

The Adventurer

By Georg Simmel

"Das Abenteuer," *Phiosophische Kultur. Gesammelte Essays* ([1911] 2nd ed.; Leipzig: Alfred Kroner, 1919). Translated by David Kettler. {Downloaded from the internet}

1. Each segment of our conduct and experience bears a twofold meaning: it revolves about its own center, contains as much breadth and depth, joy and suffering, as the immediate experiencing gives it, and at the same time is a segment of a course of life - not only a circumscribed entity, but also a component of an organism. Both aspects, in various configurations, characterize everything that occurs in a life. Events which may be widely divergent in their bearing on life as a whole may nonetheless be quite similar to one another; or they may be incommensurate in their intrinsic meanings but so similar in respect to the roles they play in our total existence as to be interchangeable.

2. One of two experiences which are not particularly different in substance, as far as we can indicate it, may nevertheless be perceived as an "adventure" and the other not. The one receives the designation denied the other because of this difference in the relation to the whole of our life. More precisely, the most general form of adventure is its dropping out of the continuity of life. "Wholeness of life," after all, refers to the fact that a consistent process runs through the individual components of life, however crassly and irreconcilably distinct they may be. What we call an adventure stands in contrast to that interlocking of life-links, to that feeling that those countercurrents, turnings, and knots still, after all, spin forth a continuous thread. An adventure is certainly a part of our existence, directly contiguous with other parts which precede and follow it; at the same time, however, in its deeper meaning, it occurs outside the usual continuity of this life. Nevertheless, it is distinct from all that is accidental and alien, merely touching life's outer shell. While it falls outside the context of life, it falls, with this same movement, as it were, back into that context again, as will become clear later; it is a foreign body in our existence which is yet somehow connected with the center; the outside, if only by a long and unfamiliar detour, is formally an aspect of the inside.

3. Because of its place in our psychic life, a remembered adventure tends to take on the quality of a dream. Everyone knows how quickly we forget dreams because they, too, are placed outside the meaningful context of life-as-a-whole. What we designate as "dreamlike" is nothing but a memory which is bound to the unified, consistent life-process by fewer threads than are ordinary experiences. We

might say that we localize our inability to assimilate to this process something experienced by imagining a dream in which it took place. The more "adventurous" an adventure, that is, the more fully it realizes its idea, the more "dreamlike" it becomes in our memory. It often moves so far away from the center of the ego and the course of life which the ego guides and organizes that we may think of it as something experienced by another person. How far outside that course it lies, how alien it has become to that course, is expressed precisely by the fact that we might well feel that we could appropriately assign to the adventure a subject other than the ego.

4. We ascribe to an adventure a beginning and an end much sharper than those to be discovered in the other forms of our experiences. The adventure is freed of the entanglements and concatenations which are characteristic of those forms and is given a meaning in and of itself. Of our ordinary experiences, we declare that one of them is over when, or because, another starts; they reciprocally determine each other's limits, and so become a means whereby the contextual unity of life is structured or expressed. The adventure, however, according to its intrinsic meaning, is independent of the "before" and "after"; its boundaries are defined regardless of them. We speak of adventure precisely when continuity with life is thus disregarded on principle - or rather when there is not even any need to disregard it, because we know from the beginning that we have to do with something alien, untouchable, out of the ordinary. The adventure lacks that reciprocal interpenetration with adjacent parts of life which constitutes life-as-a-whole. It is like an island in life which determines its beginning and end according to its own formative powers and not - like the part of a continent - also according to those of adjacent territories. This factor of decisive boundedness which lifts an adventure out of the regular course of a human destiny, is not mechanical but organic: just as the organism determines its spatial shape not simply by adjusting to obstacles confining it from inside out, so does an adventure not end because something else begins; instead, its temporal form, its radical being-ended, is the precise expression of its inner sense.

5. Here, above all, is the basis of the profound affinity between the adventurer and the artist, and also, perhaps, of the artist's attraction by adventure. For the essence of a work of art is, after all, that it cuts out a piece of the endlessly continuous sequences of perceived experience, detaching it from all connections with one side or the other, giving it a self-sufficient form as though defined and held together by an inner core. A part of existence, interwoven with uninterruptedness of that existence, yet nevertheless felt as a whole, as an integrated unit - this is the form common to both the work of art and the adventure. Indeed, it is an attribute of this form to make us feel that in both the work of art and the adventure the whole of life is somehow comprehended and consummated -

and this irrespective of the particular theme either of them may have. Moreover we fell this, not although, but because, the work of art exists entirely beyond life as a reality; the adventure, entirely beyond life as an uninterrupted course which intelligibly connects every element with its neighbors. It is because the work of art and the adventure stand over against life (even though in very different senses of the phrase) that both are analogous to the totality of life itself, even as this totality presents itself in the brief summary and crowdedness of a dream experience.

6. For this reason, the adventurer is also the extreme example of the ahistorical individual, of the man who lives in the present. On the one hand, he is not determined by any past (and this marks the contrast between him and the aged, of which more later); nor, on the other hand, does the future exist for him. An extraordinary characteristic proof of this is that Casanova (as may be seen from his memoirs), in the course of his erotic-adventurous life, every so often seriously intended to marry a woman with whom he was in love at the time. In the light of his temperament and conduct of life, we can imagine nothing more obviously impossible, internally and externally. Casanova not only had excellent knowledge of men but also rare knowledge of himself. Although he must have said to himself that he could not stand marriage even two weeks and that the most miserable consequences of such a step would be quite unavoidable, his perspective on the future was wholly obliterated in the rapture of the moment. (Saying this, I mean to put the emphasis on the moment rather than on the rapture.) Because he was entirely dominated by the feeling of the present, he wanted to enter into a future relationship which was impossible precisely because his temperament was oriented to the present.

7. In contrast to those aspects of life which are related only peripherally - by mere fate - the adventure is defined by its capacity, in spite of its being isolated and accidental, to have necessity and meaning. Something becomes an adventure only by virtue of two conditions: that it itself is a specific organization of some significant meaning with a beginning and an end; and that, despite its accidental nature, its extraterritoriality with respect to the continuity of life, it nevertheless connects with the character and identity of the bearer of that life - that it does so in the widest sense, transcending, by a mysterious necessity, life's more narrowly aspects.

8. At this point there emerges the relation between the adventurer and the gambler. The gambler, clearly, has abandoned himself to the meaninglessness of chance. In so far, however, as he counts on its favor and believes possible and realizes a life dependent on it, chance for him has become part of a context of meaning. The typical superstition of the gambler is nothing other than the tangible and isolated, and thus, of course, childish form of this profound and all-encompassing scheme of his life, according to which chance makes sense and

contains some necessary meaning (even though not by the criterion of rational logic). In his superstition, he wants to draw chance into his teleological system by omens and magical aids, thus removing it from its inaccessible isolation and searching in it for a lawful order, no matter how fantastic the laws of such an order may be.

9. The adventurer similarly lets the accident somehow be encompassed by the meaning which controls the consistent continuity of life, even though the accident lies outside that continuity. He achieves a central feeling of life which runs through the eccentricity of the adventure and produces a new, significant necessity of his life in the very width of the distance between its accidental, externally given content and the unifying core of existence from which meaning flows. There is in us an eternal process playing back and forth between chance and necessity, between the fragmentary materials given us from the outside and the consistent meaning of the life developed from within.

10. The great forms in which we shape the substance of life are the syntheses, antagonisms, or compromises between chance and necessity. Adventure is such a form. When the professional adventurer makes a system of life out of his life's lack of system, when out of his inner necessity, he only, so to speak, makes macroscopically visible that which is the essential form of every "adventure," even that of the non-adventurous person. For by adventure we always mean a third something, neither the sheer, abrupt event whose meaning - a mere given - simply remains outside us nor the consistent sequence of life in which every element supplements every other toward an inclusively integrated meaning. The adventure is no mere hodgepodge of these two, but rather that incomparable experience which can be interpreted only as a particular encompassing of the accidentally external by the internally necessary.

11. Occasionally, however, this whole relationship is comprehended in a still more profound inner configuration. No matter how much the adventure seems to rest on a differentiation within life, life as a whole may be perceived as an adventure. For this, one need neither be an adventurer nor undergo many adventures. To have such a remarkable attitude toward life, one must sense above its totality a higher unity, a super-life, as it were, whose relation to life parallels the relation of the immediate life totality itself to those particular experiences which we call adventures.

12. Perhaps we belong to a metaphysical order, perhaps our soul lives a transcendent existence, such that our earthly, conscious life is only an isolated fragment as compared to the unnamable context of an existence running its course in it. The myth of the transmigration of souls may be a halting attempt to express such a segmental character of every individual life. Whoever senses through all actual life a secret, timeless existence of the soul, which is connected with the

realities of life only as from a distance, will perceive life in its given and limited wholeness as an adventure when compared to that transcendent and self-consistent fate. Certain religious moods seem to bring about such a perception. When our earthly career strikes us as a mere preliminary phase in the fulfillment of eternal destinies, when we have no home but merely a temporary asylum on earth, this obviously is only a particular variant of the general feeling that life as a whole is an adventure. It merely expresses the running together, in life, of the symptoms of adventure. It stands outside that proper meaning and steady course of existence to which it is yet tied by a fate and a secret symbolism. A fragmentary incident, it is yet like a work of art, enclosed by a beginning and an end. Like a dream, it gathers all passions into itself and yet, like a dream, is destined to be forgotten; like gaming, it contrasts with seriousness, yet, like the *va banque* the gambler, it involves the alternative between the highest gain and destruction.

13. Thus the adventure is a particular form in which fundamental categories of life are synthesized. Another such synthesis it achieves is that between the categories of activity and passivity, between what we conquer and what is given to us. To be sure, their synthesis in the form of adventure makes their contrast perceptible to an extreme degree. In the adventure, on the one hand, we forcibly pull the world into ourselves. This becomes clear when we compare the adventure with the manner in which we wrest the gifts of the world through work. Work, so to speak, has an organic relation to the world. In a conscious fashion, it develops the world's forces and materials toward their culmination in the human purpose, whereas in adventure we have a non-organic relation to the world. Adventure has the gesture of the conqueror, the quick seizure of opportunity, regardless of whether the portion we carve out is harmonious or disharmonious with us, with the world, or with the relation between us and the world. On the other hand, however, in the adventure we abandon ourselves to the world with fewer defenses and reserves than in any other relation, for other relations are connected with the general run of our worldly life by more bridges, and thus defend us better against shocks and dangers through previously prepared avoidances and adjustments. In the adventure, the interweaving of activity and passivity which characterizes our life tightens these elements into a coexistence of conquest, which owes everything only to its own strength and presence of mind, and complete self-abandonment to the powers and accidents of the world, which can delight us, but in the same breath can also destroy us. Surely, it is among adventure's most wonderful and enticing charms that the unity toward which at every moment, by the very process of living, we bring together our activity and our passivity - the unity which even in a certain sense *is* life itself - accentuates its disparate elements most sharply, and precisely in *this* way makes itself the more deeply felt, as if they were only the two aspects of one and the same, mysteriously seamless life.

14. If the adventure, furthermore, strikes us as combining the elements of certainty and uncertainty in life, this is more than the view of the same fundamental relationship from a different angle. The certainty with which - justifiably or in error - we know the outcome, gives our activity one of its distinct qualities. If, on the contrary, we are uncertain whether we shall arrive at the point for which we have set out, if we know our ignorance of the outcome, then this means not only a quantitatively reduced certainty but an inwardly and outwardly unique practical conduct. The adventurer, in a word, treats the incalculable element in life in the way we ordinarily treat only what we think is by definition calculable. (For this reason, the philosopher is the adventurer of the spirit. He makes the hopeless, but not therefore meaningless, attempt to form into conceptual knowledge an attitude of the soul, its mood toward itself, the world, God. He treats this insoluble problem as if it were soluble.) When the outcome of our activity is made doubtful by the intermingling of unrecognizable elements of fate, we usually, limit our commitment of force, hold open lines of retreat, and take each step only as if testing the ground.

15. In the adventure, we proceed in the directly opposite fashion: it is just on the hovering chance, on fate, on the more-or-less that we risk all, burn our bridges, and step into the mist, as if the road will lead us on, no matter what. This is the typical fatalism of the adventurer. The obscurities of fate are certainly no more transparent to him than to others; but he proceeds as if they were. The characteristic daring with which he continually leaves the solidities of life underpins itself, as it were, for its own justification with a feeling of security and "it-must-succeed," which normally only belongs to the transparency of calculable events. This is only a subjective aspect of the fatalistic conviction that we certainly cannot escape a fate which we do not know: the adventurer nevertheless believes that, as far as he himself is concerned, he is certain of this unknown and unknowable element in his life. For this reason, to the sober person adventurous conduct often seems insanity; for, in order to make sense, it appears to presuppose that the unknowable is known. The prince of Ligne said of Casanova, "He believes in nothing, except in what is least believable." Evidently, such belief is based on that perverse or at least "adventurous" relation between the certain and the uncertain, whose correlate, obviously, is the skepticism of the adventurer - that he "believes in nothing": for him to whom the unlikely is likely, the likely easily becomes unlikely. The adventurer relies to some extent on his own strength, but above all on his own luck; more properly, on a peculiarly undifferentiated unity of the two. Strength, of which he is certain, and luck, of which he is uncertain, subjectively combine into a sense of certainty.

16. If it is the nature of genius to possess an immediate relation to these secret unities which in experience and rational analysis fall apart into completely

separate phenomena, the adventurer of genius lives, as if by mystic instinct, at the point where the course of the world and the individual fate have, so to speak, not yet been differentiated from one another. For this reason, he is said to have a "touch of genius." The "sleepwalking certainty" with which the adventurer leads his life becomes comprehensible in terms of that peculiar constellation whereby he considers that which is uncertain and incalculable to be the premises of his conduct, while others consider only the calculable. Unshakable even when it is shown to be denied by the facts of the case, this certainty proves how deeply that constellation is rooted in the life conditions of adventurous natures.

17. The adventure is a form of life which can be taken on by an undetermined number of experiences. Nevertheless, our definitions make it understandable that one of them, more than all others, tends to appear in this form: the erotic - so that our linguistic custom hardly lets us understand by "adventure" anything but an erotic one. The love affair, even if short-lived, is by no means always an adventure. The peculiar psychic qualities at whose meeting point the adventure is found must be added to this quantitative matter. The tendency of these qualities to enter such a conjuncture will become apparent step by step.

18. A love affair contains in clear association the two elements which the form of the adventure characteristically conjoins: conquering force and unextortable concession, winning by one's own abilities and dependence on the luck which something incalculable outside of ourselves bestows on us. A degree of balance between these forces, gained by virtue of his sense of their sharp differentiation, can, perhaps, be found only in the man. Perhaps for this reason, it is of compelling significance that, as a rule, a love affair is an "adventure" only for men; for women it usually falls into other categories. In novels of love, the activity of woman is typically permeated by the passivity which either nature or history has imparted to her character; on the other hand, her acceptance of happiness is at the same time a concession and a gift.

19. The two poles of conquest and grace (which manifest themselves in many variations) stand closer together in woman than in man. In man, they are, as a matter of fact, much more decisively separated. For this reason, in man their coincidence in the erotic experience stamps this experience quite ambiguously as an adventure. Man plays the courting, attacking, often violently grasping role: this fact makes one easily overlook the element of fate, the dependence on something which cannot be predetermined or compelled, that is contained in every erotic experience. This refers not only to dependence on the concession on the part of the other, but to something deeper. To be sure, every "love returned," too, is a gift which cannot be "earned," not even by any measure of love - because to love, demand and compensation are irrelevant; it belongs, in principle, in a category altogether different from a squaring of accounts - a point which suggests one of its

analogies to the more profound religious relation. But over and above that which we receive from another as a free gift, there still lies in every happiness of love - like a profound, impersonal bearer of those personal elements - a favor of fate. We receive happiness not only from the other: the fact that we do receive it from him is a blessing of destiny, which is incalculable. In the proudest, most self-assured event in this sphere lies something which we must accept with humility. When the force which owes its success to itself and gives all conquest of love some note of victory and triumph is then combined with the other note of favor by fate, the constellation of the adventure is, as it were, preformed.

20. The relation which connects the erotic content with the more general from of life as adventure is rooted in deeper ground. The adventure is the exclave of life, the "torn-off" whose beginning and end have no connection with the somehow unified stream of existence. And yet, as if hurdling this stream, it connects with the most recondite instincts and some ultimate intention of life as a whole - and this distinguishes it from the merely accidental episode, from that which only externally "happens" to us. Now, when a love affair is of short duration, it lives in precisely such a mixture of a merely tangential and yet central character. It may give our life only a momentary splendor, like the ray shed in an inside room by a light flitting by outside. Still, it satisfies a need, or is, in fact, only possible by virtue of a need which - whether it be considered as physical, psychic, or metaphysical - exists, as it were, timelessly in the foundation or center of our being. This need is related to the fleeting experience as our general longing for light is to that accidental and immediately disappearing brightness.

21. The fact that love harbors the possibility of this double relation is reflected by the twofold temporal aspect of the erotic. It displays two standards of time: the momentarily climatic, abruptly subsiding passion; and the idea of something which cannot pass, an idea in which the mystical destination of two souls for one another and for a higher unity finds a temporal expression. This duality might be compared with the double existence of intellectual contents: while they emerge only in the fleetingness of the psychic process, in the forever moving focus of consciousness, their logical meaning possesses timeless validity, an ideal significance which is completely independent of the instant of consciousness in which it becomes real for us. The phenomenon of adventure is such that its abrupt climax places its end into the perspective of its beginning. However, its connection with the center of life is such that it is to be distinguished from all merely accidental happenings. Thus "mortal danger," so to speak, lies in its very style. This phenomenon, therefore, is a form which by its time symbolism seems to be predetermined to receive the erotic content.

22. These analogies between love and adventure alone suggest that the adventure does not belong to the life-style of old age. The decisive point about this

fact is that the adventure, in its specific nature and charm, is a *form of experiencing*. The *content* of the experience does not make an adventure. That one faced mortal danger or conquered a woman for a short span of happiness; that unknown factors with which one has waged a gamble have brought surprising gain or loss; that physically or psychologically disguised, one has ventured into spheres of life from which one returns home as if from a strange world - none of these are necessarily adventure. They become adventure only by virtue of a certain experiential tension whereby their substance is realized. Only when a stream flowing between the minutest externalities of life and the central source of strength drags them into itself; when the peculiar color, ardor, and rhythm of the life-process become decisive and, as it were, transform its substance - only then does an event change from mere experience to adventure. Such a principle of accentuation, however, is alien to old age. In general, only youth knows this predominance of the process of life over its substance; whereas in old age, when the process begins to slow up and coagulate, substance becomes crucial; it then proceeds or perseveres in a certain timeless manner, indifferent to the tempo and passion of its being experienced. The old person, usually lives either in a wholly *centralized* fashion, peripheral interests having fallen off and being unconnected with his essential life and its inner necessity; of his center atrophies, and existence runs its course only in isolated petty details, accenting mere externals and accidentals. Neither case makes possible the relation between the outer fate and the inner springs of life in which the adventure consists; clearly, neither permits the perception of contrast characteristic of adventure, viz., that an action is completely torn out of the inclusive context of life and that simultaneously the whole strength and intensity of life stream into it.

23. In youth, the accent falls on the process of life, on its rhythm and its antinomies; in old age, it falls on life's substance, compared to which experience more and more appears relatively incidental. This contrast between youth and age, which makes adventure the prerogative of youth, may be expressed as the contrast between the romantic and the historical spirit of life. Life in its immediacy - hence also in the individuality of its form at any moment, here and now - counts for the romantic attitude. Life in its immediacy feels the full strength of the current of life most of all in the pointedness of an experience that is torn out of the normal run of things but which is yet connected with the heart of life. All such life which thrusts itself out of life, such breadth of contrast among elements which are penetrated by life, can feed only on that overflow and exuberance of life which exists in adventure, in romanticism, and in youth. Age, on the other hand - if, as such, it has a characteristic, valuable, and coherent attitude - carries with it a historical mood. This mood may be broadened into a world view or limited to the immediately personal past; at any rate, in its objectivity and retrospective reflectiveness, it is

devoted to contemplating a substance of life out of which immediacy has disappeared. All history as depiction in the narrower, scientific sense originates in such a survival of substance beyond the inexpressible process of its presence that can only be experienced. The connection this process has established among them is gone, and must now, in retrospect, and with a view to constructing an ideal image, be re-established by completely different ties.

24. With this shift of accent, all the dynamic premise of the adventure disappears. Its atmosphere, as suggested before, is absolute presentness - the sudden rearing of the life-process to a point where both past and future are irrelevant; it therefore gathers life within itself with an intensity compared with which the factuality of the event often becomes of relatively indifferent import. Just as the game itself - not the winning of money - is the decisive motive for the true gambler; just as for him, what is important is the violence of feeling as it alternates between joy and despair, the almost touchable nearness of the daemonic powers which decide between both - so, the fascination of the adventure is again and again not the substance which it offers us and which, if it were offered in another form of experiencing it, the intensity and excitement with which it lets us feel life in just this instance. This is what connects youth and adventure. What is called the subjectivity of youth is just this: The material of life in its substantive significance is not as important to youth as is the process which carries it, life itself. Old age is "objective"; it shapes a new structure out of the substance left behind in a peculiar sort of timelessness by the life which has slipped by. The new structure is that of contemplativeness, impartial judgment, freedom from that unrest which marks life as being present. It is all this that makes adventure alien to old age and an old adventurer an obnoxious or tasteless phenomenon. It would not be difficult to develop the whole essence of adventure from the fact that it is the form of life which in principle is inappropriate to old age.

25. Notwithstanding the fact that so much of life is hostile to adventure, from the most general point of view adventure appears admixed with all practical human existence. It seems to be an ubiquitous element, but it frequently occurs in the finest distribution, invisible to the naked eye, as it were, and concealed by other elements. This is true quite aside from that notion which, reaching down into the metaphysics of life, considers our existence on earth as a whole, unified adventure. Viewed purely from a concrete and psychological standpoint, every single experience contains a modicum of the characteristics which, if they grow beyond a certain point, bring it to the "threshold" of adventure. Here the most essential and profound of these characteristics is the singling out of the experience from the total context of life. In point of fact, the meaning of no single part of life is exhausted by its belonging in that context. On the contrary, even when a part is most closely interwoven with the whole, when it really appears to be completely absorbed by

onflowing life, like an unaccented word in the course of a sentence - even then, when we listen more closely, we can recognize the intrinsic value of that segment of existence. With a significance which is centered in itself, it sets itself *over against* that total development to which, nevertheless, if looked at from another angle, it inextricably belongs.

26. Both the wealth and the perplexity of life flow countless times from this value-dichotomy of its contents. Seen from the center of the personality, every single experience is at once something necessary which comes from the unity of the history of the ego, and something accidental, foreign to that unity, insurmountably walled off, and colored by a very deep-lying incomprehensibility, as if it stood somewhere in the void and gravitated toward nothing. Thus a shadow of what in its intensification and distinctness constitutes the adventure really hovers over every experience. Every experience, even as it is incorporated into the chain of life, is accompanied by a certain feeling of being enclosed between a beginning and an end - by a feeling of an almost unbearable pointedness of the single experience as such. This feeling may sink to imperceptibility, but it lies latent in every experience and rises from it - often to our own astonishment. It is impossible to identify any minimal distance from the continuity of life short of which the feeling of adventurousness could not emerge - as impossible, to be sure, as to identify the maximal distance where it must emerge for everyone. But everything could not become an adventure if the elements of adventure did not in some measure reside in everything, if they did not belong among the vital factors by virtue of which a happening is designated a human experience.

27. Similar observations apply to the relation between the accidental and the meaningful. In our every encounter this so much of the merely given, external, and occasional that we can, so to speak, decide only on a quantitative basis whether the whole may be considered as something rational and in some sense understandable, or whether its insolubility as regards its reference to the past, or its incalculability as regards its reference to the future, is to stamp its whole complexion. From the most secure civic undertaking to the most irrational adventure there runs a continuous line of vital phenomena in which the comprehensible and the incomprehensible, that which can be coerced and that which is given by grace, the calculable and the accidental, mix in infinitely varied degrees. Since the adventure marks one extreme of this continuum, the other extreme must also partake of its character. The sliding of our existence over a scale on which every point is simultaneously determined by the effect of our strength and our abandonment to impenetrable things and powers - this problematic nature of our position in the world, which in its religious version results in the insoluble question of human freedom and divine predetermination, lets all of us become adventurers. Within the dimensions into which our station in life with its tasks, our

aims, and our means place us, none of us could live one day if we did not treat that which is really incalculable as if it were calculable, if we did not entrust our own strength with what it still cannot achieve by itself but only by its enigmatic co-operation with the powers of fate.

28. The substance of our life is constantly seized by interweaving forms which thus bring about its unified whole. Everywhere there is artistic forming, religious comprehending, the shade of moral valuing, the interplay of subject and object. There is, perhaps, no point in this whole stream where every one of these and of many other modes of organization does not contribute at least a drop to its waves. But they become the pure structures which language names only when they rise out of that fragmentary and confused condition where the average life lets them emerge and submerge and so attain mastery over life's substance. Once the religious mood has created its structure, the god, wholly out of itself, it is "religion"; once the aesthetic form has made its content something secondary, by which it lives a life of its own that listens only to itself, it becomes "art"; once moral duty is fulfilled simply because it is duty, no matter how changing the contents by means of which it is fulfilled and which previously in turn determined the will, it becomes "morality."

29. It is no different with adventure. We are the adventurers of the earth; our life is crossed everywhere by the tensions which mark adventure. But only when these tensions have become so violent that they gain mastery over the material through which they realize themselves - only then does the "adventure" arise. For the adventure does not consist in a substance which is won or lost, enjoyed or endured: to all this we have access in other forms of life as well. Rather, it is the radicalness through which it becomes perceptible as a life tension, as the rubato of the life process, independent of its materials and their differences - the quantity of these tensions becoming great enough to tear life, beyond those materials, completely out of itself: this is what transforms mere experience into adventure. Certainly, it is only one segment of existence among others, but it belongs to those forms which, beyond the mere share they have in life and beyond all the accidental nature of their individual contents, have the mysterious power to make us feel for a moment the whole sum of life as their fulfillment and their vehicle, existing only for their realization.
