THE HUMAN CONDITION
OF THE GAME

by

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The central question of this inquiry is: What happens when people join in a game? The methodology used throughout the study is based upon hermeneutical inquiry. Textual interpretation of the two primary foci of the study, namely, the game and the human condition, is used to reveal significant standpoints for consideration. The two major points of interest are interpreted, at first separately; then an effort is made to join various ideas into a paradigm for the human condition of the game.

Understanding the game is approached through history, descriptions, and metaphors. The human condition is examined through the written works of Hannah Arendt, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michael Polanyi and Elizabeth Sewell. Disclosures about game and the human condition are made in light of some problematic concerns from the history of ideas in Western civilization, such as the relations between mind and body, action and contemplation, and work and play.

The claim of uniqueness is given to the game because 1) the quality of agon or contest is inherent in its structure, 2) the game produces nothing material, and 3) skilled performance in the presence of others, both players and spectators, allows players a way to distinguish themselves
through action. The structure, made by and taken up by persons, connects players to past performances, provides for outstanding deeds to be performed during play, and preserves the structure for others and their actions of the future. The game as a cultural activity has a durability because of its immaterial result and because of its passage onwards from one generation of players to another. The conditions of the game, which provide a space wherein people can appear in distinctly human fashion, are those of action, performance, skills, boundaries, personal knowing, unpredictability, contest, intentionality, perception, embodiment, and communication with objects and other people.