Finding the Self in Tension: The Importance of Play for Embodied Consciousness in Post-Kantian Philosophical Anthropology and Psychology

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Abstract
My dissertation looks at how four figures in the German philosophical tradition employ a similar concept of play in their models of the Ich', often translated as 'Self', as they explore the complexities of establishing a unity within embodied consciousness. These four figures are: Friedrich Schiller, F.W.J. Schelling, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. I situate this concept of play within the contemporary debate of the interdisciplinary field of play studies, showing that what emerges is a theory of play that avoids marginalizing it to children and leisure, but rather recognizes it as a state of consciousness that provides a semblance of self and a meaningful engagement with the world. However, these models of self that emerge provide an alternate conception compared to the mainstream versions that put emphasis on autonomy and self-transparency. Instead, these four figures acknowledge that consciousness is embedded in the world, thus it must consider its local relationships to its physical and social environment, as well as the embodied unconscious that it emerges from. As I progress through the four chapters, it will become apparent how these revised understandings of the self have a significant impact in how we approach areas like moral philosophy, political philosophy, critical theory, philosophy of biology, cognitive science, philosophical anthropology, and philosophy of art. Specifically we will see in what important ways consciousness is decentred in these accounts, thus in turn denying any particular consciousness a transcendental view that can finally settle fundamental philosophical, political and cultural issues.

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embodied the self–image of the bourgeoisie, con-ceiving itself as a truly scientific (as opposed to metaphysical or ide-alistic) philosophy supporting a progressive but non–revolutionary political program. This brand of biological materialism found its fullest and final ex-pression in the writings of Ernest Haeckel. Because Mach seems to have felt with a particular intensity the tension between the indirect and inductive methods of modern physics and the ideal of logical certainty in the descriptions and predictions of natural phe-nomena which it promised, he paid much greater attention to ques-tions of scientific methodology and epistemology than any of the materialists of his era. In the Groundwork, Kant suggests that anthropology, or the ‘power of judgment sharpened by experience’, has two roles, ‘to distinguish in what cases [moral laws] are applicable’ and ‘to gain for [moral laws] access to the human will’ (4: 389). This assumption appears to stand in tension with the Opacity Thesis, Kant’s claim that we can never know if an action is morally good. 6 For a further discussion of self-deceit, its relation to passions and importance for Kant’s position on human nature, see Wood ( Wood 2014, 44) 7 For a more detailed interpretation that also explores the different discussions on self-deception, which Kant offers in his Lectures on Anthropology, again see Frierson’s analysis ( Frierson 2005). Plessner’s Philosophical Anthropology (State University of New York Press, 1999), The Tragedy of Finitude. Dilthey’s Edited by Franck Düvell, Irina Molodikova & Michael Collyer Hermeneutics of Life (Yale University Press, 2004), Cyberspace Odyssey. Artificial by Nature An Introduction to Plessner’s Philosophical Anthropology Jos de Mul Those who want to find a