eyes are attracted to, what the work reveals, and at what time these things are revealed) are all instigated by the structure of the work. Although we may readily acknowledge the sense in which this sort of structure leads the viewer in a direction which the viewer may not have intended, is this what is meant by the intention of the work? Although the work does appear as a structural 'beast', we find that the intention of the work lies in something more than this.[85]

While Gadamer speaks of the work as something that intends, he certainly does not mean that 'intention' means 'author's intention'. Although I do not have the space here to go into Gadamer's position on authorial intention, there are countless passages in which Gadamer clearly maintains that meaning does not lie in what the author intended.[86] What Gadamer means when he speaks of the intention of the work of art is revealed in his insistence on the specific *nature* of the work. In discussing the intention of the work, we should again state the sense in which the nature of the work is not to be located in causal principles, but rather, is focused on the nature of the thing as it appears to us. On the nature of intention, Gadamer says:

> Above all, where we are talking about art and artistic creation in the preeminent sense, the decisive thing is not the emergence of a product, but the fact that the product has a special nature of its own. It 'intends' something, and yet it is not what it intends. It is not an item of equipment determined by its utility, as all such items or products of human work are. Certainly it is a product, that is, something produced by human activity that now stands there available for use. And yet the work of art refuses to be used in any way. That is not the way it is 'intended'. It has something of the 'as if' character that we recognized as an essential feature of the nature of play.[87]

The nature of the work of art is such that it refuses to be used as just an instrument; we cannot do anything we like with it. Its intention is to be taken, in play, 'as if' it were 'this' or 'that'. Connected to how the work's symbolic nature points to the plurality or openness of what the work can be, the work's intention appears in, and as, its 'as if-ness'. The work must be taken as it is intended, 'as if' it were 'this' or 'that'. The work stands to be taken in a *playful* manner (playing 'as if' it were 'this' or 'that'), partly because of its symbolic nature.

We must again turn to the nature of the symbolic in art if we are to understand what it means to say that the work's intention lies in its standing to be taken in its 'as if-ness'. The symbol points toward the many possibilities or shapes that the work can take. The symbol points in the direction of interpretation; we may even say that it points toward the interpreter (not to one person in particular, but to *an* interpreter). Part of the nature of the work of art is symbolic; it stands for something else. So we may ask ourselves, what is this something else that the work stands for? What the work 'shows' is not intended to be taken as 'real'; it is "not an imitation in which we strive to approach an original by copying it as nearly as possible".[88] The work, moreover, is also not meant to be taken as something which sets up a demonstrative proof for something else. The work intends to be taken and embraced as *play*.[89]

What then does the symbol point towards? We are told that the symbol points away from itself. The interpreter does not stare at the symbol as a dog may stare at a pointing finger.[90] What the symbol shows is something that we *see for ourselves*. It is by means of the symbolic in art that we are directed to see the thing for ourselves. The symbolic in art points us toward something that is not there; it points us toward what *can be* there only if we are readily engaged

in interpretation. The symbol points us toward the possibilities that the work can be. Our encounter with art is incomplete unless we *interpret* what the symbol points toward. What the work *is,* is more than what meets the eye, so to speak. In our encounter with the work, we 'fill in' and 'dress up' what we encounter in and through our interpretations.[91]

The work demands that we take it playfully; we *must* take it in its 'as if' character, and to do this we must engage the work not only playfully, but *interpretively.**[1] If the work is to 'speak' to us, we must put ourselves in a position to listen, and interpret, what is said. In a genuine encounter with a work of art, we find that we are not complete masters over the play; for in play, the play puts us to work. The work of art displays itself *as* a work of art (in all its 'as if-ness') only if the work is re-constituted/re-constructed by the viewer in a playful manner. Only in this manner can we fully recognize and allow for the emergence of the 'as if-ness' in the work. The work of art 'demands' to be 'constructed' in this playful manner, while, at the same time, it turns away from, so to speak, the tyrant who aggressively utilizes the work for his/her own pragmatic agenda. The work of art is 'fragile' in this sense; when it is handled properly and delicately, it is indeed precious, but if it is dropped by clumsy, brute hands, the pieces which remain lose their lustre and do not even carry a dull resemblance to the splendid thing that it might have been. What is needed for a 'proper' and 'gentle' handling of the work of art is a topic that will be raised in my second chapter. For the moment, however, I shall 'end'

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* [1] With this, I do not mean to give my reader the impression that I think that 'play' and 'interpretation' are two different things. Not only do these two things occur simultaneously, they stand for the same thing. Indeed these are just different descriptions of the same thing. So long as we are in play, we are interpreting. I only separate them here in the body of my thesis in order to stress the point that all *play* is accompanied by *interpretation.*

this discussion of play with something thought-provoking and 'scrumptious' for my next chapter. In the following quotation, what should be obvious is the sense in which the interpreter *is* an interpreter, and is forced to interpret in a playful and gentle manner:

> In the reproductive arts, the work of art must constantly be reconstituted as a creation. The transitory arts teach us most vividly that representation is required not only for the reproductive arts, but for any creation that we call a work of art. It demands to be constructed by the viewer to whom it is presented. In this sense, it 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.[92]

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. TM, p. 446. This point is hinted at in Gadamer's statement: "Someone who understands is always already drawn into an event through which meaning asserts itself". I did not want to explicitly address this statement in the body of my thesis at this early stage, for I have not yet clarified many of the factors which give rise to this sentence. For example, the notion of play - being an event wherein we play around with possible meanings - allows us to read Gadamer's sentence as having to do with play.

2. TM, p. 274. On the importance of application Gadamer writes: "...understanding always involves something like the application of the text to be understood to the present situation of the interpreter".

3. Gadamer admits this in Truth and Method on page 446, where he speaks of the attitude of one who understands in a similar manner to the attitude of one who plays. From his observations of the stance of one who understands, Gadamer then says that all of this is "...implied in the application of the concept of play to understanding".

4. This exact connection is made by Joel C. Weinsheimer in Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of *Truth and Method* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 101.

5. Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, p. 127.

6. TM, p. 443.

7. TM, p. 443.

8. TM, pp. 126-127.

9. TM, p. 127.

10. TM, p. 91.

11. I am not assuming that Gadamer's project is to do away with subjectivity altogether. Rather, Gadamer is attempting to make our encounter with the work of art *less* 'subjectivistic'; "play for Gadamer is most definitely not *ein Spiel ohne Spieler*". Gary Madison, "Beyond Seriousness and Frivolity: A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", Gadamer and Hermeneutics, edited by Hugh J. Silverman (Great Britain: Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc, 1991), p. 134.

12. Here I am speaking of the necessary condition for the possibility of understanding; and that is, our 'fore-structure' of understanding. To speak of our having a 'fore-structure' is to speak of our having language and a world. In order to understand, we must be situated in a linguistic world. For the present moment, I shall describe the 'fore-structure' of understanding in terms of language. If we examine what Heidegger says about language we will find that he (similar to Gadamer) is describing language in non-subjective terms. Indeed, the thrust of Heidegger's depiction of language carries us away from thinking in terms of subjectivity. Language, according to Heidegger, is never the product of a subjective, willing individual. It is language which brings beings into being as beings rather than the other way around: "language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time. Where there is no language, as in the Being of a stone...there is also no openness of beings". Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", Basic Writings, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p. 185. With this picture of language, Heidegger tries to "undercut the representationalist picture of our human situation, along with its objectifying outlook on reality and its subjectified picture of the self". Charles Guignon, "Truth as Disclosure: Art, Language, History", The Southern Journal of Philosophy, 28, 1989, p. 105. Language refers to the *interaction* or *event* between those who are using the language; essentially, language refers to the community of those who put it to *use*. In language, the use of 'I' does not designate subjectivity even though it may refer to a speaking subject. If 'I' refers to the act of discourse and also, if it is 'I' insofar as it distinguishes itself from the 'you', then the 'I' refers to the act of discourse with others rather than a prior subjective state. Essentially, the 'I' refers to a dialogue rather than to a monologue. Our 'fore-structure' of understanding is not the subjective state of solipsism. Rather, our 'fore-structure' consists of a linguistic community which, in turn, gives meaning and definition to the 'I'. See Madison, "Hermeneutics of (Inter)Subjectivity", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes, pp. 161-165.

13. Jeff Mitscherling, "Resuming the Dialogue", in Antifoundationalism and Practical Reasoning, edited by Evan Simpson (Edmonton: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1987), p. 129.

14. Jeff Mitscherling, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and 'The Tradition'", Man and World, 22, 1989 p. 248. In this article, Mitscherling not only distinguishes between the 'conversation' and the 'dialogue', but characterizes the latter as a self-conscious reflection and an interruption of the former. In 'dialogue', we become conscious of *having* a language, the *use* of our language, and of ourselves, as beings *in* and *using* a language. The notion of making language 'one's own' is entertained in Anthony Paul Kerby's article, "Gadamer's Concrete Universal", Man and World, 24, 1991, p. 55.

15. RB, p. 34. Humans, as finite creatures, cannot perceive or entertain 'all' at once, from every angle possible. I shall say more of this in my second chapter when I discuss truth. The effect of our finite condition on understanding in general is an issue developed at length in Tsenay Serequeberhan's article, "Heidegger and Gadamer: Thinking as 'Meditative' and as

'Effective-Historical Consciousness'", Man and World, 20, 1987, pp. 41-64.

16. Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, p. 10.

17. Martin Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology (And Other Essays), translated by William Lovitt, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), pp. 18-19. To have a world is to have a language: "whoever has language 'has' the world in that he is free from the restrictions of an animal's environment and thus is open to the truth of every linguistic world". Gadamer, PH, p. xxxix. Heidegger employs his concept of a world in order to describe the two-fold event of truth. Heidegger claims that the work of art sets forth a 'world'. The 'world' that the work of art sets up should not be understood as separate and distinct from the 'earth' which it grounds itself upon. The creation of the truth of a work of art (according to Heidegger) is depicted as a 'strife' between the 'world' and the 'earth' (revealing and concealing). Briefly, the 'world' is that which is the 'self-opening openness', while the 'earth' is described as 'the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and concealing'. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", Basic Writings, pp. 170-172. The truth of a work of art comes to be in and through the interaction between the 'world' and 'earth': "world and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and the earth juts through the world...the work-being of the work consists in the instigation of strife between world and earth...the work that rests in itself thus has its essence in the intimacy of strife". Ibid, pp. 172-173. To be in truth is not to know the definitive truth of both things as objects and ourselves as subjects. In describing truth as a process which merges together both concealing and revealing, Heidegger undercuts "the representationalist picture of our human situation, along with its objectifying outlook on reality and its subjectified picture of the self". Guignon, p. 105. The notion of a 'world' not only directs our attention to the movement or event of truth, it also suggests that whoever has a world has something other than pure subjectivity: "there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself". Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, translated by Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. xi. Thinking does not refer to the deliberate actions of a subject, but rather, it is the 'place' where being discloses itself. Our linguistic world is not something that a thinking subject creates *ex nihilo*. Rather, such a linguistic world is the necessary condition of every subject's thinking. The definition of the self is not thought of prior to or independent of the event of being which thinking serves. Gadamer, PH, pp. liv-lv.

18. Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics", PH, p. 103. When speaking of the 'mode of being', we are directed to the *processional* nature or the *event* of truth of a work of art (I shall discuss truth more carefully in chapter 2). The 'mode of being' of a work of art is the *way of* its being. Even before we read Gadamer, the word 'mode' may in fact carry us into thinking in terms of movement and transportation. In fact, the notion of movement is exactly what Gadamer has in mind when he speaks of the mode of being of the work of art. *Wesen* (the archaic form of the verb 'to be') is not a noun but a verb. Being refers not to a static thing (or substance) but

to a *way* of being (or as Heidegger might say: it is the *way* that Being 'manifests itself in the open'). PH, p. liv. The reference to the 'mode of being' makes it clear to the reader that Gadamer is speaking of the dynamic process of how something is what it is. In the case of art, Gadamer claims that its mode of being is play. As we will discuss further, the play-game is a movement rather than a static relationship. For the moment, however, it will suffice to say that play - as the mode of being of the work of art - is such that the movement of the game is more important than the actual subject who plays. TM, p. 93. To say that play is the mode of being of the work of art is to say that "play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play". TM, p. 92. The point here is that when speaking of the way that the work of art is what it is (through play) we are not referring to the subjectivity of the players of play. TM, p. 92. The *essence* of the work of art lies in its partaking in the back and forth movement 'which is not tied down to any goal'; the work's essence lies in the movement of play (and this means that it is always having to be played). The movement of play is the way in which the work of art is what it is. If the mode of being of the work of art is play, we could then say that this mode invites others to play, and moreover, that the work has something to transport or communicate with the other players (although I do not mean to say that this 'something' is a substance with a fixed content - for if it were 'something' fixed, then the mode of being of the work of art would be something other than play).

19. TM, p. 92.

20. TM, p. 92.

21. Gadamer's insistence on the importance of play over its players can be interpreted to mean that language has ontological priority over the speaker. See Nicholas Davey, "A World of hope and optimism despite present difficulties: Gadamer's Critique of Perspectivism", Man and World, 23, 1990, p. 286.

22. TM, p. xvi. This is not to say that the specific play, which is being-played, precedes the players temporally or logically, but just that this play is more important than its players.

23. TM, p. 92.

24. Here I have to agree with Weinsheimer in his criticisms of P.D. Juhl's mistake about this point in Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 8. Weinsheimer is correct in noticing that a meaning of a work of art does not refer us to, and is not a statement about the particular critic's subjective understanding. Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, p. 110.

25. TM, p. 93.

26. I do not mean to suggest that in play, we have no attitude at all. The point of my saying that 'our playful attitude is *in part* furnished by our being-in-play' is to emphasize the importance

of denying that the play with art comes about purely in and by the isolated subjective consciousness: "the players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation through the players". TM, p. 92. Part of the aesthetic attitude which the subject has when encountering a work of art is described as the following: "in the attitude of play, all those purposive relations which determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but in a curious way acquire a different quality. The player himself knows that play is only play and exists in a world which is determined by the seriousness of purposes. But he does not know this in such a way that, as a player, he actually intends this relation to seriousness. Play fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in his play...the player knows very well what play is, and that what he is doing is 'only a game'; but he does not know what exactly he 'knows' in knowing that". TM, pp. 91-92. As an interesting aside, we find that in the first sentence of the above passage Gadamer has shifted the tense in which he is writing. This is perhaps significant for it may signify that the transition from an everyday pragmatic attitude to an aesthetic attitude is a matter of temporality. For more on this, see RB, pp. 58-60. At any rate, I do not wish to disregard the aesthetic attitude. Rather, I only intend to discourage thinking of the experience with art as being something completely subjective. The aesthetic attitude is always more than it knows itself to be; the self is not completely introspectively knowable to itself. RB, p. 78.

27. Gadamer hints at this by saying that the work of art does not address people "whose minds are prepared and chooses what he expects will have an effect on them". TM, p. 118.

28. RB, p. 21.

29. RB, p. 28.

30. Jeff Mitscherling, "Hegelian elements in Gadamer's notions of application and play", Man and World, 25, 1992, p. 65.

31. TM, p. 93.

32. TM, p. 92.

33. TM, p. 95.

34. TM, pp. 95-96.

35. RB, p. 22.

36. RB, p. 125.

37. RB, p. 23.

38. RB, p. 23.

39. Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 115. This point is also expressed in Truth and Method, p. 93.

40. RB, p. 22.

41. TM, p. 93.

42. RB, p. 22.

43. TM, p. 97.

44. TM, p. 94.

45. TM, p. 97.

46. TM, pp. 98-99.

47. TM, p. 98.

48. *Participation* signifies that we contribute something to the game. I stress the word 'participation', for it implies a relationship which, at one and the same time, both gives and takes. This double sense of 'participation' is something that Brice R. Wachterhauser attends to in his article, "Interpreting Texts: Objectivity or Participation?" Man and World, 19, 1986, pp. 444-445.

49. RB, p. 25. The interpreter "...plays a central role both as an observer and as a creative agent participating in the production and reproduction of the [work]". Laurent Dobuzinskis, "The Complexities of Spontaneous Order", Critical Review, vo. 3, no. 2, Spring 1989, p. 241.

50. Because what the text says does not immediately jump out at us, and because the text can say more than one thing, we must therefore interpret in order to allow the text to say anything at all. As Gadamer says, "we speak of interpretation when the meaning of a text is not understood at first sight; then an interpretation is necessary". Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness", Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, edited by Paul Rabinow & William M. Sullivan (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1987), p. 90.

51. RB, p. 34.

52. RB, p. 68.

53. RB, p. 69.

54. TM, p. 95.

55. TM, p. 446.

56. TM, p. 446. The playing in and about what is meant takes place 'above and beyond' what the players may have intended. The player, who cannot fully control and manipulate language, is therefore at the mercy of play. By pointing out how the play of language is involved in an interpreter's play with possible meanings in a work of art, I wish to emphasize the sense in which such play is not subject to the players, but rather, that the players are moved and controlled by the linguistic movement in play.

57. TM, pp. xxii, 446, and "Scope and Function of Reflection", PH, pp. 29, 31. As we also see in Gadamer's remarks on being, the playing in meaning could also mean a play in being; one could comfortably read into Gadamer's work Parmenides' statement, "for thought and being are the same". J. M. Robinson, An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy, Parmenides Fragment 6.6 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 110.

58. I think that if this point is not clarified, it would be quite misleading to simply claim that language is the mere medium of meaning. This point is somewhat glossed over in Francis Ambrosio's article, "Dawn and Dusk: Gadamer and Heidegger on Truth", Man and World, 19, 1986, 21-53. Ambrosio asserts that 'understanding occurs *in the medium* of language' (p. 38). To say that language is a mere medium suggests that language is something separate and distinct from humans and their understanding. In using the term 'medium', we get a sense of something which is a substance of agent (a means) through which something else acts. Language is not something like a radio; i.e., language does not merely transmit meaning, but rather, it itself is the very substance of meaning. When speaking of language, Gadamer treats it not merely in terms of it being a medium, but also as the *material* of expression; language can never emancipate itself from its relationship to meaning. [RB, p. 69] Perhaps it would be better to read Ambrosio's statement as 'understanding occurs *in* language'.

59. Gadamer expresses this point when he says: "Every interpretation of the intelligible that helps others to understanding has the character of language. To that extent, the entire experience of the world is linguistically mediated...that includes what is not itself linguistic, but is capable of linguistic interpretation". "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics", PH, p. 99.

60. RB, p. 68.

61. RB, p. 26.

62. RB, p. 26.

63. Gadamer, "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics", PH, p. 101.

64. Indeed, all understanding is guided by some kind of anticipation of meaning; "a kind of anticipation of meaning guides the effort to understand from the very beginning". Gadamer,

"Aesthetics and Hermeneutics", PH, p. 101.

65. One might even say, as Kerby does, that our understanding of a work of art stems from our asking questions and giving answers, and by therefore allowing ourselves to be guided by the dynamic structure of the play. Kerby, "Gadamer's Concrete Universal", Man and World, 24, 1991, p. 51.

66. In this respect, we can accept what A. T. Nuyen suggests as art's ability to experience; art experiences an 'enhancement of being'. Nuyen, "Art and the Rhetoric of Allusion", The Southern Journal of Philosophy, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, 1989, p. 507.

67. RB, p. 28.

68. This exact point is discussed by Ambrosio, when he states that "art does not consist in either copying or transforming something already in being; rather, it is the project by which something new comes forth". Ambrosio, "Dawn and Dusk: Gadamer and Heidegger on Truth", p. 25. For more on the distinction between transformation and change, see Gadamer's discussion on this in Truth and Method, pp. 99-102.

69. We may again reflect on what Kuhn says about the hermeneutical act of reading in Bernstein's Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 31.

70. RB, p. 28.

71. TM, p. 95.

72. As we involve ourselves in the exchange of question and answer, we enter into a dialogue with what the text 'says'. The questions which we put to the text are neither applied by a rule nor merely arbitrary. See Serequeberhan "Heidegger and Gadamer: Thinking as 'Meditative' and as 'Effective-Historical Consciousness'", p. 58.

73. TM, p. 454.

74. The meaning and being of the work of art comes to be what it is through our act of playing with it. Detsch, Richard, "A Non-Subjectivist Concept of Play - Gadamer and Heidegger versus Rilke and Nietzsche", p. 164.

75. TM, p. 454.

76. TM, p. 454.

77. RB, p. 23. What is taken to be 'meaningful', will arise in, and be related to, the specific act/situation/context in which the meaning was developed. Meaning is only meaningful in the context, and for the individuals within that context; "meaning is for a subject: it is not the

meaning of a situation *in vacuo*". Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, p. 41.

78. TM, p. 98.

79. As Detsch remarks, "according to Gadamer's concept, the play takes control of the player...the players are so absorbed that they can no longer be said to direct the movement of the game; it carries them away with its own momentum". Detsch, "A Non-Subjectivist Concept of Play - Gadamer and Heidegger versus Rilke and Nietzsche", p. 157.

80. RB, p. 125.

81. RB, p. 125.

82. RB, p. 124.

83. When we encounter the work of art, we do not fully understand it at first. What the work of art says is not immediately obvious; we need to interpret what is being said. Interpreting what the work has to say is a matter of playing along with the way that the work reveals (and conceals) itself in that given encounter. Because every encounter with a work of art will be different (this will be discussed more in chapter 2), we cannot intercept the work with, or superimpose onto it, a ready-made interpretation. We could say, as Ingarden indeed does, that the work of art (i.e., the form) has 'gaps' which need to be filled in by the viewer. Roman Ingarden, The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 50-54. Every encounter with a work will differ; in each encounter the interpreter will 'fill in the gaps' differently. At any rate, the point to be made here is that we do not encounter a work of art as a ready-made thing. Because of this (and the fact that the work only responds when we poke around and ask it many different questions) we are left to playfully provoke the work of art. We could then say that the rules of the work of art are such that they do not instigate our wanting to pragmatically/instrumentally dominate what the work says, but rather, they allow for what is being said to playfully move back and forth.

84. RB, p. 124.

85. I do not want to appear as though I am saying that the work is, in and of itself, a complete unity. Although for the purposes of this paper, I do not wish to delve into the subject's participation on this matter, I shall, however, briefly state that Gadamer would insist that any unity is not merely 'found' but is also 'constructed'. Every work leaves "...the person who responds to it a certain leeway, a space to be filled in by himself". RB, p. 26. In the process of interpretation, we take whatever structure is given to us by the work, we mush it around in our jaws, and then we fill in the blanks to make another unity out of all sorts of parts (some of which come from the structure of the work, and some of which come from ourselves). In The Relevance of the Beautiful, this act of interpretation is described as follows: "This is the open

space creative language gives us and which we fill out by following what the writer evokes. And similarly in the visual arts. A synthetic act is required in which we must unite and bring together many different aspects". RB, p. 27. Gadamer's concept of play works well to describe our encounter with the work of art, for in play, we get the sense that "there is in principle no radical separation between the work of art and the person who experiences it". RB, p. 28.

86. Wachterhauser, "Interpreting Texts: Objectivity or Participation?", p. 449. It should be clear that Gadamer would dismiss the notion that meaning lies in the author's intentions. Gadamer repeatedly stresses that it is not the case that meaning resides in what an author intended, for he asserts that the work of art is autonomous to such an extent that it acquires a life of its own. We can see countless examples of Gadamer's rejection of authorial intention. TM, p. 345, RB, pp. 33, 71, PH, p. 95.

87. RB, pp. 125-126.

88. RB, p. 128.

89. RB, p. 129.

90. RB, pp. 128-129.

91. RB, p. 26.

92. RB, p. 126.

CHAPTER 2

AGREEMENT

2.1 Introduction

We have discussed play in order to understand the notion of agreement that Gadamer has in mind. We can now understand this notion of agreement through discerning the *process* of its coming-to-be. In describing our stance in play we have simultaneously characterized the position we are in when we understand another such that an agreement is allowed to be born. Similar to play, when we speak of an agreement we shall be referring to the *process* rather than to the final result. Play is such a vital part of our understanding of the process of agreement; for the process of an agreement is itself, a play game.

Play is the play in and of the making and maintaining of conditions needed for an agreement. For play to be made and maintained the players must *always remain in* play. Likewise, for an agreement to be born and cultivated the participants must be in a stance suitable for furnishing an agreement (i.e., they must be in play). Whether something is an agreement or

not will depend upon whether or not the participants in the agreement agree to agreeably stay in play. With this, I do not mean to suggest that such an agreement is always something which we wilfully decide to initiate. By our *participating* in the play with art (whether we know it or not and perhaps even against our liking it) we implicitly assent to addressing the other in a particular playful manner.[1] One *agrees* to be in play when one playfully allows oneself to come into and remain in a playful dialectic with the other.

But before we move on to discuss the way in which an agreement *is* an agreement, we must first state the reason why agreement is at all important to the discussion of this thesis. I am afraid, however, that to explain the *importance* of agreement apart from describing what the thing *is*, is to paint agreement into a form of a 'still-life'. Although I shall attempt to speak of the *importance* of an agreement I shall, however, find it difficult (if not impossible) to accomplish this task without describing what an agreement *is*. At any rate, I shall now allow the following discussion to move from this one question: do we need to talk of an agreement at all?

If we want to determine what can be said of the work of art (or to put it another way, if we want to know what a work can say to us) we inevitably must speak of an agreement. Even at the stage when we are playing around in the work's meaning, we have already implicitly agreed to apprehend the work in a playful manner (i.e., to playfully undertake an agreement of the work's meaning). When we say the meaning of a work of art is x, what we mean by this is that we have *agreed* to understand the work's meaning *as meaning* x (i.e., we have agreed, through play, to agree with the other participants involved in the play).

Not only do we agree with other human participants in play, we also agree *with the work*

(we take the work as if it were yet another player in the play of meaning). When we engage the work in a playful manner we agree to allow ourselves to act and respond playfully. When, through the process of questioning and answering, we find that a question is accepted 'beautifully' by the work, the following two things occur: (i) we agree to interpret the work in light of a certain question and answer, and (ii) the work agrees to be interpreted according to that question and answer. In being open to an agreement we are in a position which allows us to hear what a work of art says.

An agreement happens when we come together with others in play. Insofar as we are in play, we shall share some common ground with the other participants. Not only can we say that this process of building an agreement happens in play, but also that so long as we are in play we can do nothing other than stand in some sort of agreement with the other(s). Even if we may disagree on the 'final' meaning of a work, we have still implicitly assented to allow others to disagree; we agree to remain in play and henceforth to take others playfully. The fact that we are in play and that we take one another playfully is what builds and indeed insures the making of an agreement. Whatever is said of the work's meaning (while in play) will flow out of the play that all the players are engaged in.

The being of the work of art is dynamic rather than static; it is more than it knows itself to be.[2] Whatever can be said of a work of art is determined (but not pre-determined) by the way in which that work's voice is shaped and formed in our linguistic (playful) encounter with it. The development of a work's meaning is contingent upon the particular players who enter into a dialogue with the work. Not only will every individual player bring to the game their own

context to apply to their understanding of the work, but out of this particular situation there will also occur a unique dialectic between the questions and answers put to and asked by the interlocutors of the game.[3] We can only hear what a work says if we *agree* to engage in play with it.

What we take a work of art to be saying is a matter of what meaning is developed and played back and forth in our encounter with that work. What is taken to be 'meaningful' can change and, indeed, *will* change in our different encounters with a work. When we are speaking of what a work of art says, we are not referring to a 'Final Truth'. If truth is a matter of being an agreement, and if agreements change, then truth itself changes. Our encounter with a work of art may yield some agreement as to the meaning of the work but this does not, however, mean that such a meaning is immutable. But before we move on to discuss the transformative nature of what a work of art can truly say, we should begin with a brief description of what it means to say that truth is an agreement. Beginning with showing agreement to be the nature of truth, my purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate how this process of truth is *transformative* by nature.

2.2 Truth as Agreement

I shall now attempt to describe how agreement fits into Gadamer's notion of truth. Given the

general description of the play of our understanding (in chapter 1), we can now say that whatever is arrived at by this understanding (i.e., truth) is not something which lies outside of the play-game. All truths are the products of play. Now although other concoctions and arrangements can be produced outside of play, we shall find (in the next chapter of this thesis) that properly speaking, these are not very 'true' at all (in the sense in which Gadamer speaks of truth). I shall now turn to Gadamer's notion of truth.

Truth is essentially dialogical; it emerges in the very process of dialogue. Any truth is established (although never permanently established) in the exchange between the interlocutors in play. The necessity of having such a dialogical encounter in play rules out the possibility of our reaching truth through an abstract theoretical contemplation of it in our own minds. Perhaps this is the very message we get from the fact that Gadamer does not attempt to give us a systematic theory of truth *in abstracto*.[4] A truth arises and is inseparable from the dialectical intercourse in which the players are engaged.

Truth, which resides neither exclusively in the work itself nor in the mind of the interpreter, emerges in the *mutual interaction* between the partners engaged in the dialogue. The happening of truth is inseparable from the dialogical event of understanding as a movement back and forth between questioning and answering; truth is wedded to its process of reasoning.[5] Since truth is inseparable from its growth out of a specific context, it is impossible to adequately assess the content of a truth apart from this context and process of coming-to-be.[6]

Truth happens *in* communication; it is never fully present prior to this conversation. In the course of conversation we make things true not by casting aside our 'impure' bodies or by

'purifying' our thoughts of all prejudice, but rather, through the only possible human way we can: through our *finite* experiences and interpretations. Essentially, we cannot make our interpretations objective any more than we can rid ourselves of our finite situations. Interpretation always occurs and arises out of a particular practical realm.

Gadamer has not set up his discussion of the encounter with a work of art as a theory which is separate from practice. In order to illustrate this point, I would like to use what I take to be Peter McCormick's misrepresentation of a tension in Gadamer's work between theory and practice.[7] McCormick claims that a tension between theory and practice exists in Gadamer's work because our interpretations are not, as McCormick believes they are thought to be in Gadamer's theoretical model, the final court of appeal in practice. McCormick assumes that what leads us to change our interpretations in the practical realm is the encounter with 'certain situations and states of affairs or facts of a certain order'. In practice, according to McCormick, the role of 'new factual information', and not the further use of interpretation, is the final point of reference for our interpretive stance. Where I think McCormick's misunderstanding stems from is to be found in his separation of the world of 'facts' from the activity of interpretation. It would seem as though McCormick is taking these 'facts' as being 'bare' and empirically discoverable in the scientific/objectivistic sense. This view of 'facts' is incompatible with Gadamer's position, which maintains that any so-called 'fact' is itself always the product of interpretation. Interpretations can and will be altered by new situations, but these new 'states of affairs' are at the same time to be recognized as, and incorporated in, still other acts of interpretation. Interpretation is at play at every level and at every moment of the activity of our

understanding.

If we are to claim that an interpretation is 'true', we must then ask what we mean by 'truth'. To address this question, we might look to the *process* whereby we come to an understanding that something is true. The truth of a work of art is not determined by assessing whether or not our interpretations mirror an 'external' state of affairs; truth is not a matter of 'verification' with reference to some 'external', 'unchanging' reality.[8] There is no universal measure to judge the nature of an interpretation. When we come to an understanding that *something* is 'true', we have not verified that *something* by referring it to some objective reality. What this means is that we can never appeal to the 'work in itself' (in an objective sense) to verify or falsify our interpretation(s) of it. For in appealing to a work we always inevitably using a particular interpretation of that work. There seems to be no reference to an 'objective' criterion which would allow us positively or 'objectively' to assert that one interpretation of a work is 'true' or 'correct'.

Although an interpretation of a work may never be positively verified by another interpretation of a work - because the work has no one 'correct' meaning, and even if it did, we could never jump out of our finite situation to get at it - it has been suggested that we may use our interpretations to 'falsify' other interpretations.[9] Because any interpretation which attempts to falsify another will always be rooted in interpretation, it is, therefore, impossible once and for all to falsify another interpretation. In fact, instead of talking about verification and falsification we should speak in terms of meaningfulness and emptiness. The opposite of truth is best described as 'empty' rather than 'false'.[10]

In any interpretation we can only show that, for the present purposes and/or in light of certain contexts, some interpretations are better or worse than others. Essentially, Gadamer stresses the sense in which any truth will be the interpretation which is most *plausible* or *acceptable* as an answer to whatever question or anticipation is put to it. An interpretation will be considered *plausible* only if it is *coherent.*[11] An interpretation must make coherent sense of the parts and whole of the thing which is being interpreted.[12] If we want to judge interpretations against one another we do so not with the 'objective meaning' in mind, but with a view to what makes more coherent sense.[13]

Our judgement of an interpretation must itself be an interpretation which looks to the patterns and connections of that interpretation.[14] The notion of coherence refers to an ordering of the parts of a previous interpretation. When we judge an interpretation we bring to it our own anticipations and questions, and part of what makes an interpretation coherent is the sense in which we can further interpret that interpretation in the context which these anticipations and questions provide. Essentially, an interpretation is not objectively coherent, but rather, it is understood as being coherent if, in part, that interpretation can be meaningfully fused together with our own situation. In this case, the second interpreter's situation is taken as yet another 'part' which must be harmonized with the other parts. Yet not all interpretations will harmonize their parts with equal grace. An interpretation's harmony of parts - while it will not be the 'final' meaning of what a work can say - may, however, aid us in distinguishing better interpretations from worse ones.[15] Our acceptance of an interpretation as 'plausible' depends upon our ability to understand it as a coherent whole harmonizing its parts.

What is deemed 'plausible' or 'acceptable' is determined through a process of conversation. Here we arrive at Gadamer's notion of truth as *agreement.* Truth is achieved in and through, and is a matter of, an agreement born out of a *genuine* conversation.[16] In fact, what truth signifies is that there has been something which has been agreed upon. This does not, however, mean that we must initially begin with all things being agreed upon. For in fact, if truth is what is agreed upon, then it follows that truth "cannot exist in the absence of conflict of opinion".[17] In order for a truth to be something which is 'agreed upon' it must have it origins in the fact that there is a certain amount of disagreement.[18]

Truth as an agreement between those who disagree is never free from further disagreements. The transformative nature of truth reveals itself most forcefully as the truth is set up against new and different counter interpretations or situations. Any truth will constantly have to re-affirm itself as 'true'. It will do this by seeking to rationally convince the opposing interpretations in and through the course of genuine conversation. In the process of dialogue a truth must seek the agreement of the opposing force not by highlighting one and the same part of an interpretation in the exact same way, but by addressing the new challenge in a manner which allows certain aspects of the truth to emerge more predominately or differently than before; when a truth confronts a new opposition or situation it will *transform* itself to meet the opposition's challenge. In this encounter with the other, *new dialectics* will occur between the truth and the objection (e.g., between the parts and the whole of that new interpretation). The way in which a truth responds to or shapes itself in relation to a *disagreement* displays the nature of truth as transformative and adaptable. As an *agreement*, the *truth* of a truth is not fixed for

all time. Rather it is in the act of encountering the disagreements that a truth is enabled to re-affirm and re-establish itself *as* a truth (i.e., as an agreement).

The transformative nature of truth is revealed in and through the event by which we come to alter our agreement(s). And our agreements never remain static because of the nature of play and the flexible stance which we must hold in play. From all of this, we find that what we take to be true in a work of art may be substantially different each and every time we apprehend and understand that work. I would now like to focus on the notion of transformation so that we may better understand how and why our stance in play must remain open to the work of art.

2.3 Understanding: The Movement between Universals and Particulars

As we discuss the nature of understanding we shall find that what we take to be the truth is always subject to a fluid and transformative movement. To examine the transformative nature of truth we shall first have to turn our attention to the relation between universals and particulars. What Gadamer says about this relationship proves to be extremely useful for our comprehension of the way in which the process of understanding transforms the truth of a work of art. When we discuss this relation between universals and particulars we shall be concurrently depicting the way in which we *play* with the truth of a work of art.

I shall use the *relationship* between universals and particulars to demonstrate the

transformative nature of the truth of a work of art. I purposely say 'relationship' for that is precisely what it is. In this relationship neither the particular nor the universal exists without the other. Gadamer speaks of the relationship between the universal and the particular as if it were an inseparable unity:

> ...*from the multiplicity of experiences*, there arises something like a consciousness of the universal...one come[s] to the knowledge of the universal...[through] the mere fact that experiences accumulate and that one recognizes them to be identical. [emphasis added][19]

Gadamer is quite explicit about what the universal is *not.* The universal - although necessary for making a judgement - is not at all like a Platonic Idea. The universal does not stand on its own in a pre-determined or pre-fixed way. The universal, moreover, does not have a static existence before and/or independent of the concrete particulars.

We can immediately relate what Gadamer says about the relation between the universals and particulars to what was previously said about the relation between the work and its interpreter. Neither the universal nor the work of art exists in complete isolation from the particular or the interpreter; neither side in either relation is properly spoken of independent of the other half of the relation. This means that we cannot objectively grasp the 'Universal Meaning' of a work of art. We must always *apply ourselves* (our interpretive framework) in order to develop any sort of meaning. The universal cannot be known as such independent of a concrete situation and, moreover, our concrete understanding of a particular does not reflect or mirror a higher or more complete universal.

Similar to the truth of what the work of art says, the universal is a notion which is forever

growing, developing and expanding. The universal - analogous to the work of art itself - directs us neither in only one direction nor toward a point of completion. We could say that both the universal and the work or art are open to the realm of possibilities and change; the object of understanding is neither to attain the abstract universal nor to come to an absolute end. In understanding, we aim to open ourselves to the future possibilities which may arise from every new and diverse experience:

> ...the experienced person proves to be...someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its own fulfilment not in definitive knowledge, but in that openness to experience that is encouraged by experience itself.[20]

In order to experience a particular significance of a work of art one must encounter that work as an *individual* thing. Although Gadamer does maintain that the process of understanding 'always includes application', he does not mean to say that this is an application of a general pre-established rule to a concrete particular case.[21] The application here is not the sort that would make every particular an instance of or subsumed under a general comprehensive law.[22] What we arrive at - through our particular interpretive encounter with a work of art - is not something that confronts us as being only a small part of something greater; when we understand Swan Lake, for example, we do not understand it as being a particular manifestation of some greater 'universal' Swan Lake.[23] To put this another way, we could say that we encounter Swan Lake as being 'The' Swan Lake even though it is experienced through our particular encounter with

it. Essentially, we understand the universal in light of the concrete. Consider the significance of particulars in Gadamer's characterization of the event of application: "It is not the subsequent applying to a concrete case of a given universal that we understand first by itself, but it is the actual understanding of the universal itself that the given text constitutes for us".[24] When we understand two different performances of Swan Lake differently, we have not merely superimposed our previous understanding of past Swan Lakes onto the present one. We understand our encounter with the immediate performance as something which is unique and complete in itself.

We understand a particular Swan Lake to be a 'pure manifestation' of Swan Lake. The act of revealing or displaying itself as Swan Lake is the way in which that work uniquely manifests itself to the viewer as a 'self-sufficient' creation:

> ...the work of art is not itself simply as a product. It is defined precisely by not being a piece of work that has just been turned out and could be turned out again and again. On the contrary, it is something that has emerged in an unrepeatable way and has manifested itself in a unique fashion. It seems to me, therefore, that it would be more accurate to call it a creation (*Gebilde*) than a work. For the word *Gebilde* implies that the manifestation in question has in a strange way transcended the process in which it originated...it is set forth in its own appearance as a self-sufficient creation. Rather than referring back to the process of its formation, such creation demands to be apprehended in itself as pure manifestation.[25]

A work displays or manifests itself *as a creation* when a viewer constructs it as a self-sufficient creation.[26] A creation appears in its own light; it appears as being that which is unparalleled by any other thing.

The work 'stands' in its own particular meaning which is irreplaceable and unique. Because our understanding of each performance is not dictated and regulated by a universal law, each understanding will, therefore, be different and, moreover, what is understood in and by each encounter will not be subject to prediction any more than it will be capable of being substituted for another experience. The outcome of a particular meaning is something that must, therefore, wait for the event of being made.[27]

The uniqueness of each work of art lies at the bottom of Gadamer's claim that a work is no 'mere bearer' of meaning. If the work is not an inert bearer of meaning, then the meaning that it is taken to have cannot be simply transferred to another bearer.[28] In order to understand what is meant by saying that the meaning of one work of art cannot be transferred to another work, I would like to draw a distinction between the performance of Swan Lake, on the one hand, and the construction of Swan Lake tutus, on the other. The fabrication of a tutu is radically different than the construction of an understanding of a performance of Swan Lake. In describing the construction of tutus, I shall inadvertently be giving an illustration of something other than what happens when we understand a performance of Swan Lake.[29] To begin with, let us look at the construction of tutus. Swan Lake tutus are mass-produced from a pre-fabricated pattern. All the tutus are made to perform the same function; one tutu can easily be substituted for another. The design from which a tutu is made is similar to a universal law. In the case of tutus, we could say that each tutu is both an instance of a pre-determined, universal pattern, and also that it can be substituted or exchanged for any other tutu.

We cannot, on the other hand, say this of the work of art. Each and every understanding

of Swan Lake is *unique*. If we want to know what makes each Swan Lake different from every other, and from the manufacturing of tutus, we must look to the *process* by which we construct our understanding of it *as* a work of art.[30] In an encounter with a work of art we do not pragmatically conceive of the work in terms of it having a 'specific function' which can be reproduced indefinitely; we understand the work as being something which is always unique and irreplaceable.[31] An interpretive encounter with a work of art centres upon and arises out of the unique particularity of its circumstance.[32] In focusing on the particularity of a work of art, the interpreter enjoys an 'undogmatic freedom'.[33] This freedom lies in the interpreter's ability to enlarge her understanding of universal concepts, and hence, to alter and develop truth itself:

> ...the universal concept that is meant by the meaning of the word is enriched by the particular view of an object, so that what emerges is a new, more specific word formation which does more justice to the particular features of the object...there is...a constant process of concept formation by means of which the life of a language develops.[34]

This sort of *development* always involves an experience which mingles in the particular, and thus the formation of a concept is never the work of mere abstraction.[35] The formation of concepts is something which has no definitive end; it is a process which may occur with every new experience *ad infinitum*. What the mind considers to be similar among things forms the basis of our concepts.[36] However, equally important to the formation of concepts are the experiences of what we consider to be *differences* among particular things.[37] At any rate, a concept should never signal the completion of thought. On the contrary, a concept should indicate a 'preliminary achievement".[38] The 'undogmatic freedom' with which we develop concepts allows meaning to

emerge in and as a result of both the particular context and situation of the work and the interpreter.[39]

The relation between the work of art and the interpreter requires that the particular situation of the reader be taken into account as an *essential contributor* to meaning itself: "In order to understand...he [the reader] must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he wants to understand at all".[40] The *possibility* and *outcome* of understanding is, to a large extent, dependent upon the context which we bring to and apply in our act of understanding. We uniquely understand the uniqueness of a work of art through applying our context to and keeping ourselves in play. Only in play can we remain sensitive and open to the uniqueness of the work in its particular context.

Through his appeal to the notion of play in understanding we get the sense in which Gadamer is rejecting both a theory of truth as correspondence and as that which is arrived at through the application of a rigid method:

> ...it was clear that...understanding...did not mean that the question of truth was decided in advance from the standpoint of a superior knowledge of the object...we are not simply ordering knowledge into compartments, but that what we encounter...says something to us. Understanding...is a genuine experience, ie an encounter with something that asserts itself as a truth.[41]

A dogmatic application of a method is not what allows truth to emerge in an encounter with art. Any particular encounter with art is never reduced to being a mere 'pawn' or 'tool' for a universal. To interpret and describe the meaningful content of an encounter with a work of art in terms of a pre-determined abstract schema is to violently overtake art in a very 'dangerous

manner'.[42]

Although the universal may act as a 'rule of thumb' for guiding (in a loose sense) the direction of the particular, the universal itself, however, undergoes its own transformation/enhancement through each and every new particular. Rather than simply understanding the particular in terms of the universal, the universal itself must be understood in light of the particular.[43] Although to think in concepts necessitates the use of universals, these universals are considered to be open to the new possible instances of any particular which may influence and transform our understanding of the universal. Clearly, the *two-way* relationship between the universal and the particular is a *dynamic* one which has its source of nourishment grounded in the experiences themselves.

2.4 The Transformative Nature of Truth

The truths which we hold to be true are not complete and static. All truths are continually being made true. Truth is never immune to flux. According to Gadamer, we shall never attain knowledge of objective Being; Gadamer describes everything in terms of its becoming. All that we may know is that which deals with and is derived from the realm of becoming. Gadamer's position excludes the possibility of absolute starting-points, self-contained certainties, and/or presuppositionless foundations.[44] What we may take to be true from any encounter with a work

of art is born out of and taken from an "intricate interplay of showing and concealing".[45] We find that the movement of 'concealing' is given just as much priority as the notion of 'revealing'.[46] In any creation of truth, certain things are highlighted while other parts are relegated to the shadows and darkness of what no longer fits into, and therefore is left out of, a *particular* truth.[47] Gadamer describes this two-fold movement of truth (*aletheia*) as the following:

> Alongside and inseparable from this unconcealing, there also stands the shrouding and concealing that belongs to our human finitude. This philosophical insight, which sets limits to any idealism claiming a total recovery of meaning, implies that there is *more to the work of art than a meaning that is experienced only in an indeterminate way.* [emphasis added][48]

Any one experience of a work is partial; different experiences elicit different truths. What is in fact meaningful in our engagement with a work of art is that meaning is never totally (or objectively) complete in any one interpretive experience. If we are to find any truth to a work of art we must actively engage ourselves in the process of the concealing and revealing.

What should be evident from a reading of Gadamer is how truth is not a single or static state of affairs. With the rejection of the notion of a single truth, Gadamer has also thrown away the idea that every truth is merely a progression to or approximation of a final truth.[49] Truth is conceived of as being something other than what the traditional model of correspondence depicts it as. When Gadamer speaks of truth he is referring to the process of playing with possibilities:

> ...truth does not mean correspondence with reality...but refers to the disclosure of possibilities for being and acting that emerge in and

> by the means of the playful encounter. Truth refers not to a static, mirroring relation between a subject and an object but to the transformation process which occurs in all instances of genuine understanding.[50]

Imbedded in the above passage is the assertion that truth comes about through a playful adventure wherein both the subject and the object are *altered* throughout and as a result of this process: "Truth refers to the self-enrichment and self-realization that occurs as a result of the play of meaning".[51] This 'enhancement' - which happens to both the subject and the object - is more than just a slight 'accidental' change. When Gadamer claims that the work of art is transformative by nature he does not mean that it slowly changes piece by piece. Gadamer draws a distinction between the notions of 'change' and 'transformation'. Within the realm of this distinction, Gadamer maintains that a work of art is in a process of 'transformation' rather than in a state of 'change'. To ascertain the nature of this transformation we must first consider what Gadamer has to say about the difference(s) between *change* and *transformation*:

> The implications for the definition of the nature of art emerge when one takes the sense of transformation seriously. Transformation is not change, even a change that is especially far-reaching. A change always means that what is changed also remains the same and is held on to. However totally it may change, something changes in it. In terms of categories, all change (alloiosis) belongs in the sphere of quality, ie of accident of substance. But transformation means that something is suddenly and as a whole something else, that this other transformed thing that it has become is its true being, in comparison with which its earlier being is nothing. When we find someone transformed we mean precisely this, that he has become, as it were, another person. There cannot here be any transition of gradual change leading from one to the other, since one is the denial of the other. Thus the *transformation into a structure* means that what existed previously

> no longer exists. But also that what now exists, what represents itself in the play of art, is what is lasting and true. [emphasis added][52]

To say that the work of art *transforms into a structure* is to deny that its true being slowly evolves in the direction of a teleological end; it does not gradually progress in a linear manner.[53] What 'represents itself in the play of art' can completely transform its being into something surprisingly *unpredictable* and *different.*

We can better understand this notion of difference if we again speak of an interpretation in terms of its parts and whole. Every encounter with a work of art will yield a different harmonization of the parts which are taken as being essential to that encounter. When we have a new and different encounter with a work, we are not merely ordering around pre-existing parts to achieve the same 'end'. Essentially, every different encounter will have a different ordering of parts and, therefore, a different notion of a 'whole' or 'end'. The harmonizing of parts in any interpretation will be such that it may *transform* the 'whole'.[54] Every understanding of a harmony of parts will always be transformative - it will involve an understanding which is uniquely different than the previous interpretation.[55]

The nature of each encounter could also lead us to say that the 'universal' - or what has up to this point been regarded as the universal - is itself transformed. When we think of the transformation of the meaning of a work we must remind ourselves of the relation between the universal and the particular. Each particular encounter is significant to the truth of the work of art, for in such encounters what we encounter is not merely added to something greater, as if the essential core was already there. On the contrary, the encounter *transforms* the truth of a work

of art.[56] Every encounter with a work of art is *essential* to the *being* of that work.[57] We should not suppose that each encounter will be the same or that it will be what we want it to be. Because we do not blindly slump together all our encounters into one 'compost heap', so to speak, we encounter works of art as if they were unique creations. Every particular encounter with a work of art will be incredibly unique and, in its uniqueness, it will set its own standards.

We do not have to look outside of our particular *encounters* with the work of art in order to ascertain its meaning. If we are to say or interpret anything about an encounter it will be done within the structure of our play with the work. All forms of comment or criticism will be *immanent*.[58] In other words, in our encounter with a work we shall not look to some long-term, unchanging, universal idea. Instead, we shall speak and interpret from the heart of the playful encounter itself. In play, the work transforms into a structure which carries within itself its own rules and guidelines for further interpretive intercourse:

> Transformation into a structure is not simply transposition into another world. Certainly it is another, closed world in which play takes place. But inasmuch as it is a structure, it has, so to speak, found its measure in itself and measures itself by nothing outside it.[59]

From all of this, we may conclude with two interrelated and essential ramifications: (i) when we interpretively encounter a work in play we do not understand it by measuring it against a pre-fixed, schematic, universal idea, and (ii) what we encounter in our play with art is something uniquely different than all of our previous encounters.

Underneath these two consequences we find the very source of their nourishment:

agreement. The disclosure of truth, resting on the above two considerations, is primarily the product of agreement. If we fail to take into account all of the relevant aspects of the above factors, then we shall have an altogether different notion of truth - one that *does not* resemble Gadamer's notion of truth as agreement.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. When we participate with one another (in a game), what binds all the participants (e.g., the rules of the game) is something that lies between the participants, and is furthermore, held in common. The infinitive form of the Latin verb 'to be' is *esse*. When we combine *esse* with *inter* (which translates 'between, among, in the course of') we have a verb which generally translates to the following: to be between, among or in the course of'. Henceforth, we may understand the latin root of participate - *interesse* - as meaning 'what is held in common, or what is held between those who partake in the holding'. To participate (*interesse*) is to be *amongst* whatever it is that one is participating in. Whenever we enter into a conversation with works of art, we "...participate in the profound tensions that they set up". RB, p. 39. The reconstitution of a work of art takes place in a linguistic ground which 'mediates' the conversation between ourselves and the work. When we communicate with a work, we *participate* in, and *share,* that work's language: "...art unites us in the communicative dimension...the artist no longer speaks for the community, but forms his own community...in fact, all artistic creation challenges each of us to listen to the language in which the work of art speaks and to make it our own. It remains true in every case that a *shared or potentially shared* achievement is at issue". RB, p. 39. [emphasis added].

2. Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, p. 13.

3. If the outcome of our understanding is a new truth, then this truth is true in relation to the particular concrete situation from which it arose. If the situation or context changes we should expect that the truth would also alter. What may be taken as true in an interpretation cannot be separated from the perspective or situation of the interpreter. Truth will never be context-free. Whatever may be construed as being true will in part depend upon the situation in which this truth arose. A situational truth is embedded in *how* it is *used* in the given context in which it emerges. Truth arises in the *interaction between* the interpreter's situation and the thing which is interpreted *into* that situation. If the outcome of each truth relies on the concrete situation which it is developed in and through, then each concrete situation will be critical for the development of a different understanding or outcome.

4. This point is put forth by Jean Grondin in his article, "Hermeneutical Truth and its Historical Presuppositions", in Antifoundationalism and Practical Reasoning, edited by Evan Simpson (Edmonton, Canada: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1987), p. 50.

5. Gary Madison, The Logic of Liberty (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 218.

6. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, p. 218.

7. Peter J. McCormick, Modernity, Aesthetics, and the Bounds of Art (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,1990), pp. 28-29.

8. This also means that truth is not a matter of an interpretation corresponding with some universal. I only *mention* that truth is not a matter of correspondence (without wishing to explore this issue further) for this is a topic that is discussed more thoroughly in section 2.3.

9. Brice R. Wachterhauser, "Interpreting Texts: Objectivity or Participation?", pp. 450-451.

10. Jean Grondin, "Hermeneutical Truth and its Historical Presuppositions", Antifoundationalism and Practical Reasoning, p. 52.

11. In describing his notion of truth, Gadamer makes use of the concept of coherence. To understand something we must "seek and acknowledge the immanent coherence contained within the meaning claim of the other...the perfect coherence of the global and final meaning is the criterion for *the* understanding. When coherence is wanting, we say that understanding is deficient". Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness", Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, pp. 87, 127. When speaking of coherence we should not necessarily assume that what is coherent can be tested by logic. The reason for making this point is stated succinctly by Ricoeur: "that is to say to cease to limit this concept to logical coherence and empirical verification alone, so that the truth claim related to the transfiguring action of fiction can be taken into account". Paul Ricoeur, "On Interpretation", Philosophy in France Today, edited by Alan Montefiore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 187.

12. In understanding we seek the interpretation which best harmonizes its parts. TM, p. 264.

13. Paul Fairfield, "Truth Without Methodologism: Gadamer and James", American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. LXVII, No. 3 (1993), p. 287.

14. Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text", Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, edited and translated by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 202-207.

15. Paul Fairfield, "Truth Without Methodologism", pp. 286-289.

16. I shall discuss the notion of a 'genuine' conversation in my third chapter.

17. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, p. 242.

18. If we refer back to language, we can easily think of how there would be plenty to disagree about. The meaning of a word, similar to the meaning of a work of art, is ambiguous. This ambiguity - signalling that there will be disagreement - calls for an act of our coming together in an agreement.

19. TM, p. 492. There is no absolute beginning to speak of (just as there is no absolute end to achieve)

20. TM, p. 319.

21. TM, p. 345.

22. Gadamer, TM, p. 446. We do not proceed to explain a concrete phenomenon as if it were a particular case of a general rule: "application is not a calibration of some generality given in advance in order to unravel afterwards a particular situation. In attending to a text, for example, the interpreter does not try to apply a general criterion to a particular case; on the contrary, he is interested in the fundamentally original significance of the writing under his consideration [i.e., its uniqueness]". Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness", Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, pp. 95, 125-126.

23. On this Gadamer writes: "the artistic experience is constituted precisely by the fact that we do not distinguish between the particular way the work is realized and the identity of the work itself". RB, p. 29.

24. TM, p. 305.

25. RB, p. 126.

26. RB, p. 126. How one goes about reconstituting a work of art as a creation will be the topic of my third chapter. For the moment, however, we must first recognize that the work of art appears to us as a self-sufficient or pure manifestation. Here we could contrast this notion of a 'pure manifestation' with the idea that the work is not to be viewed as a 'particular manifestation' of some greater universal.

27. Because truth must wait for an act of its being-made-true, truth then requires and relies upon our acts of making-it-true. Since all truths are always transforming, we must constantly re-think our truths in order to reinstate 'that which we are constantly forgetting', or what "threatens to pass away" (i.e., truth). RB, p. 46. It is in the act of play itself - that is, our playing around in linguistic meaning - that we are enabled to constantly re-order and re-affirm that which incessantly 'threatens to pass away'. Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 117.

28. RB, p. 33. The way in which a work is not a mere instrumental tool of meaning parallels Gadamer's insistence that language itself is not a mere means. Thus, I would think that it would be imprecise to say that art (similar to the case of language) is only a medium of meaning. See Heidegger's Origin of the Work of Art. Rather, we could think of art as being the very threads of, as well as that which partakes in the act of weaving together, meaning.

29. I realize that I am professing that understanding takes the form of a construction (or creation). This is a legitimate use of the word 'construction', for Gadamer refers to our understandings of a work of art as being 'creative constructions'. RB, pp. 126-127.

30. We must always remember that what is revealed in an encounter with a work of art cannot be divorced from the playful 'tango' in which it arose. What emerges in and through this encounter is such that it cannot be replaced by another. On this, Gadamer writes: "just as a symbolic gesture is not just itself but expresses something else through itself, so too the work of art is not itself simply *as* a product. It is defined precisely by not being a piece of work that has just been turned out again and again. On the contrary, it is something that has emerged in an unrepeatable way and has manifested itself in a unique fashion". RB, p. 126. The 'way' of the play with art is 'cleared' in the act of play (and this always happens beyond our schematic plans and designs). A work of art, furthermore, is *not* conceived 'in terms of it having a specific function' and therefore, it is not, in principle, replaceable. RB, p. 35. The *meaning, alternative, and consequence* of our not conceiving the work 'in terms of a specific function', however, is another issue that will be discussed in my third chapter.

31. RB, p. 35. I shall wait until my third chapter to explore what it means to say that 'we do not conceive the work in terms of it having a specific function which can be reproduced'.

32. TM, p. 388. An interpretation is always grounded in a concrete circumstance and as such it is inseparable from the particular effects which are produced in the act of interpretation; "understanding is inseparable from application, i.e., from the reading subject's reaction to and appropriation of the text". Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 114.

33. TM, p. 391.

34. TM, p. 388.

35. TM, p. 389.

36. TM, p. 391.

37. TM, p. 280.

38. TM, p. 391.

39. Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 114.

40. TM, p. 289.

41. Gadamer's denial of a theory of correspondence can be noted when he maintains that what the work of art 'says' is something which refuses external verification. [RB, p. 110] Truth, furthermore, is not the product of a formal state of propositions which are logically or objectively true; for if truth is restricted to the truth of propositions "then it appears that art has nothing to do with truth". Peter J. McCormick, Modernity, Aesthetics, and the Bounds of Art, p. 22.

42. RB, p. 33. This overbearing act may remind us of the violence which Ricoeur claimed would end the 'hermeneutical dialogue'. For more on this see Paul Ricoeur, Main Trends in Philosophy, New York 1979, pp. 226-67.

43. Anthony P. Kerby. "Gadamer's Concrete Universal", Man and World, 24, 1991, p. 53. We must always remind ourselves of the similarity of the relationship between the interpreter and the work of art, and between the universal and the particular. Each side in the relationship can only be separated through a matter of abstraction. The parts in each relationship are firmly rooted in one and the same place: an interpretive event of understanding wherein the parts are understood as 'flowering' from the same 'seed'. Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 109.

44. Gary Madison, "Getting Beyond Objectivism: The Philosophical Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur", in Economics and Hermeneutics, ed. Don Lavoie (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 52.

45. It is the symbolic function in art which continually provokes, instigates, and maintains this dual-movement. The Relevance of The Beautiful, p. 33. Truth grows out of our playing with the work's playful 'transformation into structure'; what transforms into structure (out of that which was previously hidden) is true. RB, p. 101.

46. Truth addresses us in this two-fold movement, and as a movement, the truth which emerges cannot be described in an abstract language. We could say that this movement (of the emergence of truth) makes something *actually stand as true* amidst all the possibilities of truth. If we translate this movement into a movement from what is *possibly* meaningful and true to what *actually* becomes meaningful and true then we speak of truth in terms of its becoming. As an interesting aside, there is a passage from Kierkegaard which succinctly describes this movement (as that which cannot be abstractly explained): "the transition from possibility to actuality is...a movement. This cannot be expressed or understood in the language of abstraction; for in the sphere of the abstract, movement cannot have assigned to it either time or space which presuppose movement or are presupposed by it...from the abstract point of view...[there can be no] movement, since from this point of view everything *is*". Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 306.

47. Here I do not mean to say that the process of revealing and concealing is totally controlled and deliberated by the conscious mind. We are not always aware of the prejudices we carry which would make us construct something into truth x rather than truth z. Henceforth, we are not aware of all the possibilities that may or may not have even occurred to our finite minds.

48. RB, p. 34. When speaking of truth (as something never fully complete) Gadamer implicitly recognizes human finitude as inherent to our being-in-the-world. It is not, however, correct to say (as Ambrosio does) that the "...never completed meaning, that comes into language itself accounts for the finitude of human understanding". Ambrosio, "Dawn and Dusk; Gadamer and Heidegger on Truth", p. 38. Gadamer does not speak of our finitude in terms of an inference.

49. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, pp. 220, 242.

50. Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 117.

51. Madison, "A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, p. 117.

52. TM, p. 100.

53. With this notion of a 'transformation into structure', Gadamer stresses the sense in which the 'parts' of an interpretation are capable of transforming the entire 'whole' of a new interpretation. Whenever Gadamer speaks of this 'transformation into a structure' we find that we are immersed in his belief that "something is suddenly and as a whole something else". TM, p. 100. What is transformed into a structure is therefore not 'measured' by some 'end' which the structure is gradually changing into. Transformation into structure is a transformation into the 'true'; something is revealed as being true. Essentially, what Gadamer is stressing here is the notion that in play what is 'revealed' is the 'true being' of the work of art. TM, p. 101. The notion of transforming (in play) into a 'true being' or 'structure' is also found on page 126 of The Relevance of The Beautiful. Here, Gadamer claims that the work of art reveals what it 'truly is' in the act of re-creation (i.e., in play). The work of art, Gadamer maintains, "must constantly be reconstituted as a creation...it demands to be constructed by the viewer to whom it is presented. Part of what the work of art is, is something which must await the act of reconstruction in play. In play the work is transformed into a structure (or what it truly is). And this transformation is always a 'complete' and 'whole' transformation rather than a minor 'accidental' alteration.

54. This is the notion of non-dogmatic interpretations that James Franklin discusses in his article, "Natural Sciences as Textual Interpretation: The Hermeneutics of the Natural Sign", Philosophy & Phenomenological Research, XLIV, 4, 1984, pp. 509-520.

55. For as Gadamer says in Truth and Method, understanding is the process wherein we create an interpretation which is both transformative and different; he writes, "it is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all" (p. 264).

56. It becomes 'this' rather than 'that'.

57. TM, p. 118.

58. Essentially, our interpretive assessments arise out of our activity *in* play. Whatever interpretive claim we make of a work of art is always done in and from a particular concrete context: "we cannot say in a general and abstract way which actions are just and which are not; there are no just actions in themselves, independent of what the situation requires". Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness", Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, p. 121.

59. TM, p. 101.

CHAPTER 3

AGREEMENT VERSUS CONSENSUS

3.1 Introduction

In an effort to understand Gadamer's notion of truth as agreement, we have had to elucidate the notion of play in interpretation. I previously stated that 'play is the play of and in the making and maintaining of the conditions needed for an agreement'. Now, in this third and final chapter, the bulk of my discussion will require an understanding of this active ingredient of play in agreement. When we want to understand what *makes* truth true, we must look to the movement of *play* in interpretation. What distinguishes a truth from other fabrications is the *way* in which it comes about or is made. The *process* of play is where and how a truth becomes made. When we want to answer the question 'what makes a truth a true?' we must, subsequently, look to the process of play for an answer. Only when we look towards play do we receive an answer to our question which both pierces and lies at the very heart of our inquiry.

In this chapter I shall use the process of play to clarify a distinction between an agreement

and a consensus. The benefit of making such a distinction is two-fold. Firstly, such a distinction will require a deeper analysis of the consequences and presuppositions imbedded in the notion of agreement. And secondly, such a contrast will enable me to adequately address Mary Devereaux's work on Gadamer. But before I introduce Devereaux's work to my discussion, I must first set the stage, so to speak, with a comparison between agreement and consensus. With such a contrast drawn, we will find that a consensus is fundamentally different than an agreement. Keeping in line with Gadamer's emphasis on play, we will find that, properly speaking, truth happens or is made in an agreement rather than in a consensus.

In order to understand this assertion, we must recall that what is deemed true is something that is brought about or constructed in and through a dialectical play with the other. A consensus is radically different from an agreement in that it does not require such a dialectical interplay. Only *in the movement of play* can we hope to achieve a truth born from an agreement. The consequences of play (along with and somewhat inseparable from the conditions of play) are the key elements addressed in this third chapter. Such consequences are of paramount importance when truth is at stake. Not every 'concoction' is a truth. Likewise, not every process embodies play. Without play, silhouettes of truth are just that; facsimiles. A consensus belongs to this breed of shadowy figures; a consensus does not bring about truth.

How, we may now ask, do we distinguish between a consensus and an agreement? In deciphering whether or not something is an agreement we do not get very far if we merely consult the end result. With only a finished product, we grasp nothing with which we could judge the product's nature. In short, product x, for example, tells us little or nothing about its

origins; with just x, we cannot tell if x is a product of an agreement or a consensus. Because the finished product of an agreement may resemble something arrived at by a consensus, we are forced to observe the *process or making* of x if we want to find its true nature.

It is in the *process* of a consensus that we are enabled to see the production of x (and, consequently, the product itself) as being fundamentally different than what would occur in an agreement. In studying the process of a consensus we find that it lacks the essential element of play. Without play, a consensus *about* a work of art cannot bring about a truth. We must ascertain how it is that a lack of play forbids those involved in a consensus to come to an understanding of truth.

Already, with words, we can note a difference between the way in which we talk of either an agreement or a consensus. In talking of a consensus, I implied that 'we achieve a consensus *about* a work of art', whereas if I were to substitute the word 'consensus' with 'agreement' the above statement would alter to something like: 'we achieve an agreement *with* the work of art'. The difference between the above two statements is hinted at in the words 'about' and 'with'. In the latter case, the statement that 'we achieve an agreement *with* the work of art' leads us to view the work as something which has an important impact on the making of truth. In the original sentence (i.e., we achieve a consensus *about* a work), on the other hand, it would seem that what the work of art has to say is insignificant, or to press the point further, it appears as if the work has *nothing* to say. In a consensus the work's voice becomes drowned out by the tyranny of the manipulating subject's desires. This difference in the way in which we *speak* of either an agreement or a consensus is an indication of a distinction which will be highlighted in

this chapter. It is precisely this dissimilarity that will become crucial when we ask the question 'what makes a truth a truth?' This pressing question, when answered, reveals the distinction between agreement and consensus and, further, illuminates the significance of play.

Having drawn the distinction between agreement and consensus, I shall then proceed to present a brief exegesis of Devereaux's article, 'Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer'. After outlining Devereaux's article, I shall explain how Devereaux's conception of truth is more akin to a consensus than to an agreement. It will come as no surprise that Devereaux's work results in a misinterpretation of Gadamer's notion of truth. Such an unfortunate misreading, I suggest, stems from Devereaux's inattention to the ontological process or event wherein the work of art and the interpreter come together in understanding.

What is fundamental to the notion of truth as agreement is the mode in which the subject apprehends the work of art. Truth requires that all of its subjects participate in play in a certain playful way. In focusing on how the subject apprehends or comes together with the work of art, we are better equipped to understand the full implications of truth as agreement.[1] With this in mind, I now redirect the reader to the aforementioned question: 'what makes a truth a truth?'.

3.2 Agreement versus Consensus

Now if truth is something which is agreed upon, we may ask whether everything seemingly

'agreed' upon is a truth. If our answer is 'yes', then we might admit that truth is capriciously made by manipulating what people 'agree' upon. If what we call truth is anything that we arbitrarily decide to agree upon, then we are talking about a consensus rather than an agreement. This nature of a consensus and its dissimilarity from an agreement is what I shall now concentrate on.

When we are trying to reach a consensus we are striving to *settle* a debate or matter. When search for agreement, conversely, we are attempting to understand the other, and this by no means suggests that we are trying to settle or end the discussion. A consensus wants to silence debate, while an agreement remains ready to expose itself to conflicting views. In a consensus we try to put an end to the discussion by making the majority have the same view as ourselves (and thereby making the small group of dissenters so small or timid that there ends up being no dissenting voice at all). Every 'conversation' which follows from an end to attain a consensus is nothing other than a slave to that end which is to be achieved. In a consensus, the 'conversation' is chained to and, inevitably, strangled by the end result. This end, moreover, is fixed, static and not subject to alteration by the individuals who partake in 'debating' for it. An agreement, on the other hand, which does not silence opposing views but listens to them, allows every participating individual to shape his or her own position around the other. Nothing as of yet is settled, for even the end result must wait to be made in the process of an agreement. When we agree with the other we listen and allow ourselves to be transformed by that other; that is to say, our very view of what we thought we would achieve through such an agreement is itself transformed.

In a consensus, the end result is designated by a subjective will. This decision happens prior to any sort of dialogue between those who may disagree. In short, in a consensus the end is known before any process of dialectical dialogue. The end then justifies the means and, consequently, the entire process of discussion follows from and is contorted or worked around this desired end result. In a consensus, therefore, we have an arbitrary ruling of what end is going to be achieved. It is in the light of this end that all 'conversation' and 'dialogue' proceeds. Consequently, the 'conversation' for a consensus will be stifled, violently controlled and abruptly ended rather than 'freely' encouraged.

Clearly, if we were to talk of truth and consensus as being one and the same thing, then we would have an altogether different notion of truth than that of Gadamer's. If we believe that what is arrived at through a consensus is true, then what we really accept is the notion that truth is a matter of subjectivity and, furthermore, that every consensus or debate works towards some teleological end. Such a teleological orientation runs exactly counter to Gadamer's notion of truth, as I have outlined it in my second chapter. In a consensus, when we try to *settle* the matter of the meaning of a work of art, what is really taking place is the attempt to *silence* all debate and to gain every other person's acceptance of a particular interpretation of that work. There is no need to listen to the other, or to the work of art, for that matter. The particular interpretation which is being foisted upon those who partake in a consensus does not flow out of a dialogical encounter with the work, but rather, it arises out of a subjective will. The subject, standing apart and separate from the object or work of art, does not playfully interact with that work. Rather, the subject completely imposes an interpretation *onto* what the subject apprehends as an

'inanimate' work of art. In a consensus all interpretative activity takes place in a one-way, linear fashion.

Not only does a consensus lack the two-way interactive play between the subject and object (a movement prevalent in agreement), but furthermore, a consensus must, independent of whether or not this is obvious, view every achievement as a part and in light of some teleological end. While an agreement is capable of transforming the end and of interpreting every work as an individual, the consensus, on the contrary, cannot help but view every particular as a 'mere manifestation' of some larger telos or universal that is not to be altered in any way. With its end state already fixed, what a consensus hopes to achieve is not a radical transformation or divergence from this end, but rather, a complete and utter acceptance of it. In a consensus, every time we find that something looks like it has been agreed upon, in essence, this is illusory; in fact, the only thing that has occurred is that individuals have slowly gravitated towards some final, pre-established and unalterable end.

Even though the surface result cannot tell us if we are dealing with a consensus or an agreement, there is, evidently, the more subtle distinction lurking about in the *processes* of either event. I concluded my second chapter with the following two ingredients and consequences of truth as agreement: (i) when we interpretively encounter a work in play we do not understand it by measuring it against a pre-fixed, schematic, universal idea, and (ii) what we encounter in our play with art is something uniquely different than all of our previous encounters. Not only do these two developments follow as a result of being in a playful agreement with one another, but also, by their very nature they are integral aspects of what makes a truth become a truth.

Clearly, just based on these above two considerations, the consensus, which does not fulfil the requirements of either (i) or (ii), does not describe the same 'truth' which Gadamer speaks of when he refers to play and agreement.

The truth of a consensus is more akin to a mob-rule. In such a situation, the mob (those who designate which ends are to be tossed about into the market place) are the ones who make 'truth'. 'Truth' is decided before it even reaches the 'buyers' hands. 'Truth', as viewed from the angle of a consensus, is the product of a subject's schematic designs and blueprints. Essentially, the consensus feeds from this controlled and manipulated notion of truth.

Clearly, Gadamer's position on truth allows him to escape this mob-rule mentality. For while he holds that truth is agreement, Gadamer also maintains that such agreement is reached through a non-purposive/non-controlled *genuine* conversation. Truth is a matter of agreement but it does not follow that just *anything* that looks like an agreement is a truth. In a *genuine* conversation we do not start from the position of wanting something specific to be true only then to agree upon it. Rather, we begin with dialogue and conversation. We then find that in the course of conversation, a certain agreement emerges as to what is taken as plausible or true. From this we could then presume that for Gadamer, only the agreements which stem from this *genuine* conversation will be taken as true.[2]

What guarantees truth *is* the *genuine* movement or conversation which occurs *in* a *genuine* encounter with someone or something. Truth will not emerge if the dialogue is one-sided, or if the interlocutors have a specific and rigid end-state in mind throughout the course of their conversation. When Gadamer asserts that in this form of 'nonpurposive' activity (i.e., play), it

is "reason itself which sets the rules [of the game]",[3] he is referring to the sense in which play's existence depends on the movement of a *shared* language; what is at stake in the play with language moves to and from each player's hand. Essentially, the play of language which occurs in a genuine conversation is such that no one player completely controls its movement. The back and forth movement of language in play takes surprising turns that sweep 'above and beyond' any particular player's intentions. In such a movement, each participant engaged in genuine conversation both gives and receives. What this means is that genuine communication does not take the form of a one-way linear path.

Part of what makes genuine communication *genuine* is revealed when we look at different types of attitudes. If we want to know the distinct nature of genuine communication we ought to contrast it with something that is different. We can accomplish this task through an examination of the various possible attitudes we may have when we approach a work of art.[4] The point of addressing different attitudes is quite simple: the player in a genuine conversation has a specific attitude that we need to be able to describe if we are to understand the qualitative distinction between an agreement and a consensus. From this angle, I shall now refer to the player's stance in play (a.k.a., genuine conversation) as an *aesthetic* attitude. But now, the reader may appropriately ask, 'what is an aesthetic attitude?'. Without completely plunging into this topic, I would like to briefly characterize the aesthetic attitude by contrasting it with an instrumental attitude.[5]

Gadamer casts aside any notion that the aesthetic experience is a matter of 'instrumental rationality' or the result of an abstract method.[6] In an instrumental attitude, the subject

approaches the work as if it were nothing else but some instrumental object (a telephone, for example). The object - viewed as an instrument - is then taken to be merely a thing that fulfils some sort of set function. Basically, in an instrumental attitude we encounter the work of art with and through our wanting to utilize the work in some instrumental way. We therefore conceive of the work in terms of it being a 'means' to some further 'end'. In essence, we 'violently' overtake the work of art with an instrumental mind to control and master the 'ends'. In short, the instrumental attitude is the attitude of the consumer.[7]

In the aesthetic attitude, on the other hand, the subject does not view the work as some instrumental object to be utilized.[8] The aesthetically seized subject approaches a work of art without some pre-fabricated plot to use that work in some specific fashion.[9] In an aesthetic attitude "there is no prior knowledge of the right means which realize the end, and this is because, above all else, the ends themselves are at stake and not perfectly fixed beforehand".[10] And finally, the work of art, from the perspective of an aesthetic subject, is not just some instrument which can be discarded after the 'end' is achieved.[11]

We find that the aesthetic subject embodies a certain disposition that is quite different than the description we understand an instrumental subject to have. Part of what makes an aesthetic subject is the particular way in which that subject engages with the work of art. There is a certain amount of curiosity in the aesthetic subject's stance towards the work. From this angle, we apprehend the work of art as being an intriguing thing which we do not fully know; we feel that we can learn something from the work.[12] In an aesthetic attitude, we anticipate and allow a work of art to speak to us because we do not pretend to have full knowledge and control

over it:

> If someone is to say something to someone else, it is not enough that there should be a so-called recipient who is there to receive the information. For over and above that, there must be a readiness to allow something to be said to us. It is only in this way that the word becomes binding, as it were: it binds one human being with another. This occurs whenever we speak to one another and really enter into genuine dialogue with another. What is really presupposed when we let something be said to us? Obviously the primary condition for this is that we do not know everything already and that what we think we know is capable of becoming questionable.[13]

We encounter the work as if it were *equal* to ourselves; what is said in a genuine conversation is created and held equally between all participants. Implicit in our relation to the work (in a stance of equality and curiosity) is an attitude of *respect* for the work. Essentially, we allow a work of art to speak to us because we place ourselves in relation to it in the following manner: (i) we do not claim to already know what is going to be said, and (ii) we respectfully, politely and patiently allow the work of art to respond.

The subject, in taking part in the world of the work, learns something and is, henceforth, changed by this experience. In genuine communication, the subject and the object merge together their worlds.[14] In an instrumental attitude, however, this sort of communion does not take place. In this instrumental attitude, the relationship between the subject and the object is unequal. The subject and object do not merge together their worlds. On the contrary, the subject imposes every idea and function onto the work. Not only is this relationship unequal, it also presupposes that the subject approach the work from a more knowledgeable position.[15] In

complete contrast to the aesthetic attitude, the instrumental attitude demands that the subject have a superior stance. What follows is that the subject has a lack of respect for the work and, further, a lack a patience. There is no 'readiness' and patient 'willingness' on the subject's behalf to allow the work to speak. The speech of the work is ended before it begins.[16] Nothing is new or surprising for the subject who already has a pre-determined plan of how to put the silent work of art *to work*. In this attitude, all we can hope to achieve is the enslavement of art:

> ...there is the case when we enjoy something for the sake of some quality or other that is familiar to us. I think that this is the origin of kitsch and all bad art. Here we see only what we already know, not wishing to see anything else. We enjoy the encounter insofar as it simply provides a feeble confirmation of the familiar, instead of changing us. This means that the person who is already prepared for the language of art can sense the intention behind the effect. We notice that such art has designs upon us. All kitsch has something of this forced quality about it. It is often well meant and sincere in intention but it means the destruction of art. For something can only be called art when it requires that we construe the work by learning to understand the language of form and content so that communication really occurs.[17]

As we respectfully position ourselves around the work of art, we must learn how to share the work's repertoire of movement. In our engagement with a work of art we participate in the particular rhythm of the encounter's dance.

Gadamer employs the role of rationality in play not to refer to 'instrumental rationality' but to the rules understood through the process of a 'communicative' discourse of *reasoning*.[18] In a genuine conversation, an interpretation seeks a mutual non-coerced agreement or synthesis of opposing views. Whenever we understand the other in a genuine conversation, we open

ourselves to the possibility that the other, who is worthy of our consideration, will say something that will alter our own position.[19] In the process of an agreement, the play with and in different possibilities develops out of a discourse which must be conducted in an open and respectful manner:

> All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or of the text. But this openness always includes our placing the other meaning in a relation with the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in a relation to it.[20]

In the play-game we listen and respond to the other as if the other's position is equally important as our own: "Openness to the other, then, includes the acknowledgement that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me".[21] Through our acknowledgement that the other has something to say to us, it is clear that we do not claim an intellectually superior position over that other.[22] The way in which we reach a genuine agreement and thereby secure the process of truth is through our entering into a conversation which has mutual respect and consideration for all views.[23] Gadamer's notion of truth is such that it can tolerate and account for opposing views.

Whenever we agree with the other, we have put ourselves in a position of understanding that other. What this means is that we have allowed ourselves to enter into a sort of risky compromise.[24] What is to develop from a conversation must await its formation through the movement of a playful debate:

> And, as in conversation, when there are such unbridgeable differences, a compromise can sometimes be achieved in the to and

> fro of dialogue, so the translator will seek the best solution in the toing and froing of weighing up and considering possibilities - a solution which can never be more than a compromise.[25]

In genuine conversation no participant is left in the dark. Whoever partakes in a genuine conversation has a say in and an effect on the movement of the dialogue; what is achieved in an agreement is created out of the forces of both participants' positions. This combination of joint forces is never the product of one over-powering and manipulating subject. Whatever comes out of a conversation is something that happens to us; we eagerly await a result that may compromise our own anticipations.

The dialectic of questioning and answering acts as some sort of measure or guide to an open conversation. If we sincerely, curiously and, to some extent, ignorantly ask a question, we genuinely do not already fully know the answer to that question. Whenever we ask such a question we acknowledge that the answer is *yet to be made*:

> To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. It must still be undetermined, in order that a decisive answer can be given.[26]

When we ask a work of art a 'genuine' question we seek to understand something new.[27] In remaining flexible and open to the other in play, we place ourselves in a position where our own understanding is capable of transformation; "the more that remains open, the more freely does the process of understanding succeed, ie the transposition of what is shown in the play to one's own world".[28]

If we contrast this with the nature of a consensus, we find that the latter does not allow us to become sensitive or open to a work of art; it does not require that we apprehend the work of art in a particular aesthetic way. All the disruptive enemies of genuine communication - namely, force, inequality and lack of respect for the other - are warmly welcomed into the process of a consensus. Whatever is arrived at through this controlled and/or 'jarred' process is merely the product of a forceful and manipulative subjectivity.[29] The process of truth is suffocated so that a consensus may be created. The tensions of differing opinions are silenced. Understanding, consequently, is lacking where such tensions are purposively avoided:

> Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutical task consists in not covering up this tension but consciously bringing it out.[30]

We succeed in understanding a work of art only when we play in the possibilities of such tensions and thereby create a "new order of unity in tension".[31]

3.3 Reflections on Devereaux

I would like to now offer a brief outline of some of the main points in Devereaux's article 'Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer'. Right from the start of her article Devereaux's mission is ill-fated. Her title suggests that society is suspended over a pit of social chaos by just

one fine thread of morality. But what is this 'pit' comprised of? And how is art supposed to carry us safely away from this menacing mess? When we come to understand Devereaux's answer to the above two questions we shall inadvertently stumble across Devereaux's notion of truth.

Devereaux's article is an attempt to find 'a source of moral value' in art. Devereaux's description of the history of aesthetic judgement focuses on our steady 'slide' into relativism: "...judgements of aesthetic value, once rooted in a *sensus communis*, now find a foothold in nothing firmer that the quicksand of personal taste".[32] In recognizing the difficulty of rising out of and evading relativism, Devereaux is also confronted by the tension(s) between relativism and foundationalism.[33] With the 'slopes' of relativism never far from our footing, Devereaux asks the following questions: "how can art, long associated with appearances, with mere 'aesthetics', provide a solution to the ethical impasse described above? Can art save us, and if so, how?"[34]

Devereaux sets out to find a way in which she can eliminate relativism from and incorporate truth into the discussion of the value of works of art.[35] With this task in mind, Devereaux then turns to Gadamer with the hope that she will find an answer to her above questions:

> The idea that art has something to offer a culture suffering from the devaluation of all values is richly developed in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer admirably suits my purposes because he proposes to find in art a source of moral instruction which neither reverts to foundationalism nor leads to relativism. Into this discussion he interjects a middle term, tradition. Tradition provides a temporally and culturally grounded authority. It offers a nonfoundational source of value which exceeds the merely personal.[36]

Devereaux offers an account of Gadamer which highlights the sense in which art's truth as *aletheia* is connected to and responsible for our self-understanding(s).[37] Devereaux proceeds to describe how art provides a source of 'unification'; we are told that some works of art - things which 'stand as pledges of order' - help to unify a 'disintegrating' culture.[38]

In her article, it is clear that Devereaux is preoccupied with the notion of order. Although Devereaux believes that some works of art "exemplify the human capacity to order experience",[39] she also claims that there are *other* works of art which in fact *destroy* social order.[40] Such works of art, rather than simply adding new material to the already fixed framework, strive to change and 'destroy' the very rules of this existing artistic framework.[41]

It is in the presence of such 'destructive' works of art that Devereaux feels inclined to stress how some works of art, in speaking of and promoting the 'failure of order', are unable to provide any moral order.[42] These 'destructive' works - eroding the very fabric of order - are, according to Devereaux, not accounted for by Gadamer. Devereaux, absorbed in the idea that some works of art are 'destructive', closes her article by stating that not all works of art are morally valuable insofar as they do not promote social cohesion:

> Abandoning a picture of fixed artistic value may lead us, like Socrates, to question whether the self-interpretation art initiates and the community it fosters are always to our benefit. Without such questioning, Gadamer's account remains enamored of a romantic picture of art. That picture is, I fear, less pertinent to contemporary moral life than we might hope.[43]

In short, Devereaux concludes her article with the idea that we cannot 'romantically' rely on every work of art to sweep us away from the state of the 'devaluation of all values'.

The above, although scanty, is about the most detailed exegesis of Devereaux's article that I can offer without criticising it. I find it almost impossible to give an account of what Devereaux is saying without bringing to light her hidden agendas and anti-Gadamerian perspective. Devereaux's remarks on the lack of value of some works of art are fashioned around a distinct misconstruction of Gadamer's position. It would, perhaps, be best to start the analysis of Devereaux's work by going back to and flushing out her notion of order.

Since not all works of art contribute to a 'desirable' social order they are, suggests Devereaux, not equally valuable. Essentially, Devereaux argues that only the works of art which promote 'social cohesion' are 'valuable' or 'desirable'. At this point we must ask what Devereaux means by 'social cohesion' and 'valuable/desirable'. Upon reading Devereaux we can notice that she begins her article with a strong notion of a unified community. Devereaux cannot conceal her view that the most unified society is one where *only* 'order' is prevalent.[44] It would seem as though her notion of a 'socially cohesive' community is one wherein there exists no tension.[45] Devereaux's disregard for disagreement(s) and her abhorrence of 'disintegration' arises from her misunderstanding of Gadamer's descriptions of play and agreement.

I have described how, according to Gadamer, we cannot establish a *unity of tensions* without tensions existing and, furthermore, in understanding we continually bring such tensions to the surface. Understanding always seeks to re-establish that which is 'forever continually threatening to pass away' (i.e., meaning).[46] We could never arrive at some ultimate, final and all-inclusive understanding about something primarily because we experience the world in a temporally limited way. In our travels we find that we are continually experiencing new things,

situations and the like. We cannot know what our next experience will bring. Our notions as to what we take to be coherently meaningful in society, therefore, may change as we encounter new situations. Whatever unity of meaning we may find for our society must continually be called into question and reappraised. Ambiguities in meaning and disagreements between conflicting opinions should be brought to the surface and played back and forth so that a new coherent meaning for society can emerge.

Unfortunately, Devereaux has not taken into account the need to affirm the tensions that may lurk under the notion of 'social cohesion'. It would seem as though Devereaux would rather that there exist no dissenting voice. Works of art which paint a picture of difference or 'disintegration' are the works that Devereaux wants to discredit. Essentially, Devereaux cuts out all difference and destructive or uprooting things from her portrait of 'social cohesion'. Her notion of a 'socially cohesive' community is simply a belief in an ideal utopia wherein there exists only one desirable idea of how to attain order and unity.

Devereaux's notions of order and desirability in fact prove to be totally anti-Gadamerian. The concept of order that pervades Devereaux's article is such that it may remind us of a pre-established teleological order. We discover Devereaux's notion of order when we find her declaring that Gadamer has 'missed the point' of much of twentieth-century art.[47] The point supposedly 'missed' lies in her depiction of works of art which strive to 'alter the rules'.[48] Devereaux maintains that some works of art dissolve all order insofar as they succeed in 'altering rules':

> Burden, like Cage, Tinguely, and many others, aims not simply to

> introduce new materials or new subject matter within an existing artistic framework, but to alter the frame. The intent is to reconceive the very nature of artistic activity and change the rules...In doing so, much art of the last century rejects the commitment to aesthetic order embedded in traditional, artistic principles. This art speaks of, and to, the *failure* of order and the loss of the type of coherent worldview that made sense of the cosmos for the Greeks.[49]

To begin with, we may note that Devereaux's idea of what it means to 'change the rules' is exactly that which is accounted for in Gadamer's description of truth as agreement, as I have explained in my second chapter. Devereaux's fear of such an 'alteration' can be juxtaposed against Gadamer's gracious acceptance of it. Complimenting Devereaux's fear of 'alteration' is her belief that the non-destructive (i.e., desirable/valuable) works of art 'simply introduce new materials or new subject matter within an existing artistic framework'.

Enough has been said in my second chapter to show that Gadamer's notion of truth does away with the notion that every meaning is only an approximation of or gradual change into some pre-established end. I continually stressed how, for Gadamer, a particular interpretation was capable of *transforming* the entire *whole* or *end.* Truth in art is always setting its own standards. But this setting of standards and breaking with the old is exactly what Devereaux abhors and dismisses as being painfully and purposelessly destructive. Devereaux would rather that there be only one fixed and static end to be achieved. In her framework, art would merely have to reconfirm and slowly build up to an affirmation of that one, pre-fixed end. Clearly, Devereaux's rejection of transformative art (i.e., art that 'alters the frame') belongs to her desire to secure a pre-fixed, unalterable, teleological end. As a consequence, Devereaux herself has

'missed' the essence of much of Gadamer's philosophy.

Intent on establishing and putting art to work for a teleological end, Devereaux adorns her article with the following two dubious presuppositions: (i) we can package a perfect replica of the traditions of the past and carry them over to our present day situation, and (ii) 'destructive' works of art totally disintegrate order without ordering anew. The first assumption is at work in Devereaux's belief that the 'collapse of traditional morality' has left society morally vacant.[50] Devereaux looks towards tradition as if it were some sort of fixed and rigid authority or standard.[51] Instead of reinterpreting the past tradition into the present situation, Devereaux seems to think that if we just abolish all the 'destructive' works of art, then we can regain the exact order of a more 'traditional' time.[52]

Devereaux looks to her ideal of the 'traditional order' as if it were a fixed and finite set of beliefs. Simply viewing the past as a fixed standard or measure of order, Devereaux offers no interpretive need or way to reappropriate the past into the present. Devereaux's notion of order ultimately carries the weight of correctness, exactitude and objective truth.[53] Her glorification of some ancient tradition is, essentially, founded upon a belief in an objectively superior system of ordering. She does not see her glorious past as just one way of ordering that must be continually re-ordered. Rather, the static picture of the past that Devereaux imagines is such that she believes it to be capable of, so to speak, cut and paste.

Not only has Devereaux missed much of what Gadamer says about interpretive reappraising, she has also failed to hear the significance of how, in an interpretive encounter with a work, we must rid ourselves of our dogmatic method. From Devereaux's perspective, the new

and 'frame-busting' works of art destroy the order of society. Upon such a destruction, Devereaux believes that we are left with only a vacant spot where moral order once stood. Devereaux supposes that the destruction of one order leads to sheer chaos and lack of order. She does not fully examine the possibility that the works of art which break the old order create, in return, a new order. Devereaux is not intent on establishing new orders (or in granting that such orders are possible). Instead, fixated on her idea that there can be only one order, Devereaux promotes the abolishment of all works of art which do not work towards this order.[54]

The 'proper' order which Devereaux seeks rests upon her belief that the order which any work can provide must mirror and work towards one and the same teleological end. And to attain this 'proper' order, Devereaux suggest that we need the 'right amount' of works of art that promote (a.k.a., slave) towards this end. At the heart of Devereaux's analysis of the 'proper' purpose of art we find a conviction which misreads and contradicts Gadamer's paramount characterization of understanding. Consider Devereaux's following remarks:

> So far I have questioned only whether enough of us will have access to the right type of experiences and whether these experiences will be powerful enough to overcome other, more 'disintegrative', experiences. But there is a further, more serious problem with Gadamer's account of art, namely, its unquestioned assumption that art always operates to our benefit.[55]

Upon examination of this passage, we shall find that Devereaux's notion of coherent meaning is founded upon and derived from consensus rather than agreement.

3.4 Devereaux's Truth as Consensus

Devereaux divides experiences into the two categories of good and bad. This division, however, is not a judgement arising out of an interpretation that may be altered by yet another interpretation. This is, for Devereaux, the objective truth; namely, that there are objectively good and bad experiences. Devereaux's division of good and bad, made prior to any encounter with a work of art, is superimposed onto all the individual works of art.

Devereaux's insistence that we ought to question the 'benefit' of works of art is premised upon a stance of instrumental rationality.[56] The work is seen as a 'particular manifestion' of some greater ideal. Her approach and view of the work (in a purely instrumental way) is indicative of a subject's stance in a consensus. In a consensus one cannot apprehend and reconstitute the work as a 'creation' or a 'pure manifestation'.[57] Devereaux's instrumental rationality reduces the work of art to being merely a tool required and judged for its capacity to further some pre-established end. Only in the sense that it submits to a higher 'authority' is the work of art seen as being 'beneficial'.

With Gadamer's notion of an agreement, any experience at all would be beneficial insofar as it would be a way of making ourselves 'at home' in this world.[58] When Gadamer speaks of the 'experienced' person he describes someone who has experienced things which conflict with or go against what was previously anticipated or thought. Central to the notion of agreement is the pull or tension of disagreement. In developing an agreement the result of the experience is

not known in advance. Therefore, every experience, no matter how 'disruptive', is encouraged in an agreement. In fact, if truth as agreement is to prevail at all, we must embrace the so-called 'disruptive' experiences in a new light; that is, we must view all experiences as contributive and productive to the building of our world and truth.

An encounter with another and its outcome, regardless of whatever runs counter to our wishes and plans, is embraced in an agreement as a way for truth to develop. Devereaux's project, on the other hand, condemns the 'dissenting' works of art and forces them into submission to some greater planned, teleological end. In ostracising some works, Devereaux puts herself in the position of violently silencing works of art and, therefore, of arbitrarily putting a limit on the 'conversations' to follow. Through her use of the words 'beneficial' and 'destructive' we are inclined to believe that Devereaux's discussion on the value of works of art proceeds from an already firmly established set of standards.

What Devereaux deems to be 'destructive' is not open to debate; there is no possibility of an open conversation. In her attempt to encourage one end, Devereaux has tried to rid society of and make amends for 'destructive' works of art. Every experience which runs counter to this one fixed end is cast aside. We previously noted how, in a consensus, the end result, known prior to any sort of conversation, is not subject to alteration. With Devereaux's insistence on labelling works of art as 'destructive' and 'harmful', we find that we have sufficient evidence to warrant our conclusion that consensus lies at the basis of her notion of truth.

In a most imperative sense, Devereaux has failed to listen to Gadamer's description of the event of understanding. Ignoring the movement or play of possibilities in interpretation,

Devereaux remains deaf to Gadamer's words: "All interpretation points in a direction rather than to some final endpoint, in the sense that it points toward an open realm that can be filled in a variety of ways".[59] It is clear that in this event the to and fro movement of possibilities is invaluable. We do not have to focus on who plays or what particular agreement is reached at a specific time to know that it is this movement itself which is prized above all else. In this movement we find a way to construct a linguistic world of meaning. We always have something *beneficial* at stake when we are engaged in an event of understanding: the continual creation and maintenance of a meaningful world. The fact that certain works do not 'swing' our way should not caution us to steer around such encounters. Every time we play with art we should be prepared to take the risk of having to change our previous system of beliefs; we must be able to make room for the new and unpredictable. Although the event of understanding may take us in an unpredictable direction, this should not, however, indicate this direction is dangerous and to be avoided. All genuine encounters with art are transformative - we ought to be ready for an unpredictable and thrilling 'ride' which will threaten to shake our previous convictions.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. When we come to understand the 'truth' of what a work of art says, we must playfully open ourselves to both the work of art and the other humans who participate in the dialogue. The process of an agreement is ensured only insofar as we apprehend all the other participants in a certain manner (e.g., we engage in conversation with the assumption that the other participants may have something valuable to say).

2. Whether there is any epistemological test for the presence of genuine communication and, therefore, for a confirmation that such a conversation has actually taken place, is an unanswered question that would require a separate analysis.

3. RB, p. 23.

4. With the word 'attitude' I certainly do not mean to suggest that truth is completely reduced to a particular subjective attitude. Again I must stress that an attitude of play is not to be viewed merely as a product of some willing subject's decision, but rather, it is to be understood as something which, to some extent, is brought about and furnished by the play-game itself. Despite my efforts to refrain from directly addressing such a complex issue, it would seem that at this point, the notion of an aesthetic attitude needs to be introduced.

5. There really is nothing *totally* new in these concepts for I have already hinted at them in my first two chapters (the only difference is that I have now given them specific names which I did not previously use).

6. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, pp. 210, 211, 217. Gadamer stresses the sense in which the truth of a work of art emerges in a unique and unrepeatable fashion; it is not something which - like a manufactured product (e.g., a tutu) - could be continually 'turned out'. The work of art is not an instrument which, when instrumentally employed, could multiply itself into tons of 'clones' of the same work. RB, p. 126.

7. Jeff Mitscherling, "The Aesthetic Experience and the 'Truth' of Art", British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 28, No. 1, Winter 1988. p. 33. Even though I have decided to talk about the attitude of the consumer, I do not pretend to have covered other possible attitudes (such as that of the critic, which Gadamer discusses on page 52 of The Relevance of the Beautiful).

8. The aesthetically seized subject would not be moved (as one might in an instrumental attitude) to use a Degas painting as an exhibition piece merely in order to procure a lucrative income.

9. I am not supposing that we blindly approach works of art (we require a background understanding of the world and this means that we can never be without prejudice). My point is simply that we do not approach the work with definite ideas of its meaning and function.

10. Gadamer, "The Problem of Historical Consciousness", Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, p. 123.

11. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, pp. 211-219. Gadamer cautions his reader from judging the work of art in the 'instrumental' language of 'efficiency' and/or 'maximizing ends'. RB, pp. 89.

12. In fact, one might go even further to say that we approach the work from a position of being inferior to it. In the height of our curiosity, our interest in a particular work of art is not necessarily reciprocated.

13. RB, p. 106.

14. We genuinely understand another by placing ourselves in the position of that individual. TM, pp. 271-272, RB, p. 52.

15. Weinsheimer describes what I take to be an instrumental attitude as that which is adopted by the self-controlled subject who employs a certain method so that the object can be manipulated. The requirement of such an employment of method is the attainment of a 'complete' and 'accurate' knowledge of the self and the world. Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, pp. 9, 12.

16. Such abruptness is not evident in genuine communication, for in such a genuine interplay, "there is no last word just as there is no first word". James Risser, "The Two Faces of Socrates: Gadamer/Derrida", Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter, edited by Diane P. Michelfelder & Richard E. Palmer (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 183.

17. RB, p. 52.

18. RB, p. 23. See also, Gary Madison, "Hermeneutical Liberalism", Gemeinschaft und Gerechtigkeit (Frankfurt: Kongress der Frankfurter Akademie der Kunste und Wissenschaft, 1992), pp. 5, 10. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, pp. 210, 211, 217.

19. TM, p. 347. Understanding, Gadamer urges, is always "an assimilation of what is said to the point that it becomes one's own". TM, p. 360.

20. TM, p. 238. The participants in the dialogue will not arbitrarily control the flow of the conversation any more than they will 'hold a gun', so to speak, to the heads of the other participants.

21. TM, p. 324.

22. TM, p. 324. Gadamer maintains that understanding does not mean that truth is "decided in advance from the standpoint of a superior knowledge of the object". TM, p. 445. In experiencing an object, we do not merely enjoy our own privileged knowledge of it. We must orient ourselves to what truth a work may speak of. TM, p. 341. The truly experienced person senses that there are limits to her own reason and self-knowledge and that any experience can run opposite to her expectation(s). TM, pp. 319-321.

23. Madison, The Logic of Liberty, pp. 218-236.

24. In play we put our own prejudice at risk; i.e., we expose our prejudice to the potentially 'lethal' positions of others. TM, p. 266.

25. TM, p. 348.

26. TM, p. 326.

27. By 'genuine', I mean the sort of questions that involve a curious readiness to understand the truth of the work of art. It should be obvious that the questions that I have in mind are not the sort that would take the form of "hmmm...I wonder if this painting would look better in the sitting room or in the library?". In a genuine conversation, the work offers itself as an answer to the *open* 'ultimate questions of human life'. RB, p. 113.

28. TM, p. 454.

29. RB, pp. 52, 114. The distinct difference between the consensus and the agreement (as illustrated through the different types of attitudes) is noticeable when we address the being of both the subject and the object. While the subject and object are in a state of metamorphosis and, therefore, never finalized and complete in agreement they are, in the consensus, taken to be complete and static. Through the entire play dialectic between the subject and object, neither player is fully complete and immutable. Why the depiction of the aesthetic subject is so invaluable is because it seems to grasp or characterize the poignant transformative nature of the subject. The transformative nature of the aesthetic subject's prejudice, anticipations, and entire project greets a dialectical encounter with anticipations and the like which are subject to and prepared for alteration.

30. TM, p. 273.

31. RB, p. 103.

32. Mary Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", Philosophy and Literature, 15 (1991), p. 59.

33. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 60.

34. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 60.

35. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 60-61.

36. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 61.

37. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 65-66.

38. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 68.

39. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 69.

40. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 69-70.

41. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 69.

42. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 70.

43. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 72.

44. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 68-72.

45. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 70, 71, 72.

46. RB, p. 46.

47. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 69.

48. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 69.

49. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 69-70.

50. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 59.

51. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 61.

52. In fact, not only does Devereaux believe that the 'tradition' is a fixed ball of stuff sitting in the closet waiting to be unveiled, but moreover, she romantically takes this 'tradition' to be synonymous with what she believes to be a 'fixed' and 'unambiguous' order found in the Classical Age of Greece. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 68, 70.

53. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 71.

54. With this we can easily imagine Devereaux eventually affirming the need and justification for censorship.

55. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", pp. 70-71.

56. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 72.

57. With the view that universals are merely applied to the particulars (or that the particulars themselves are mere manifestations of the universals) there is little room for the creative input and the sense of surprise or self-fulfilment of the interpreter. For if we describe creativity - as Madison does in his critique of Hirsch - we find that it involves the notion of doing what is beyond what one knew or willed. It is clear, then, that creativity is rendered meaningless and obsolete if all one has to do is apply a given formula to a concrete instance. Madison, "A Critique of Hirsch's Validity", The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, pp. 20-21.

58. RB, pp. 36, 51, 89, 114-115, 130, 164.

59. RB, p. 68.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Mary Devereaux's attempt to re-evaluate the moral worth of art is based upon her assumption that art does not always operate to our 'benefit'. In an effort to delineate the works of art which are 'beneficial', 'good' works are categorically separated from 'bad' ones. Implicit in this distinction is Devereaux's belief that works of art intrinsically contain their own objective value.[1] We find that in Devereaux's characterization of the objective or fixed status of the work's value, an attention to Gadamer's description of play is clearly lacking. In failing to recognize Gadamer's position on the ontology of the work of art, Devereaux has ignored Gadamer's statement: "It is quite wrong to think that the unity of the work implies that the work is closed off from the person who turns to it or is affected by it".[2] When we understand Gadamer's characterization of the work of art it is essential that we do not conceive of the work as separate and complete in itself. Gadamer's description of play as the mode of being of the work itself steers us away from thinking of the work as an isolated and independent thing. This movement of play, crucial to the development of the being of the work of art and our interpretation of it,

calls for our active attention and engagement for the making of truth:

> The play properly exists first and only when it is played. Performance brings the play into existence, and the playing of the play is the play itself. An artwork is: to be represented. Representation is its mode of being.[3]

What the work says is brought about through play and, moreover, what is created in play does not exist independently of the playing of the play. Gadamer's description of play forces us to recognize how the truth of the work emerges and stands before us in a meaningful way only in and through our co-creative efforts (i.e., the efforts of *all* participants including the work).

Alongside the depiction of the eventful nature of understanding and being, we find our understanding responding to new situations and, as a result, in a process of transformation. Without recognizing this transformative nature of play, we might, as Devereaux herself does, view all transformation as destructive and evil. Gadamer's portrayal of transformation is indispensable for our understanding of truth as agreement. Only in agreement do we allow our meaning and the being of the work to transform into something true. A consensus such as Devereaux's, on the contrary, must replace the movement of transformation with the static ideal of a fixed telos. In stifling the transformative movement of play, Devereaux's consensus has gravely misinterpreted the spirit of the playful creation of meaning as portrayed by Gadamer:

> The being of all play is always realisation, sheer fulfilment, *energeia which has its telos within itself.* The world of the work of art, in which play expresses itself fully in the unity of its course, is in fact a wholly transformed work. By means of it everyone recognizes that that is how things are. [emphasis added][4]

What is admired and accepted in an agreement (but not in a consensus) is the sense in which play desires itself rather than a static end; play is an end in itself.

Devereaux's consensus does not, unfortunately, accommodate the relevance of Gadamer's paramount notion of the playful and transformative process of *making* value; in short, Devereaux has *altogether missed* the nature and significance of Gadamer's notion of play. Without taking into account the nature and role of play, Devereaux has ignored the way in which meaning is *created.* What we find in Devereaux's work is an admiration and acceptance of a controlled, stifled and rigid motion instead of a two-way unpredictable energetic playful movement. With the lack of play, Devereaux's consensus has abandoned the path towards truth.

It is in the playful act of co-creation that we find or take a work to be true and valuable; in play we find that art has something to contribute and say to us. Caught up in the dialectical movement of play, we must patiently wait for the other (the work) to respond in its own unique way. Works that 'scream' back to us are always beneficial to the play-game and the making of meaning itself for they prompt us to listen and keep the movement going. The work has something to say and what it says can only be heard if we carefully provoke and listen to it. When we silence the works that 'scream' (as Devereaux herself does) then we are not in a position of playfully engaging with the work.

Clearly, Devereaux's article advocates the idea that we ought to manipulate works of art from a secure and superior position outside of play. The only reaction that Devereaux has to some works of art (while she cooly refrains from entering into play with these works) is a *bad* taste in her mouth. Her pessimistic descriptions of both society and the 'destructive' nature of

works of art are not to be found in Gadamer's work on play. Through Gadamer we learn that the work is such that it can reinforce and contribute to a meaningful existence. Devereaux, on the other hand, cannot hear this meaning until she places herself in an equal and playful relation to the work of art. When we cease to playfully interpret through the 'eyes of the work', the world no longer appears different.[5] Closed off from the work - by refusing to enter into a playful dialectic with it - the 'fruit' of any encounter with art is indeed forbidden.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Devereaux, "Can Art Save Us? A Meditation on Gadamer", p. 72.
2. RB, p. 25.
3. Weinsheimer, Gadamer's Hermeneutics, pp. 109-110.
4. TM, pp. 101-102.
5. RB, p. 168.

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