

## Play

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Damn “work”: “Work ethic!” “Get a job!” “Full employment!” “Human resources!” “Labor!” “Comrades!” “Arbeit macht frei!”—slogans of two centuries (and more) of human gaslighting, colonialism, “revolution,” “progress.” And too the word “compensation”: a little money (but no more than is just, just enough, please), a little pleasure, comfort, security, an offsetting return for grunting weekly at a job.

And “The Work”: a little bit older slogan for some brave new self-inflicted path to enlightenment—alchemical, theosophical, lately Gurdjieffian.

In Genesis 2:17 the Hebrew טוֹב וְרָע (KJV: “good and evil”) might be glossed as “play and work,” in view of Genesis 3:19 in which God (not יהוה “Jawheh,” the “Cause,” but אֱלֹהִים “Elohim,” “Lords,” i.e. the Bosses of the universe) commandeth that, from the eating of this knowledge, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread”

Also from the Hebrew Bible: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” (Eccl. 9:10 KJV). Yet here is a subtle difference: in Ecclesiastes it is not said that work is given, put upon one from above: one *findeth* it. Such work hath *play* in it. If work were not also play, it were only burden.

“Play”: in music we “play,” with joy. Psalm 98:4 commandeth: “Make joyful music!” Also in acting, as in theater, also in just plain play, which animals as well as humans do spontaneously. All art is play—“Art”: that which is *artificial*, that which is the essence of *man*, the being capable of artifice, of *manifesting* the unmanifest. A dour Darwinian (or any Lutheran) might suppose that play is just something young animals do to improve their bodily skills, later to be exercised in the exacting work of killing to eat, escaping being eaten, sex, succoring offspring: all the works of animal life. But I say NO! The very gist of life is play. Life is the play of the cosmos, which existeth for no other reason.

Let us take a vacation from Work. An emptying out of our busy life, a *kenosis* like that of God, who vacated heaven to become the play of the cosmos. Let us prepare a place within the heart where we can hear and heed a call, a *vocation*, to that play which is our own. And, indeed, let us *work* at it, because to play seriously entails practice, which is work. And whenever we *work* let it never fail to be in service of *play*.

I play, therefore I am.