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Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other

Monica Vilhauer

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Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other examines the ethical dimensions of understanding by focusing on Gadamer's concept of "play" as it is developed in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*. Monica Vilhauer argues for the global relevance of play in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics by revealing play as the key concept that depicts the process of *all* understanding?that is, the dynamic, dialogical, and interpretive process by which interlocutors come to grasp a common subject matter together. Through the lens of dialogue-play, the book focuses on openness toward one's dialogue partner, respect for his differing point of view, and a willingness to learn from him in conversation as crucial ethical conditions of genuine understanding. The book aims to revive the ethical heart of philosophical hermeneutics and reveal the transforming power of the Other in Gadamer's hermeneutics.

While *Gadamer's Ethics of Play* develops his philosophical hermeneutics as an ethical philosophy, in the style of the older tradition of Aristotelian practical philosophy, it is finally critical of the extent to which Gadamer's hermeneutics can be used as a guide to practice. The book points out our need for guidance when we face our most prevalent obstacle to understanding?a closedness to the Other, or unwillingness to engage in conversation?but finds no guidance from Gadamer in scenarios where ethical conditions are lacking. Inspired by Gadamer's discussion of play, the book searches for types of human interaction that might have the power to open or re-open the play of dialogue between those who have become closed to each other, so that true understanding between them can be developed. The book is accessible to an undergraduate audience, while also being relevant to ongoing debates among Gadamer scholars.

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