

Response Paper #2

Both Gadamer's *Philosophy of Play* and Heidegger's philosophy of "skillful engagement" provide ways of understanding the world and what it means to be human, either by interacting with the Other (people, things), or, through a skill. Gadamer's idea of *play* – the idea that when we engage in play, we give meaning to the action of play, and what we play with becomes part of this dialogue – draws parallels to Heidegger's philosophy, and those philosophies that have emerged from Heidegger's work, as presented in Ruspoli's film *Being in The World*. Both philosophies call for genuine dialogue and engagement with others, whether it be a person or another thing in the world. Gadamer's game of understanding requires commitment to play in good faith – Heidegger's truth about a situation requires commitment to develop mastery of a case-by-case skill. Gadamer's idea of *play*, a dialogue, is reflected in the film through the dialogical relationships human beings hold with skills such as carpentry, flamenco, and cooking. Specifically, the notion of play "as an activity that goes on between the players...and has a...spirit...that emerges from a players' back-and-forth movement" is present in Manuel Molina's discussion of the "dialogue" between guitar and master guitar player. Gadamer's idea of *play* with the *Other* draws similarity to Heidegger's skillful engagement with the world – both require an articulated response to the situation. Gadamer's and Heidegger's philosophies speak to commitment and risk taking as integral concepts for true understanding. Vilhauer explains of Gadamer's philosophy:

Just as any play-movement has a life of its own that takes hold of the players, dialogue-play requires that interlocutors give up a certain level of control and allow the subject matter to guide them.

This is reflected by Heidegger's idea that "when people are at their best and most absorbed in doing a skillful thing, they lose themselves into their absorption and the distinction between the master and the world disappears." Gadamer's *play* of understanding is beyond the subject's mind. Similarly, Heidegger's "skillful practice" is beyond theory (especially "rules") on how to do "it". The film makes clear that "spontaneous actions can reveal people at their best." This is paralleled with Gadamer's philosophy that the key to understanding is losing oneself in reciprocal play.

According to the scientific paradigm, researchers must use structured sets of methodologies to prevent the potential for mistake-making during the research process. In contrast, Gadamer explains that the process of *play* and the potential for mistaking-making is integral to true understanding. He posits that inspecting reality in a detached way, as through rules (which work by ignoring detail), leads to a reduction of reality. Similarly, Heidegger's idea about being skilled is about responding to detail by ignoring rules, for example, if one engages in something and become skilled in doing that, one becomes knowledgeable about every detail.

As inferred from Gadamer's philosophy, becoming fluent in my research process will be dependent on my complete immersion with the research process. Wrathall explains:

Just as skills allow things to show themselves, they also allow people to show up and be the people that they are...they'll start to see things that someone without those skills wouldn't see. They become someone who inhabits a world differently.

The ways in which I approach my research (referred to in the film as "moods") will affect my uncovering of different views and enlightenments in my research – remaining open and playful will be integral to my true understanding. Gadamer's philosophy posits that truth cannot be adequately explained by the scientific method. It will be imperative to my true understanding that I engage in a dialogical way (as if playing a game) with all aspects of the research process. It is evident then, that the key to success in my research will be to maintain *playfulness*, take risks, and engage in a dialogical way.