An Affair of Flutes: An Appreciation of Play

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In this paper,[1] I wish to proclaim, to extol, to champion, and to celebrate the cause of frivolity, uselessness, unproductivity, inconsequentiality, nonachievement, gratuitousness, irrelevance, and irreverence. In short, I wish to offer an apology for, and an appreciation of, play.

I

The phenomenon of play has permeated all of human history; no civilization has ever been free of its influences. "In culture we find play as a given magnitude existing before culture itself existed, accompanying it and pervading it from the earliest beginnings" (20: p. 14) up to contemporary phases of civilization.

Despite the universality of play, serious and scholarly investigations of its basic nature, structure, and intricacies have produced a multitude of diverse, sometimes indiscriminate, and not occasionally antithetical characterizations, at times imbued with value connotations alternately condemning or exalting the enterprise. This state of affairs is not altogether unexpected given the application of and references to the concept in current usage:

> "Play" is a term which has been applied to many of the affairs of nature, man and God. We speak of a piston rod playing in its cylinder, a fountain playing streams of water, the play of wind on fields of grain, and the play of otters who fashion slides out of mudbanks and slip on their backs into the water. We see ourselves as players of games and musical instruments, participants in love-play, and players of both ends against the middle. It has even been asserted that existence itself is the play of the gods and that to be in tune with these gods is to be in play. (44: p. 148)

Therefore, it is hardly surprising to note the plethora of definitions[2] and theories which have been promulgated in attempts to delineate clearly and explicate carefully this multifaceted, wide-ranging, and highly elusive phenomenon.

In general, two major definitional procedures are extant in the voluminous play literature. The *first* is that of carefully and systematically analyzing the nature and structure of the play occurrence to attempt to outline its essential attributes, components, content, and significance.[3] The *second* major approach consists of attempts to decipher and to clarify the motivational context and structure that precedes, influences, and dictates participation in play. Posited causal explanations derived from this extensive and influential area of play behavior research and investigation include the following hypotheses: surplus energy; instinct practice; life preparation; learning and cognitive devel-

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opment; recapitulation; relaxation and recreation; generalization and compensation; catharsis; psychoanalytic (the mastery of unpleasant experiences through playful repetitions); competence-effectance (a desire or need to produce effects in the environment); and finally, the triumverate of knowledge-seeking, boredom prevention, and arousal-seeking.

To enumerate, to analyze, and to evaluate comprehensively all aspects of the various fruits of these definitional inquiries, as significant as such a venture undoubtedly would be, is a separate, major research task, far beyond the limits, or for that matter, the concerns of the inquiry at hand. Thus, for the purpose of delineating the focus of the present study, I wish to provide a stipulative definition of the term.

It is here asserted that play may be perceived adequately not as a specific activity or set of activities, but rather as an orientation or way of organizing, experiencing, or relating to the activity. That is, play may be characterized as the context or quality of an activity; it is a stance, a manner of comportment, a fundamental mode of being-in-the-world. Play provides "a syntax, not a vocabulary" (38: p. 94); therefore, although the activity engaged in is not specified, the manner of pursuit is.[4]

There are two major necessary and sufficient components of the play stance. *First,* play is of necessity, a voluntary endeavor which cannot be forced, externally demanded, obligated, or imposed by necessity, coercion, or any form of duty. Indeed, during moments of play, man is fully his own master. *Second,* play is an autotelic activity. That is, play is an intrinsic, noninstrumental, self-contained enterprise which has only "internal finalities which do not transcend it" (14: p. 80) and is participated in for its own sake. Play is not a means to external ends or purposes; it does not further survival, sustenance, pragmatic, or materialistic interests. It is process rather than product oriented. The interest in play is the pursuit of internal values and ends; the reward is in the act. Thus, the prize of play is play itself.

In summary, play is herein characterized as an activity voluntarily undertaken for intrinsic purposes. Participation in any venture, including a game or a sport, in this manner, may therefore be legitimately termed a play occurrence.

II

In contemporary Western culture, the reign of the ideology of work gives us "highly limited permission to be useless" (45: p. 14). Enormous emphasis is placed on man as laborer or producer; everywhere he is fettered or chained to the process of work. Work may be defined as an instrumental or functional activity, exertion, task, operation, or occupation designed to manufacture, to construct, to provide or to accomplish useful results, efforts, goods, or services.

The search for reasons underlying the development and heralding of labor and production as "the ideal, and then the idol, of the age" (20: p. 192) must extend to the realms of both the sacred and the secular. The puritanic tradition of 19th century Protestantism, as an indicator of one source of the former, is succinctly exemplified in the following statement:

> Remember that we are sent into this world, not for sport and amusement, but for labor; not to enjoy and please ourselves, but to serve and glorify God, and be useful to our fellowmen. That is the great object and end of life. In pursuing this end, God has indeed permitted us all needful diversion and recreation. . . . But the great end of life after all is work. (19: pp. 124–125)

It is rather clear that this particular religious orientation[5] places work and play at opposite ends of a continuum, according a positive evaluation to the former and a more negative evaluation to the latter. It should also be noted that "the Protestant ethic linked sacred and secular worlds by regarding success at work as an indication of sal-

vation and avoidance of work as a sign of damnation" (56: p. 8).

The remnants of the religious work ethic; the derivation and construction of a secular version of this code, which facilitated and encouraged the rise and development of the capitalistic structure of the Western world; the significant influences of the Industrial Revolution, when "all Europe donned the boiler-suit" (20: p. 192); the development and aggrandizement of the orderly and hard-working spirit of the American character and republic; and the general ideology of *homo faber* or "man as worker"[6]—all contributed to the increasing acceptance of the assumption that man's expectations and orientation should be framed and nurtured under the category of work and the understanding that he literally manufactures his identity and dignity by his fabrications as a functional entity in the work world.

The permeation, acceptance, and glorification of the spirit of work is readily apparent in contemporary language and discourse:

> It is not an accident that we regularly speak of homework, workbooks, work loads, workouts, workshops, workhorses, schoolwork, task forces, works of art, workrooms, work sheets, work-ups, classwork, work schedules, make-up work, board work, remedial work, course work and committee work. (Harper cited in 16: p. 89)

> Man is what he does; his identity is his productivity. The assessment of an individual is conducted, therefore, by a scrutiny of what he has manufactured or attained; academic rank, position on the political or corporate hierarchy, and the length of his vitae or list of credits are all heralded as legitimate indicators of merit. Thus, personal satisfaction, value, and meaning are direct products of man's labor.

These widely acknowledged conceptions cause considerable difficulties. For one, if self-esteem and self-justification are derived predominantly, if not totally, from participation in productive occupations, it is readily apparent that "the most concentrated points of identity-crisis" in society are to be found when persons are "ostracized from the world of work—the preemployed, the unemployed, and the postemployed." Since work grants identity and status, "those who are excluded from the arena in which values and meanings are produced are exiled from full humanity" (26: p. 123).

This state of affairs is reflected in the widespread belief that moral approval and, for that matter, an adequate income, are to be granted only to persons who are employed.[7] "This morality is captured in the derogatory labels ('welfare bums') applied to people who do not work. Individuals who hold steady jobs are evaluated, and often evaluate themselves, as better than those who do not work" (56: p. 8).

Given the utilitarian, acutely competitive approach of North American and European society—with its dedication to industrious endeavors, efficiency and thrift; "sobriety and rational calculation" (6: p. 10) and rigid discipline; and its unwavering devotion to the proper (i.e., most productive) use of time—it is readily apparent that there is little tolerance or adulation for enterprises perceived to contradict this general orientation.[8,9] While play, at the present time, is deemed permissible and worthwhile for children—because its utilitarian functions of learning, socialization, and general preparation for later life provide rational justification—it is often viewed as "a frivolous throwback to childhood" (58: p. 39) for adults.

A culture or society which praises work, of necessity, considers play to be problematic since "praise of work does not engender praise of play" (45: p. 15). Because play, in effect, produces nothing, neither material goods nor works of service, it is often described as basically empty, sterile, misspent or lost time, rather than as time well applied. Due to its lack of emphasis on practical affairs, it is perceived as being aimless, wasteful, and nonserious;[10] a form of idleness, trifling, or sloth abhorrent to the productive personality; or, perhaps, even as a morally unseemly enterprise characterized by profligate indulgence. Play or, for that matter, other leisure endeavors, often give rise to

guilt and embarrassment or elicit shame in persons who seek justification through work (45: p. 13). Consequently, many avoid the opportunity for engagement in such activities by willingly working longer hours, accumulating overtime, taking second jobs, and abbreviating or eliminating vacation periods altogether to return to or remain at work.

Any pragmatic culture so heavily oriented toward productive, utilitarian enterprises will view the adult player as irresponsible, "foolish and incompetent, if not positively demented" (26: p. 128); "will find play to be incomprehensible and dangerous" (45: p. 12); and will tolerate it only with suspicion, guarded restraint, and constraints.

"Since praise of work is the ruling spirit of contemporary man . . . , the world of play is irrelevant and irreverent—irrelevant to the profane world of the worker and irreverent to the magical god of the worker" (45: p. 15). Therefore, play is largely ignored, criticized, disparaged, or even persecuted. For those who inhabit a world of total work, a call to play will sound socially immoral, "as though directed at the very foundations of human society" (52: p. 4). Of course, a call to play is just that, and for that very reason, as I will attempt to demonstrate subsequently, play should be openly, freely, unabashedly, and exuberantly celebrated.

III

Before developing the thesis of this paper further, it should be noted that "there is a current and rather pedestrian view of play, a sort of *vulgar* interpretation," which perceives play to be an occasional and peripheral phenomenon "on the margin of human life," and grants it, albeit begrudgingly, a restricted, supplementary place in the affairs of man as a recreative pause or temporary "surcease from burdens," through pleasant distraction or diversion, which highlights by contrast the more genuine, important, and serious aspects of life (14: p. 77).

Further, play is frequently posited to serve a prophylactic or therapeutic service as recreation, warding off disasters and ills of the mind and body, and also developing health, fitness, and strength, thereby facilitating increased productivity. It will be helpful here to remember that "recreation," in the root, means literally to "recreate" or "create again." Ecob (9: p. 43), writing more than 60 years ago in a religious journal, urged his readers to understand that "the fundamental and most compelling reason for shorter hours of work, [is] that there may be ample time for the recreating process to restore the waste of vital force, and so make us whole for the next day's labor."[11]

However, if play is utilized as a break in routine for the purpose of returning recuperated to work, it is merely another utilitarian link in the chain, serving as a handmaiden to the productive enterprise, and thereby, demonstrating essentially a work orientation and structure. However, genuine play in its essence is not an instrument for the attainment of external ends, it is not primarily a mental or physical restorative (52: p. 31) and, most assuredly, it is compromised when it is considered as a "sort of Coca-Cola philosophy: 'the pause that refreshes' *in order that* one may do more work" (37: p. 70). Rather, as will be demonstrated subsequently, play is, at heart, use-less.

However, this perception is not widely recognized or acknowledged. A brief amplification of three particularly relevant instances will provide support for this contention. First, there is precious little play to be found in the orientation, content, or activity of many programs or departments of recreation. Frequently, such departments comport themselves as unannounced subdivisions of industrial psychology, charged with the task of making the child or laborer more productive and the school or work environment more tolerable through temporary diversion and relaxation.

Second, faculties of physical education, of course, are also often eligible for this criticism. Here "technocrats of the body," the repair and maintenance men of the human organism, function to tone up, recondition, heal, shape, and train the

body (2: p. 90); health, physical fitness, strength, cardiovascular endurance, etc., are highly valued because of the postulated concomitant increases in labor concentration and output, absence of fatigue, and extended work life.

Third, and finally, contemporary, elite, high-achievement sport, although not laying claim to the play spirit, does much to destroy the possibility of its manifestation in other sport forms by its extremely conspicuous example. This form of sport may increasingly be characterized as the experimental science of human productivity. Highly regarded, if not apotheosized in contemporary Western society, the pursuit of excellence—which in its interpersonal forms entails the demonstration of very high degrees of proficiency, surpassing ability, and preeminence in the performance of sporting skills in comparison to the capacities and achievements of others—demands, at the very least, intense effort, concerted dedication, and sacrifice in the preoccupied search for increasingly productive modes and techniques to mobilize totally the athlete to attain maximum output and performance. Enormous ideological and material resources are consumed in the frantic drive for physical excellence, the hunt for new records, and the "manufacturing of champions." Highly specialized and rigid educational programs, laboratories, research institutes, experimental sport centers, and training camps staffed and directed by physiologists, biochemists, doctors, physical educators, psychologists, trainers, and other master technicians and engineers (2: pp. 18–19), work diligently to objectify the athlete's body to produce performance machines subordinated to the goal of ultimate efficiency. Thus, in preparation for athletic endeavors, the body is drilled, trimmed, strengthened, quickened, and otherwise manipulated to improve its fitness and functioning and is often handled as an instrument or utensil to be appropriately directed and mastered.

But where is play?

All three of the previously delineated occurrences or programs produce consequences which are most often negative;[12] such instances and approaches are inappropriate and inadequate to fully comprehend the nature of man's embodied being and the possibilities of celebration inherent in play. In concluding this section, it may be asserted that an obsession with objectivity and productivity in physical efforts and activities renunciates the lived body; represses muscular sensuousness for expressive rather than instrumental ends; focuses exclusively on quantifiable matters to the exclusion of qualitative questions of bodily freedom, sensual gratification, and sexual expressiveness; desensitizes movement as a distinctive source of creative impulses and aesthetic experience; and finally, alienates the individual from his own body.

Several of the forementioned items, of necessity, will be addressed again in subsequent portions of this paper; however, attention must now be focused on a further discussion of some negative results of extrinsic and objective work orientations.

IV

Despite the praise and adulation accorded to work, it is observed, on occasion, that much of modern labor no longer conveys the sense of satisfaction and personal worth that once resulted from the completion of a meaningful task. Although there are variations in the milieu and content of contemporary work structures, there is a remarkable degree of identity. The occupational situation of many contemporary workers is often perceived as an externally controlled and deserted void.

Work on assembly lines and elsewhere is often superficial, repetitive, frustrating, deadening, and meaningless. The fragmentation of labor, demanding only simplistic and automatic responses, and the depersonalization of the laborer often reduce man to a mere assemblage of tasks and functions, and consequently, engender powerful negative and reductive tensions producing perceptions of self-reification, anonymity, estrangement, and personal obliteration. "When the categories of function, efficiency, and output become central for identity,

the result is alienation; the individual no longer feels himself to be a sacred nexus of life" (on Marcel, 26: p. 126).[13]

These negative possibilities and factors all contribute to establishing work and concomitant instrumental orientations as significant contemporary social problems most worthy of careful deliberation, rather than mere unreflective acceptance.[14] Consequently, numerous social philosophers and critics stridently denounce the functional absorption of the individual and the tendency towards denial of self fostered by such environments. Nonetheless, the leveling demands of routine and uniformity frequently transcend the workplace to dictate the nature and modes of activities pursued in other aspects of daily life.

The individual often spends much of his time submerged and cloaked in anonymity, concerned only with assimilating and conforming to the attitudes, opinions, judgments, and role models advocated by the group. Participating solely in average, routine, and mechanical activities, he is engulfed in the communal consciousness of the crowd and its usually undistinguished dictates, and consequently, becomes merely a reflection of social functions and obligations.

In the mass (Kierkegaard's "the public" or "the they" and Heidegger's *das Man*), for example, everything appears as if it is in the best order. The individual takes his undifferentiated social existence for his whole life; he becomes accustomed to viewing himself in thinglike terms, as merely one unit among many others, as a given substance with predetermined properties and modes of action. Man is "disburdened" or "accommodated" by the crowd; the choices have already been determined. Participation in this superficial mode of existence and in solely distracting preoccupations and jejune activities, distorts, truncates, or even precludes self-knowledge and often results in self-estrangement.[15]

It should be obvious that the individual completely immersed in objectivity, with little awareness of his unique subjectivity, is unreceptive to avenues and modes of personal existence of a qualitatively different manner. Rather than permitting the individual to obtain insight into his true capabilities and possibilities of free choice or meaningful self-projection, mass dictates tend to foster personal obliteration.

V

With this extended preliminary discussion in hand, I wish to direct my comments beyond the forementioned negative confines to suggest that there is a great deal more available for individuals willing to enter the fields of frolic and to engage in true play activities; that is, more spacious pastures, gently rippling with softer more luxurious grass, saturated with deeper colors, and filled with richer fragrances than was previously described are most assuredly available.

It is herein contended that the realm of play, if participated in openly, offers obvious opportunities to explore alternative modes of awareness, to develop insights into and knowledge of new modes of being, and to explore radically different possibilities perhaps not readily available elsewhere.

During moments of intense, vivid, and individuating engagement made available in play, the individual is provided with numerous occasions to recover himself and to attain a new and more perceptive sense of his own unique, personal existence.

One of the most significant insights to be derived from existential philosophy is the disclosure that man is a "being-ahead-of himself"; that is, "being-possible" and "being-free for" are integral ontological components of the human condition. Possibilities[16] are important issues for man and he has a concerned stake in their manifestation.

Sartre, of course, amplified this point by asserting that man is not what he is, but is what he is not. Man's contingency and facticity do not preclude his freedom or ability to "stretch toward the future." "Possibility is not to be defined by already known limits; the past does not exercise an absolute tyranny over the future" (26: p. 174).

That is, man is an indeterminate, open question, a "not-yet," with the capacity to transcend present modes of being to structure himself by his choices, actions, and commitments to personal projects.[17]

Although man often avoids recognizing or acting on his possibilities, deliberately or otherwise, if he participates in the world in a state of open awareness, cognizant of the contingencies permeating human existence, possibilities take on a most profound significance. Indeed, "perhaps nothing is so important an object of seriousness than a lost possibility" (11: p. 142).[18] Furthermore, "we experience 'missed opportunities' as missed because we feel that our lives would have been more complete, richer, had we responded when the opening was present" (21: p. 40). Kierkegaard presented an appropriate reflection on this matter: "If I were to wish for anything" Kierkegaard wrote, "I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so foaming, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!" (11: p. 144).

These sentiments, although primarily concerned with the phenomenon and experience of human love, have been echoed and supported recently in several significant philosophical studies[19] which perceive play to be an existentially fundamental occurrence, aptly and succinctly characterized as "an encounter with possibility" (11: p. 141).

Play is heralded as an opportunity and forum for man to experience and to luxuriate in the pursuit of possibilities outside of everyday concerns and contexts and relatively unconstrained by external interventions.

The world of genuine play opens man to new experiences. Hyland (21: p. 38) asserted that the individual's stance in the play situation may be partially distinguished from stances assumed in nonplay encounters by what he termed "responsive openness"—a heightened sense of openness toward the environment and context, as well as the capacity of responding to the possibilities elicited by his receptivity to the play situation.[20] Here he is not abstracted or distanced in any way from his activity, rather he has the opportunity to perceive freshly, to experience novelty, and to immerse himself wholly. Further, as Keen pointed out, this ability may indeed be one of the defining marks of human dignity:

> In those moments when I am able to rise above compulsion, need, and expectation and allow some novelty to refresh me, I am most certain of my freedom and my potency. I become gracefully free when I become convinced that I have the power to do a new thing. (25: p. 30)[21]

Thus, play may be heralded as a singularly fulfilled, liberating experience, through which man opens doors normally closed, alters his habitual modes of perception, refuses categorically to tolerate premature and limiting closures, views the naked simplicity of the world and entities within it, and inaugurates processes and actions of creative and novel transformation.

To advance to another but very related concept, it must be noted that man is an incarnate subject and that the most decisive trait of human consciousness, coloring all of its manifestations, is that it is an embodied consciousness. Consequently, the actions and motions of the "lived-body," man's insertion and foundation in existence, reveal him as being intimately concerned with his unfolding in the world.

Further, as many phenomenological investigations so capably demonstrated, particularly those of Merleau-Ponty, "nothing is more expressive than the human body" (50: p. 114); it is the locus and vehicle of "an indefinite number of symbolic systems" (35: p. 9). The body provides man with a personally oriented focus for projection and action.

Play, and in particular playful sport, as a vibrant form of human endeavor, reveals the body in its lived concreteness. Configurations and meanings inscribed with shapes and qualities expressive and

indicative of the texture of the being of the participant arise by means of the body's power of expression. The player, through exuberant, delightful, joyous and spontaneous movement, gestures, and actions, confronts the world in a fresh manner,[22] engages in dialogue with it, and explores it and himself in a manner pregnant with individual significance.

Thus, it may be stated that the objective and extrinsic approaches previously discussed are inadequate and inappropriate to fully comprehend the unique nature of man's embodied being.[23] The open and aware player experiences and apprehends his body neither as an object nor as a manipulatable, quantifiable instrument; the "lived-subject" not only is sensed but also does the sensing. The body perceived totally as an object is, in a very legitimate sense, drained of its humanity; it is a dead body devoid of its vivifying, expressive, and intentional qualities and abilities.

In addition, it should also be noted that play and sport, through their capabilities of manifesting and transmitting affective states and meanings, may be viewed both as symbolic media and as potentially artistic enterprises capable of stimulating and releasing the creative components of the participant. This thesis will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

In summary, it may be asserted that play is the impulse for, the gate to, and the exercise, instantiation, and essence of freedom.[24] Liberated from mundane, routine confinements; from subordination to the impersonal shackles of constraint and circumstance; and from utilitarian demands, objective orientations, and habitual stances—the true player commits himself totally to the situation at hand and the opportunities to experience possibility[25] by pouring himself wholly and without restraint into the activity to focus on his subjectivity and to luxuriate in the intense, full, lived experience of play.

It will prove to be helpful to the present analysis to discuss play briefly from two additional philosophic perspectives, both relating directly to and based upon the previous investigation of the interconnections between play and possibility: *first,* a systematic theological orientation to the phenomenon and its significance for man; and *second,* an aesthetic perusal of the structure and nature of play. These concerns will be addressed in the subsequent two sections.

VI

In recent times, the question of the nature and significance of human play has emerged as a visible focus of study and discourse in the religious study disciplines under the rubric of "the theology of play." Generally, it may be asserted that the theology of play consists of "an attempt to illuminate the meaning of play through an application of theology, and/or the attempt to clarify theology by applying a play metaphor" (18: p. 48).

The connection between human play and the divine has a long, and perhaps, somewhat surprising history. In *The Laws,* Plato stated that life is most appropriately lived as play: man was "created as a plaything of the gods, and that is the best part of us. All of us, then, men and women alike, must live accordingly, and spend our lives making our play as noble and beautiful as possible" (21: p. 36). The highest goal of human endeavors, thus, is to participate fully in play consecrated to the gods. This insight, coupled with other similar observations variously expressed throughout the history of ideas, including Nietzsche's postulation that "the world *is* the play of Zeus" (13: p. 29), is strongly echoed in selected streams of contemporary Christian theological thought.

Hugo Rahner (54), Jurgen Moltmann (39), Sam Keen (25;26), among several other contemporary theologians,[26] asserted that the creation of the world and man was a meaningful and serious, but also an uncoerced and unnecessary, act. God is free—He is, of course, not constrained by inexorable drives, restraints, compulsions, or laws—

therefore, He creates spontaneously because He wills to do so, not because He must (54: p. 18). The world, thus, cannot be viewed as a "necessary unfolding of God nor an emanation of his being from his divine fullness" (39: p. 17). In other words, the Creation is the result of divine play, that is, of God playing with his own possibilities.

Consequently, it may be contended that man attains the fullest state of awareness and highest form of creative development by demonstrating attributes and qualities and engaging in actions which approximate and imitate those of God through participation in unconstrained, purposeless, and joyful play. Playing corresponds directly to "the ultimate groundlessness of the world" (39: p. 16) as the most appropriate option for man. Similarly to God, man playing in and with the world creates whole new worlds;[27] like the Creation, man's playing is a meaningful outward flowing, an inventive and innovative expression of his freedom, and a festive affirmation of his being. Play, then, is a form of godliness; it is participation in, and consecrated to, the divine. Thus, in play man can echo in a finite manner the infinite joy of the Creator, delight in and celebrate God, become a full "plaything" of the Lord, and exuberantly embrace the nature of his own existence.

A second consideration addressed by the theologians of play concerns itself with an evaluation of the justification and direction of man's worldly endeavors. It is contended that human existence is joyful, at heart, because it is basically and inherently secure in God. Since "grace is a happening rather than an achievement, a gift rather than a reward" (25: p. 145), the individual has already arrived and been accepted as he is. That is, man's existence is "justified and made beautiful" before he is "able to do or fail to do anything." Consequently, man displays and celebrates the meaning of his being not in rendering service, engaging in productive enterprises, or participating in pedantic life styles dedicated toward usefulness or accomplishment, but rather through the far more appropriate nonutilitarian and purpose-free acts of cheerful affirmation, expression, and celebration. "Play as a world symbol goes beyond the categories of doing, having, and achieving and leads us into the categories of being, of authentic human existence and demonstrative rejoicing in it . . . [through] dancing, singing, and playing" (39: pp. 21, 23–24).

Finally, a third aspect of the theological inquiry into play merits brief mention. Rahner (54: p. 60), for one, repeatedly hailed and extolled play as a manifestation of heartease or an untroubled gladness of the soul; it was perceived as a meaningful prelude to eternity, "a kind of rehearsal, fashioned into gesture, sound or word, of that Godward directed harmony of body and soul which we call heaven" and "the dance of everlasting life" (18: p. 49). Concurrence with Moltmann's (39: p. 35) assertion that "life is not a struggle but preplay, not preparatory labor but prevision of the future life of rejoicing," permits play to be viewed, quite literally, as foreplay and, perhaps, even as "a foretaste of the eschaton" (49: p. 216).

The previously delineated considerations of the positive aspects or attributes of play, among other issues not herein discussed, led Neale (45: p. 176) to assert strenuously that "the goal for the church is to encourage play at all levels. The task of the average person is to continue his playing and allow the spirit of full play to enter into all levels of his adult life." Thus, it may be seen that these theologians emphatically advocate the replacement of the utilitarian or work orientation by the play stance as the most appropriate and definitive perspective on worldly enterprises and modes of being.

Obviously, these brief theological considerations warrant considerably more attention than was possible here.[28] However, hopefully, sufficient indicators have been presented to provide support for the major thrust of this study.

VII

There is currently an almost ecumenical acceptance of play or the element of playfulness as a

necessary component of art, and indeed, an extremely long and significant tradition in the history of philosophic thought, from Plato and Aristotle to Kant, Schiller, Santayana, and numerous others, has associated play with aesthetic theory. If in the act of playing man proceeds to formulate new perspectives within which to enjoy, to interpret, and to understand the nature and conditions of his-being-in-the-world, a convincing argument may be forwarded for play as the foundation of art and as an essential ingredient in the artistic process, insofar as it seeks to eschew formalism and rigidity and to keep open its possibilities of comprehension and creativity. Brief mention of three specific aesthetic theories will amplify this contention.

Kant (23: pp. 37–77, 145–181), for example, asserted that the aesthetic experience in man is based upon the interaction of the cognitive faculties of first, imagination, and second, reason and understanding. The imagination formulates images from the perceptual field and the understanding classifies and synthesizes these images. The perception of an aesthetic object or work stimulates these two faculties of apprehension and facilitates their harmonious interaction and unification which is, in turn, the ground for aesthetic pleasure. Thus, for Kant, free play is the unconstrained synthesis and harmonization of the mental powers of imagination and understanding.

Schiller (64), although significantly influenced by Kant,[29] rejected his rather ascetic and one-sided rational orientation to incorporate physical and sensual aspects and concerns absent in much of Kant's work. He perceived play to be a totally absorbing and creative enterprise performing the essential task of reconciliation and harmonization between not simply two mental faculties, but between the two divergent demands or facets of man's nature—reason and the senses.

According to Schiller (64: pp. 64–66, 133–134), to achieve completeness, man is required to develop and to balance both the formal impulse (stemming from his rational nature) and the sensual impulse (stemming from his physical existence or sensuous nature), since both are essential parts of his being. This harmonious middle disposition, or state of organic wholeness, in which man affirms both the physical and the rational, without the constraint or the domination of one by the other, is termed "the play impulse." The play impulse is manifested in or leads to the "living form" of aesthetic activity in which man enthusiastically abandons himself to contemplation and enjoyment "above the fetters of every purposed end . . . in the free movement which is itself end and means."

Play, thus, gives satisfaction to man's creative imagination, nurtures the emotions, excites the soul, and satisfies the senses. This led Schiller (64: p. 80) to assert, in his famous peon of praise to play: "To declare it once and for all, Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly Man when he is playing."

To proceed to more contemporary thought, it may be noted that Santayana (61: p. 18), in his discourse on the sense of beauty and aesthetic theory, emphasized that both play and art act as delightful, energizing, and liberating sources of new power which provide opportunities for the modification of human consciousness, the expression of novel and creative acts, and the organization of new modes of joyful sensibility. Indeed, he asserted that "there is an undeniable propriety in calling all the liberal and imaginative activities of man play."

The stance supported by Santayana is highly reminiscent of Schiller's characterization of the activities of the aesthetic man as being free from utility, obligations, practical considerations, and the tyranny of specific, pragmatic ends. Schiller (64: p. 125) stated that the aesthetic impulse builds a "joyous realm of play" which releases man from the shackles of circumstance and constraint. "As long as necessity dictates and want impels, imagination is bound with strong chains to the actual; only when want is satisfied does it develop its unrestrained capacities."

If the three previously delineated sketches are accepted as, at least, indicative and promising,[30]

it may be argued that the play and aesthetic experience have much in common: both are unfettered, uncoerced, and disinterested activities releasing the subjectivity of the participant; both provide fresh perspectives and vision, thereby opening up the world and freeing man from the total domination of causality and unreflective, unwavering, and mechanical routines or patterns of action and perception; both provide possibilities for the delight and joy of the participant or viewer completely absorbed and entranced by the activity or object; both are distinct from the everyday, mundane world, if only to gain new perspectives and comprehension; and finally, both possess and demonstrate intrinsic values and ends.

Play is indeed a rich source and protean resource where new paths to understanding and meaning are nurtured in an open field of free expression. Therefore, it may be contended that "human play is a matter of creative imagination and that the creative artist is a player" (37: p. 75).[31]

Thus, it appears to be defensible to assert that play often is the vibrant, living embodiment, to utilize Schiller's terms, of the sensual and the rational, as well as the harmoniously balanced synthesis of form and freedom. It extends beyond pragmatic perspectives, probes beneath superficial surfaces and concerns to address the heart of the matter, thereby permitting a revelational penetration into true being. It is what we believe in and live for.

VIII

It may be asserted that contemporary Western man suffers from the atrophy and debilitation of a "shrunken psyche" (6: p. 12). Socialized and pressed extensively toward instrumental rationality, objective calculation, and sober manipulation, he has repressed and forgotten the jubilation of open and boundless play. However, man is essentially fanciful, graceful, and festive; thus, to become fully human he must regain the ability to laugh, to dream, to experience wonder, to dance, and to play.

In the orderly, pragmatic, rational, secure, and repressive adult kingdom of Apollo, some sports and games (of course, properly oriented and regulated) are permissible, but enterprises manifesting exuberance, delight, enchantment, revelry, undisciplined enjoyment, and even ecstasy[32]—in other words, instances of full, free, joyous play—are perceived to belong to the domain of Dionysius and are consequently, at the very least, suspect (26: pp. 145, 154).

Nonetheless, it is herein contended that rigid and predominate adherence and homage to Apollonian consciousness involves a "staggering impoverishment of the vital elements" (6: p. 6) essential to open and full human existence: "Poor life, that lacks the elasticity to dart off in prancing enterprises!" (51: p. 22). A reorientation to resurrect the elements of, and to celebrate the capacity for, Dionysian consciousness in vibrant and fulfilled play will alter the barrenness of life, grant transcendence of servitude, dependence, and utility, and radically transform man. Ortega y Gasset emphatically stated that:

> Life is an affair of flutes. It is overflow that it needs most. He who rests content with barely meeting necessity as it arises will be washed away. Life has triumphed on this planet because it has, instead of clinging to necessities, deluged it with overwhelming possibilities. (51: p. 21)

Further, if it is agreed that the "abundance of possibilities is a symptom of thriving life," it may be contended that play is a most exceptional mode of being; it is a humus from which man surges creatively forward toward a horizon full of "the lure of infinite distances" (51: pp. 19, 15), beyond stagnation and petrification to cultivate and to explore wondrous fields of possibility.

Entrance into play permits the attainment of the state of balanced and harmonious consciousness manifested by Schiller's aesthetic man and extolled

by Nietzsche's Zarathustra, transforms man from producer and accumulator to rejoicer and player, and consequently, provides a readmission to paradise. This state of affairs induced Ortega (51: p. 28) to suggest that the normal hierarchy be inverted to place play and playful sportive activity at the top as "the foremost and creative, the most exalted, serious, and important part of life, while labor ranks second as its derivative and precipitate. Nay more, life, properly speaking, resides in the first alone; the rest is relatively mechanic and a mere functioning."[33]

However, in a world dominated by prudence, diligence, obligation, servitude, necessity, and passivity, play is foreign and the wide recognition of its ontological significance is all but precluded. Play embodies and reflects new, divergent, and radical characteristics and directions; it is a way of "breaking the hammer" (29: p. 72), that is, of removing man from his everyday preoccupations to express doubts concerning the unquestioned relevance and importance of mundane existence; and finally, it announces the "rebirth of patently unproductive festivity and expressive celebration" (6: p. 5).[34] Thus, play and the life of the player are perceived to be irrelevant to the pragmatic world of instrumental concerns and irreverent to those who structure their identity upon, and derive their significance from, successes attained in such efforts.

Consequently, those who refuse to see the joyful colors of the play world and prefer to be deaf to its call will hold the player in disrepute and perceive him to be a fool or a madman. But, as Zorba the Greek (24) so emphatically demonstrated, a touch of madness and the ability to laugh and to dance in the face of contingency[35] and the self-important structure of the social world are essential components of genuine existence, and further, "man must have a little madness or else he will not be free" (60: p. 117). As Keen wrote:

> God, but I want madness!
> I want to tremble,
> to be shaken,
> to yield to pulsation,
> to surrender to the rhythm of music and sea,
> to the seasons of ebb and flow,
> to the tidal surge of love.
>
> I am tired of being
> hard,
> tight,
> controlled,
> tensed against the invasion of novelty. (25: p. 117)

Surely, to affirm play, and also to concur with Heraclitus, Jesus,[36] Schiller, Huizinga, Fink, and others, that man is only fully man when he plays and that he plays fully only when he plays like a child, in contemporary, achievement-oriented Western society, of necessity, requires more than a touch of madness.

IX

In conclusion, it may be asserted that play is an intrinsically rewarding, purposeless[37] activity which requires no external justification and is located at the center of life, not relegated to its distant perimeter. Indeed, it may be characterized as a rich and vital focal point of diverse lived meanings.[38] It is a *joie de vivre*, an adventurous, festive undertaking which reduces man's provincialism and enlarges his experience by embracing, and penetrating to, the heart of life.

Although it is impossible to delineate fully the diverse components, expressive possibilities, and multitude of infectious delights inherent in the sphere of play, it is readily apparent that it is a most extraordinary and commodious realm—a transubstantiated and wondrous world permeated with serenity, joy, happiness, as well as surprise.

Ultimately, play is an essential, revelatory, liberating, most human enterprise. It is "an affair of flutes" wherein man is provided a grove in which he may listen to the fluid rhythms of inner music, cheerfully express all aspects of his being,

including the affirmation of his sensual nature, and luxuriate in the intense, fully-lived release, if not explosion, of his subjectivity. And this is most worthy of praise and celebration, indeed.

Notes

1. Paper presented at the 8th Annual Meeting of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport and the International Workshop in Sport Philosophy conducted at Karlsruhe University, Karlsruhe, Federal Republic of Germany, July 6–10, 1980.

   It is necessary to introduce, at the beginning, an important qualifying note. Although nouns and pronouns of the male gender such as "men," "he," and "him" are at times utilized in this paper, the intention is by no means to limit their reference or import specifically to one sex. Rather, the decision not to utilize such neutral terms as "human being" or "human existence" was based solely on the desire not to produce unfortunate and counterproductive confusion with the unique and vibrant denotations and connotations of these specific terms in some of the literature of existential philosophy called upon in certain sections of this essay. Hopefully, the benefits derived from adherence to this policy, in this particular case, will significantly outweigh any quite unintended offense which may be generated.
2. It may be noted that the *Oxford English Dictionary* (42) demonstrates the inevitable difficulties and complications which arise in any definitional investigation of play by utilizing more than 5 full, closely-packed pages to delineate 17 distinctive, major acceptable usages of the term as a noun (with extensive subsets) and 32 additional appropriate applications as a verb. This condition, as indicated by Miller (38: p. 87), has led some critics to assert that the term is frequently utilized as "a waste-basket category of miscellaneous behavior."
3. This methodological approach was utilized by many investigators including Huizinga (20: pp. 13,28), Caillois (3: pp. 9–10; 4: p. 46), Riezler (55), Maheu (31: p. 12), Weiss (68: pp. 138–139), Neale (43: p. 105; 45: p. 65), Fink (14: pp. 80–83), Schmitz (65), Roochnik (58), Hyland (21), Miller (37), Suits (67), and numerous others.
4. For well-considered amplifications, implications, and praise of the "play stance" see Roochnik's (58: pp. 36–41) and Hyland's (21: p. 37) thoughtful philosophic analyses, as well as Miller's (38) interesting anthropological discussion of this topic.
5. The stance discussed here is, to a certain extent, a rather direct reflection of medieval Christian theology which generally condemned all purposeless or unproductive efforts or activities, including play.
6. Sam Keen (26: pp. 121–123) delineated four interpretations and appropriate usages of the term "*homo faber*" and provided an extended description of how the fourth and most popular form is really the most degraded. The four forms are as follows: (1) man is the animal who makes and uses tools; (2) the human mind, no less than the hand, is a toolmaking and tool-using faculty; (3) the chief product of *homo faber* is man himself (i.e., he creates his own identity); and (4) the image of *homo faber* signifies that man is a worker.
7. One notable exception to this general orientation centers upon wealth that is inherited. In such cases, exemption from participation in productive labor enterprises is granted the recipient, at times, without concurrent or consequent negative evaluations; however, any such approval is usually based upon a presumption, often uninvestigated, that the capital and material goods inherited were originally attained and accumulated

through the industrious efforts or shrewd economic investments of the previous members of the family, and thus, legitimately produced in accord with the ethos under discussion. In essence, the seeds of prior labor are permitted to bear fruits in subsequent generations.

8. The opening lines of Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back* illustrated this point:

> This was no time for play.
> This was no time for fun.
> This was no time for games.
> There was work to be done. (37: p. 127)

9. On a somewhat different but related matter, it is interesting to note that, in North American society at least, games of chance and lotteries were generally perceived negatively and were vociferously denied widespread social or legal approval until very recently, largely because they contravened the accepted norms requiring concerted efforts and dedication for the attainment of significant materialistic rewards. However, when the full extent and possibilities of potential "productive" aspects of such ventures were clearly illuminated (for example, the generation of funds for the reduction of taxes, for aid to senior citizens, for church projects, and for cultural and civic enterprises), social acceptance was finally, if somewhat reluctantly, accorded.
10. Miller (37: pp. 103–116) argued that in the history of ideas and theological thought play was not originally perceived to be the opposite of seriousness, but that the intellectually higher principle of rationality forwarded by both Plato and Aristotle subordinated "the virtue of play to the higher virtue of seriousness." For an additional and, at times, contrary discussion of this issue see Hyland (21).
11. Conversely, for the sake of balance and historical accuracy, it is necessary to state that Collier (5: p. 45), writing in the same journal, discerned that leisure serves a richer, fuller function: "Leisure is not simply a time for recuperation in order to work again, but, on the contrary, it is the time in which we live, grow, and experience our humanhood, if we experience it at all."
12. Brohm (2: pp. 1–36) presented a vociferous and extended denunciation of the objectification and renunciation of the human body in contemporary elite sport programs which culminates with the assertion that such enterprises are forms of "institutionalized celebration of the mortification of the flesh" (2: p. 23). For a further discussion of the limiting, negative, and perhaps even debilitating orientations and consequences of physical education and sport programs dedicated to and obsessed with reification, efficiency, and productivity in the pursuit of excellence, and for suggestions for amelioration of some of the deficiencies, see Meier (34).
13. The literature exploring the concept of alienation is vast. For access to this material, see Schacht's (63) comprehensive analysis, as well as Murchland's (41) and Feuer's (12) studies. For a brief introduction to the analysis of the sources of alienation in labor, in the Marxist sense, see Rinehart (56: pp. 18ff). Finally, the following statement provides insight into the results of two studies on the alienation of labor:

> Robert Dubin's study of the "industrial workers' world" suggests that three out of four industrial workers "did not see their jobs and work places as central life interests for themselves. They found their preferred human associations and preferred areas of behavior outside of employment." Yet another study of industrial workers [David Riesman's "Leisure and Work in Post-

> Industrial Socity"] reported that 80 per cent would go on working even if there were no economic need, although the job itself was without meaning or positive satisfaction. These studies point to the problem of alienated leisure. Even when work has ceased to be economically necessary, creatively satisfying, or the focus of meaningful personal relationships, it remains a psychological (or should one say "theological") necessity. (26: p. 143)

14. It is necessary at this point, in an attempt to disarm some potential criticism, to introduce a significant note of qualification. Any utilization of a major differentiation, if not dichotomization, between work and play, as the extent literature concerned with this issue attests, may at times be problematic. Unfortunately, the scope of this paper precludes an exploration of this topic beyond that provided in the text, despite whatever importance such an understanding may possess. However, the purpose and substance of this study, namely, an appreciation of play, are not seriously incapacitated by this state of affairs.

    It may be readily acknowledged that not all forms of work possess debilitating consequences or are perceived negatively by the participants, and also that not all forms of play are always free of routinization or superficiality. However, the crucial factor at issue here is the predominant extrinsic or intrinsic orientation of the activity. Any intrinsic rewards generated by the productive work enterprise may be pleasurable and satisfying, but are inessential bonuses, not necessary conditions; conversely, intrinsic motivations and rewards are necessary and essential aspects of the play phenomenon, not fortunate additions. Novak (49: p. 40) addressed this point in the following manner: "To participate in the rites of play is to dwell in the Kingdom of Ends. To participate in work . . . is to labor in the Kingdom of Means." The forementioned distinction between play and non-play activities, as more fully delineated in earlier sections, is the basis for and informs this study.
15. In a discussion of a thesis to be found in George Konrad's novel *The Case Worker*, Kessler (27: p. 13) stated that "our urban culture grows more vacant of humane values in proportion to our power to process masses of people through a machinery designed to give them well-being."
16. Human possibility is here utilized specifically in a manner distinguished from the concepts of empirical or logical possibility; see Stack (66) for a further discussion of this distinction.
17. In a later source, Sartre moved from the unconditional freedom hailed in his earlier writings, particularly in *Being and Nothingness* (62), to a more modified position:

    > I believe that man can always make something out of what is made of him. This is the limit I would today accord to freedom: the small moment which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him. (1: p. 22)

18. In one sense, of course, it must be acknowledged that taking action and thereby choosing to actualize one or more possibilities denies, temporarily at least, if not permanently, the manifestation of certain other concurrent possibilities; thus, from this perspective there are always missed possibilities. However, as indicated by the subsequent discussion, the lost possibilities which are at stake and the objects of concern here are those characterized by certain forms, natures, or directions.
19. Cf 11; 14; 21; 40; 43; 58; 62: pp. 580–592.

20. In a *palinode* to his *main* thesis, Hyland (21: p. 47) acknowledged that, despite its importance, "responsive openness" is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for play since the pickpocket, for one, also demonstrates this quality to a marked degree. Thus, Hyland qualified his statement by introducing the notion of "good" and "bad" forms of "responsive openness," although, regrettably, he did not present an analysis of this distinction.
21. Keen (25: p. 35) amplified this notion by asserting that "a graceful future is one open to psychological, political, and ontological novelty."
22. Novak (49: pp. 137,86) discussed a somewhat similar point in his analysis of the attractiveness and significance of the sport of North American football for the spectator rather than the participant: "To play football wholeheartedly is to live a higher form of life, beyond the ordinary, to drink deep of possibilities of consciousness heretofore neglected." He also stated that "he who has not drunk deep of the virtues of football has missed one of the closest brushes with transcendence that humans are allowed."
23. Further criticism of such approaches, an extended discussion of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, plus a consideration of sport in light of these new perspectives are to be found in Meier (33).
24. This sentiment is echoed in numerous philosophical discourses concerned with play: Tillich (37: p. xxx), for example, stated that "play is one of the most characteristic expressions of the freedom of the spirit"; Rahner (54: p. 65) asserted that to play is "to be free, kingly, unfettered and divine"; and Sartre (62: p. 580), of course, specifically viewed play as the release of subjectivity.
25. In fact, Esposito (11: p. 141) asserted that games and sports in general may be perceived as "contrived situations, the purpose of which is to heighten and bring into focus the interplay between possibility and actuality"; the grasp or foothold on a ledge or rock in mountain climbing, for example, contains poignant moments of possibility. Further Morgan (40: pp. 24–30), in an analysis of the notion of possibility largely derived from Esposito, suggested that sport, or better, "sportive activity" may be adequately delineated as the unmediated pursuit of possibilities, predominantly "unconstrained by external impinging factors." In addition, Morgan presented a hierarchical scheme ranking sports according to the degree of mediation of external impinging factors: individual, dual, team, animate nonhuman, inanimate mechanical device—progressively diminishing "the role played by the individual athlete in this evocation of possibility."
26. It is possible to identify at least six theologians who have addressed this particular topic at some length. In addition to the three authors listed, mention must be made of the works of Cox (6;7), Neale (43;44;45), and Miller (36;37). Obviously, limitations preclude a discussion of many of the issues delineated in these works. However, the interested reader is referred to one of the few critical studies of this literature, namely De Caluwe's (8) illuminating study of the positions developed by Rahner, Moltmann, and Neale.
27. Two qualifying notes must be presented concerning the metaphor employed here. First, God's play, in the circumstances under discussion, resulted in the creation of physical entities, a state of affairs very infrequently the case with human play. Second, although *man* creates new worlds in play, he does not do so totally *ex nihilo* because of the constraints of his facticity; this, of course, is not a factor which limits or binds God.
28. On a somewhat different, but nonetheless

interesting point, it may be noted that, in a recent work, Novak (49: pp. 19,24) argued at considerable length that contemporary sports are forms of natural religion, pregnant with symbolic meaning and other religious qualities; they flow outward "from a deep natural impulse that is radically religious." He asserted that sports create primal symbols and metaphors of cosmic struggle and, thereby, may be perceived legitimately as "rituals concerning human survival on this planet" or as "liturgical enactments of animal perfection and the struggles of the human spirit to prevail."

29. Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (23) was published when Schiller was 30 years of age.
30. The general position previously briefly developed may be supported by numerous herein unspecified ideas and concepts drawn from additional works of aesthetic theory. Of particular merit is the stimulating discussion of the interconnections between play and aesthetics to be found in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (48). Although some of Nietzsche's thoughts on Dionysius and play will be addressed later in this paper, the reader interested in pursuing this topic further is urged to peruse this provocative work. The secondary literature, of course, is extensive. One study of specific relevance to this section, for example, is Roberts's (57) discussion of Santayana's aesthetic theory, in particular, as applied to sport.
31. It should be kept in mind that the intention of this section was not to equate play totally with the aesthetic experience (a plausible position, indeed, but one requiring more extensive discussion and support than was provided herein), but to identify significant similarities in the ontological structures demonstrated or possessed by the two forms of human endeavor.
32. Leonard (30) discussed some of the "hidden dimensions" of play in sport in terms of energy flows, experiences of new clarity, moments of heightened perception and fulfilled presence, peak experiences, and transformed states of consciousness during participation.
33. In fact, Ortega is quite willing to forward a more precise bifurcation:

> We may then divide organic phenomena—animal and human—into two great classes of activity, one original, creative, vital par excellence—that is, spontaneous and disinterested; the other of utilitarian character, in which the first is put to use and mechanized. Utility does not create and invent; it simply employs and stabilizes what has been created without it. (51: p. 17)

34. Cox (6: pp. 10–11,63) asserted that man is *homo festivus:* "man is by his very nature a creature who not only works and thinks but who sings, dances, prays, tells stories, and celebrates." In a later section, he stated that "dance both uses the body to celebrate and also celebrates the body." The interested reader may wish to peruse Cox's (6: pp. 58–67) discussion of the Church and dance. De Caluwe's (8: pp. 110–114) brief analysis of dance as a form of play also provides access to some of the relevant literature.
35. Keen (26: p. 157; 25: p. 160) offered two pertinent reflections on Zorba's dancing and its significance. First, "Zorba dances when the joy or the tragedy of life overflows the capacity of his words." Second, "Religion must return to dance. Perhaps Zorba is the saint for our time."
36. Miller amplified this notion in *Gods and Games:*

> The laughter of the child expresses the joy of freedom, of the sense of adventure, of delight, of pleasure. This must have been what Heraclitus had in mind

> when he referred to the end of life as belonging to the little child, and what Jesus meant when he said: "Truly I say to you, unless you receive the kingdom of God as a little child, you cannot enter into it." (37: p. 131)

37. To contend that play is purposeless is to describe it as a self-sufficient enterprise which does not translate to economic or other external concerns. It involves a redistribution of resources and efforts to focus on internal finalities. Indeed, in one sense, it may be postulated that "play posits the non-necessity of the necessary" (46: p. 93). Further, it is a fluid "letting-be of life and meaning," and as Miller (37: p. 151) proposed, it may be the case that "man's noblest and most profound destiny lies in making the central purpose of his life a kind of purposelessness." In sum, then, as far as extrinsic factors are concerned, true play is good for nothing, and therein resides both its essence and merit.
38. Fink (14: pp. 76,83,85) supported this contention. He postulated that play is a "return to the morning freshness of life at its origin"; "a symbolic act of representation, in which human life interprets itself"; and, further, an "action which puts us in the presence of the meaning of the world and of life." For an additional analysis of the rich meanings to be unearthed in the play world, wherein men may "feel the pulse of life's central beat," see Zaner's (69: p. 14) insightful discussion of play as an inherently self-endorsing presentation of what he terms "the moral order."

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