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Reflection II

Vilhauer’s essay "Gadamer and the Game of Understanding" and Ruspoli’s documentary film “Being in the World” both elaborate on a similar theme using different analogies. That theme is that to truly understand and connect with any given thing, you need to look outside of yourself. Both texts expand on the idea that a connection is needed, either between a given object, idea or person to truly experience and understand it. In Ruspoli’s film they use mastery or the art of mastering something. Different philosophy professors conclude that to become a master (of cooking or carpentry or of jazz) you need the practice, experience and to risk yourself in order to open yourself up to possibilities inside those worlds. Vilhauer’s essay digs into the theory of the “philosophy of Play” or the art of communicating with human beings that we see as “other” through what is termed dialogue-play. In this Vilhauer critically analyzes Gadamer’s theory that to breach the socio-cultural distance between human beings they need to be active in listening, and active in willing to open their minds to new realities. This can be applied to art and text as to understand the reality the artist or writer was trying to present, we need to be open to what they are trying to say.

Vilhauer’s essay and Ruspoli’s film connect because the ability to understand and validate the differences between human beings, and to build connections we need to master the art of active listening and to become a master we need to make connections outside ourselves so that we can build on the interconnectedness of what we are trying to master. Both essay and film stress the necessity of taking risks by embracing new ideas different then what is generally accepted; either by us individually or by society. The essay makes the point that in order for us to truly understand each other we need to be willing to risk opening our minds to thoughts, processes, ideas and traditions that vary from our own set of rules or cultural knowing. The film elaborates this by stating that we cannot master anything if we are completely uniform, if we follow every rule. We need to be able to take the risk to bend, break or transform these rules to discover new ways of doing. However, as we bend or break these rules, the film suggests that we need to stay within the realms of traditional society as it is with the people within them that these new “worlds” or new rules you’ve created find meaning. Both texts highlight the importance of human experiences in building skills that lead us to better connect with our world.

Part 2: Ways of Reseraching

When thinking about ways of researching my project and the connection between the above texts, my mind immediately jumps to Vilhauer’s essay and the section regarding reading when doing textual historical research. In the last reflection, the topic discussed how we see things based on our own preconceptions, and Vilhauer’s essay touches on that too by stating that “literary text finds its life in the event in which its medium is grasped by an audience” (78) and since that audience is the reader and the reader in this situation is me, my divined meaning of the texts may be different from the original audience’s meaning as I have different experiences and human interactions to account for. It will be important for me to set my own realm of experience aside, so I can grasp who the audience might have been at the time and what meanings lie in the interaction between this text and the audience. The given text wouldn’t have been written with just the author in mind, but rather how the author’s ideas would impact and interact with that historical audience.

Despite my very first inclination to skip right to textual work, both the film and the essay stress the importance of interconnections between people and so to understand the past, I need to understand the audience today and their connection to myths. Therefore, some field research will have to be done going beyond merely observation and data collection to actually experiencing the connections of people in the context of the world I am researching. This could be done be showing myths to a determined number of people in a community and recording their reactions and thoughts to it. Ruspoli’s film “Being in the World” mentions the importance of authenticity and to be authentic or respond authentically we need respond in the moment to do what needs to be done. This means that when interviewing or discussing the issue of mythology in our present lives and in the past, I need be able to go off script and respond in kind to the answers that I am being given, and as Vilhauer’s states in his essay I need to set aside my “prior understanding” and be willing to accept new ones.

Works Cited

Ruspoli, Tao. "Being in the World." Directed byTao Ruspoli, 2010.

Vilhauer, Monica. "Gadamer and the game of understanding: Dialogue-play and opening to the other." *The Philosophy of Play*. Routledge, 2013. 89-100.