

HOMO LUDENS

A STUDY OF THE PLAY-ELEMENT
IN CULTURE

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE	vii
FOREWORD	ix
I NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PLAY AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON	1
II THE PLAY-CONCEPT AS EXPRESSED IN LANGUAGE	28
III PLAY AND CONTEST AS CIVILIZING FUNCTIONS	46
IV PLAY AND LAW	76
V PLAY AND WAR	89
VI PLAYING AND KNOWING	105
VII PLAY AND POETRY	119
VIII THE ELEMENTS OF MYTHOPOIESIS	136
IX PLAY-FORMS IN PHILOSOPHY	146
X PLAY-FORMS IN ART	158
XI WESTERN CIVILIZATION <i>Sub Specie Ludi</i>	173
XII THE PLAY-ELEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZA- TION	195
INDEX	214

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THIS edition is prepared from the German edition published in Switzerland, 1944, and also from the author's own English translation of the text, which he made shortly before his death. Comparison of the two texts shows a number of discrepancies and a marked difference in style; the translator hopes that the following version has achieved a reasonable synthesis.

FOREWORD

A HAPPIER age than ours once made bold to call our species by the name of *Homo Sapiens*. In the course of time we have come to realize that we are not so reasonable after all as the Eighteenth Century, with its worship of reason and its naive optimism, thought us; hence modern fashion inclines to designate our species as *Homo Faber*: Man the Maker. But though *faber* may not be quite so dubious as *sapiens* it is, as a name specific of the human being, even less appropriate, seeing that many animals too are makers. There is a third function, however, applicable to both human and animal life, and just as important as reasoning and making—namely, playing. It seems to me that next to *Homo Faber*, and perhaps on the same level as *Homo Sapiens*, *Homo Ludens*, Man the Player, deserves a place in our nomenclature.

It is ancient wisdom, but it is also a little cheap, to call all human activity “play”. Those who are willing to content themselves with a metaphysical conclusion of this kind should not read this book. Nevertheless, we find no reason to abandon the notion of play as a distinct and highly important factor in the world’s life and doings. For many years the conviction has grown upon me that civilization arises and unfolds in and as play. Traces of such an opinion are to be found in my writings ever since 1903. I took it as the theme for my annual address as Rector of Leyden University in 1933, and afterwards for lectures in Zürich, Vienna and London, in the last instance under the title: “The Play Element of Culture”. Each time my hosts wanted to correct it to “in” Culture, and each time I protested and clung to the genitive,* because it was not my object to define the place of play among all the other manifestations of culture, but rather to ascertain how far culture itself bears the character of play. The aim of the present full-length study is to try to integrate the concept of play into that of culture. Consequently, play is to be understood here not as a biological phenomenon but as a cultural phenomenon. It is approached historically, not scientifically. The reader will find that I have made next to no use of any psycho-

* Logically, of course, Huizinga is correct; but as English prepositions are not governed by logic I have retained the more euphonious ablative in this sub-title.—Trans.

FOREWORD

logical interpretations of play however important these may be, and that I have employed anthropological terms and explanations but sparingly, even where I have had to quote ethnological facts. He will find no mention of *mana* and the like, and hardly any of magic. Were I compelled to put my argument tersely in the form of theses, one of them would be that anthropology and its sister sciences have so far laid too little stress on the concept of play and on the supreme importance to civilization of the play-factor.

The reader of these pages should not look for detailed documentation of every word. In treating of the general problems of culture one is constantly obliged to undertake predatory incursions into provinces not sufficiently explored by the raider himself. To fill in all the gaps in my knowledge beforehand was out of the question for me. I had to write now, or not at all. And I wanted to write.

Leyden,

June 1938.

I

NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PLAY AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

PLAY is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing. We can safely assert, even, that human civilization has added no essential feature to the general idea of play. Animals play just like men. We have only to watch young dogs to see that all the essentials of human play are present in their merry gambols. They invite one another to play by a certain ceremoniousness of attitude and gesture. They keep to the rule that you shall not bite, or not bite hard, your brother's ear. They pretend to get terribly angry. And—what is most important—in all these doings they plainly experience tremendous fun and enjoyment. Such rompings of young dogs are only one of the simpler forms of animal play. There are other, much more highly developed forms: regular contests and beautiful performances before an admiring public.

Here we have at once a very important point: even in its simplest forms on the animal level, play is more than a mere physiological phenomenon or a psychological reflex. It goes beyond the confines of purely physical or purely biological activity. It is a *significant* function—that is to say, there is some sense to it. In play there is something “at play” which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action. All play means something. If we call the active principle that makes up the essence of play, “instinct”, we explain nothing; if we call it “mind” or “will” we say too much. However we may regard it, the very fact that play has a meaning implies a non-materialistic quality in the nature of the thing itself.

Psychology and physiology deal with the observation, description and explanation of the play of animals, children, and grown-ups. They try to determine the nature and significance of play and to assign it its place in the scheme of life. The high importance of this place and the necessity, or at least the utility,

of play as a function are generally taken for granted and form the starting-point of all such scientific researches. The numerous attempts to define the biological function of play show a striking variation. By some the origin and fundamentals of play have been described as a discharge of superabundant vital energy, by others as the satisfaction of some "imitative instinct", or again as simply a "need" for relaxation. According to one theory play constitutes a training of the young creature for the serious work that life will demand later on. According to another it serves as an exercise in restraint needful to the individual. Some find the principle of play in an innate urge to exercise a certain faculty, or in the desire to dominate or compete. Yet others regard it as an "abreaction"—an outlet for harmful impulses, as the necessary restorer of energy wasted by one-sided activity, as "wish-fulfilment", as a fiction designed to keep up the feeling of personal value, etc.¹

All these hypotheses have one thing in common: they all start from the assumption that play must serve something which is *not* play, that it must have some kind of biological purpose. They all enquire into the why and the wherefore of play. The various answers they give tend rather to overlap than to exclude one another. It would be perfectly possible to accept nearly all the explanations without getting into any real confusion of thought—and without coming much nearer to a real understanding of the play-concept. They are all only partial solutions of the problem. If any of them were really decisive it ought either to exclude all the others or comprehend them in a higher unity. Most of them only deal incidentally with the question of what play is *in itself* and what it means for the player. They attack play direct with the quantitative methods of experimental science without first paying attention to its profoundly aesthetic quality. As a rule they leave the primary quality of play as such, virtually untouched. To each and every one of the above "explanations" it might well be objected: "So far so good, but what actually is the *fun* of playing? Why does the baby crow with pleasure? Why does the gambler lose himself in his passion? Why is a huge crowd roused to frenzy by a football match?" This intensity of, and absorption in, play finds no explanation in biological analysis. Yet in this intensity, this absorption, this power of maddening, lies the very

¹For these theories see H. Zondervan, *Het Spel bij Dieren, Kinderen en Volwassen Menschen* (Amsterdam, 1928), and F. J. J. Buytendijk, *Het Spel van Mensch en Dier als openbaring van levensdriften* (Amsterdam, 1932).

essence, the primordial quality of play. Nature, so our reasoning mind tells us, could just as easily have given her children all those useful functions of discharging superabundant energy, of relaxing after exertion, of training for the demands of life, of compensating for unfulfilled longings, etc., in the form of purely mechanical exercises and reactions. But no, she gave us play, with its tension, its mirth, and its fun.

Now this last-named element, the *fun* of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation. As a concept, it cannot be reduced to any other mental category. No other modern language known to me has the exact equivalent of the English "fun". The Dutch "aardigheid" perhaps comes nearest to it (derived from "aard" which means the same as "Art" and "Wesen"¹ in German, and thus evidence, perhaps, that the matter cannot be reduced further). We may note in passing that "fun" in its current usage is of rather recent origin. French, oddly enough, has no corresponding term at all; German half makes up for it by "Spas" and "Witz" together. Nevertheless it is precisely this fun-element that characterizes the essence of play. Here we have to do with an absolutely primary category of life, familiar to everybody at a glance right down to the animal level. We may well call play a "totality" in the modern sense of the word, and it is as a totality that we must try to understand and evaluate it.

Since the reality of play extends beyond the sphere of human life it cannot have its foundations in any rational nexus, because this would limit it to mankind. The incidence of play is not associated with any particular stage of civilization or view of the universe. Any thinking person can see at a glance that play is a thing on its own, even if his language possesses no general concept to express it. Play cannot be denied. You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play.

But in acknowledging play you acknowledge mind, for whatever else play is, it is not matter. Even in the animal world it bursts the bounds of the physically existent. From the point of view of a world wholly determined by the operation of blind forces, play would be altogether superfluous. Play only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an influx of *mind* breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos. The very existence of play continually confirms the supra-logical nature of the human

¹Nature, kind, being, essence, etc. Trans.

situation. Animals play, so they must be more than merely mechanical things. We play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational.

In tackling the problem of play as a function of culture proper and not as it appears in the life of the animal or the child, we begin where biology and psychology leave off. In culture we find play as a given magnitude existing before culture itself existed, accompanying it and pervading it from the earliest beginnings right up to the phase of civilization we are now living in. We find play present everywhere as a well-defined quality of action which is different from "ordinary" life. We can disregard the question of how far science has succeeded in reducing this quality to quantitative factors. In our opinion it has not. At all events it is precisely this quality, itself so characteristic of the form of life we call "play", which matters. Play as a special form of activity, as a "significant form", as a social function—that is our subject. We shall not look for the natural impulses and habits conditioning play in general, but shall consider play in its manifold concrete forms as itself a social construction. We shall try to take play as the player himself takes it: in its primary significance. If we find that play is based on the manipulation of certain images, on a certain "imagination" of reality (i.e. its conversion into images), then our main concern will be to grasp the value and significance of these images and their "imagination". We shall observe their action in play itself and thus try to understand play as a cultural factor in life.

The great archetypal activities of human society are all permeated with play from the start. Take language, for instance—that first and supreme instrument which man shapes in order to communicate, to teach, to command. Language allows him to distinguish, to establish, to state things; in short, to name them and by naming them to raise them into the domain of the spirit. In the making of speech and language the spirit is continually "sparking" between matter and mind, as it were, playing with this wondrous nominative faculty. Behind every abstract expression there lie the boldest of metaphors, and every metaphor is a play upon words. Thus in giving expression to life man creates a second, poetic world alongside the world of nature.

Or take myth. This, too, is a transformation or an "imagination" of the outer world, only here the process is more elaborate and ornate than is the case with individual words. In myth,

primitive man seeks to account for the world of phenomena by grounding it in the Divine. In all the wild imaginings of mythology a fanciful spirit is playing on the border-line between jest and earnest. Or finally, let us take ritual. Primitive society performs its sacred rites, its sacrifices, consecrations and mysteries, all of which serve to guarantee the well-being of the world, in a spirit of pure play truly understood.

Now in myth and ritual the great instinctive forces of civilized life have their origin: law and order, commerce and profit, craft and art, poetry, wisdom and science. All are rooted in the primæval soil of play.

The object of the present essay is to demonstrate that it is more than a rhetorical comparison to view culture *sub specie ludi*. The thought is not at all new. There was a time when it was generally accepted, though in a limited sense quite different from the one intended here: in the 17th century, the age of world theatre. Drama, in a glittering succession of figures ranging from Shakespeare and Calderon to Racine, then dominated the literature of the West. It was the fashion to liken the world to a stage on which every man plays his part. Does this mean that the play-element in civilization was openly acknowledged? Not at all. On closer examination this fashionable comparison of life to a stage proves to be little more than an echo of the Neo-platonism that was then in vogue, with a markedly moralistic accent. It was a variation on the ancient theme of the vanity of all things. The fact that play and culture are actually interwoven with one another was neither observed nor expressed, whereas for us the whole point is to show that genuine, pure play is one of the main bases of civilisation.

To our way of thinking, play is the direct opposite of seriousness. At first sight this opposition seems as irreducible to other categories as the play-concept itself. Examined more closely, however, the contrast between play and seriousness proves to be neither conclusive nor fixed. We can say: play is non-seriousness. But apart from the fact that this proposition tells us nothing about the positive qualities of play, it is extraordinarily easy to refute. As soon as we proceed from "play is non-seriousness" to "play is not serious", the contrast leaves us in the lurch—for some play ~~can be~~ very serious indeed. Moreover we can immediately name several other fundamental categories that likewise come under the heading "non-seriousness" yet have no correspondence whatever

with "play". Laughter, for instance, is in a sense the opposite of seriousness without being absolutely bound up with play. Children's games, football, and chess are played in profound seriousness; the players have not the slightest inclination to laugh. It is worth noting that the purely physiological act of laughing is exclusive to man, whilst the significant function of play is common to both men and animals. The Aristotelian *animal ridens* characterizes man as distinct from the animal almost more absolutely than *homo sapiens*.

What is true of laughter is true also of the comic. The comic comes under the category of non-seriousness and has certain affinities with laughter—it provokes to laughter. But its relation to play is subsidiary. In itself play is not comical either for player or public. The play of young animals or small children may sometimes be ludicrous, but the sight of grown dogs chasing one another hardly moves us to laughter. When we call a farce or a comedy "comic", it is not so much on account of the play-acting as such as on account of the situation or the thoughts expressed. The mimic and laughter-provoking art of the clown is comic as well as ludicrous, but it can scarcely be termed genuine play.

The category of the comic is closely connected with *folly* in the highest and lowest sense of that word. Play, however, is not foolish. It lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly. The later Middle Ages tended to express the two cardinal moods of life—play and seriousness—somewhat imperfectly by opposing *folie* to *sense*, until Erasmus in his *Laus Stultitiae* showed the inadequacy of the contrast.

All the terms in this loosely connected group of ideas—play, laughter, folly, wit, jest, joke, the comic, etc.—share the characteristic which we had to attribute to play, namely, that of resisting any attempt to reduce it to other terms. Their rationale and their mutual relationships must lie in a very deep layer of our mental being.

The more we try to mark off the form we call "play" from other forms apparently related to it, the more the absolute independence of the play-concept stands out. And the segregation of play from the domain of the great categorical antitheses does not stop there. Play lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil. Although it is a non-material activity it has no moral function. The valuations of vice and virtue do not apply here.

If, therefore, play cannot be directly referred to the categories of truth or goodness, can it be included perhaps in the realm of the aesthetic? Here our judgement wavers. For although the attribute of beauty does not attach to play as such, play nevertheless tends to assume marked elements of beauty. Mirth and grace adhere at the outset to the more primitive forms of play. In play the beauty of the human body in motion reaches its zenith. In its more developed forms it is saturated with rhythm and harmony, the noblest gifts of aesthetic perception known to man. Many and close are the links that connect play with beauty. All the same, we cannot say that beauty is inherent in play as such; so we must leave it at that: play is a function of the living, but is not susceptible of exact definition either logically, biologically, or æsthetically. The play-concept must always remain distinct from all the other forms of thought in which we express the structure of mental and social life. Hence we shall have to confine ourselves to describing the main characteristics of play.

Since our theme is the relation of play to culture we need not enter into all the possible forms of play but can restrict ourselves to its social manifestations. These we might call the higher forms of play. They are generally much easier to describe than the more primitive play of infants and young animals, because they are more distinct and articulate in form and their features more various and conspicuous, whereas in interpreting primitive play we immediately come up against that irreducible quality of pure playfulness which is not, in our opinion, amenable to further analysis. We shall have to speak of contests and races, of performances and exhibitions, of dancing and music, pageants, masquerades and tournaments. Some of the characteristics we shall enumerate are proper to play in general, others to social play in particular.

First and foremost, then, all play is a voluntary activity. Play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it. By this quality of freedom alone, play marks itself off from the course of the natural process. It is something added thereto and spread out over it like a flowering, an ornament, a garment. Obviously, freedom must be understood here in the wider sense that leaves untouched the philosophical problem of determinism. It may be objected that this freedom does not exist for the animal and the child; they *must* play because their instinct drives them to

it and because it serves to develop their bodily faculties and their powers of selection. The term "instinct", however, introduces an unknown quantity, and to presuppose the utility of play from the start is to be guilty of a *petitio principii*. Child and animal play because they enjoy playing, and therein precisely lies their freedom.

Be that as it may, for the adult and responsible human being play is a function which he could equally well leave alone. Play is superfluous. The need for it is only urgent to the extent that the enjoyment of it makes it a need. Play can be deferred or suspended at any time. It is never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty. It is never a task. It is done at leisure, during "free time". Only when play is a recognized cultural function—a rite, a ceremony—is it bound up with notions of obligation and duty.

Here, then, we have the first main characteristic of play: that it is free, is in fact freedom. A second characteristic is closely connected with this, namely, that play is not "ordinary" or "real" life. It is rather a stepping out of "real" life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own. Every child knows perfectly well that he is "only pretending", or that it was "only for fun". How deep-seated this awareness is in the child's soul is strikingly illustrated by the following story, told to me by the father of the boy in question. He found his four-year-old son sitting at the front of a row of chairs, playing "trains". As he hugged him the boy said: "Don't kiss the engine, Daddy, or the carriages won't think it's real". This "only pretending" quality of play betrays a consciousness of the inferiority of play compared with "seriousness", a feeling that seems to be something as primary as play itself. Nevertheless, as we have already pointed out, the consciousness of play being "only a pretend" does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture and, temporarily at least, completely abolishes that troublesome "only" feeling. Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play. Play may rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leave seriousness far beneath. Tricky questions such as these will come up for discussion when we start examining the relationship between play and ritual.

As regards its formal characteristics, all students lay stress on the *disinterestedness* of play. Not being "ordinary" life it stands outside the immediate satisfaction of wants and appetites, indeed it interrupts the appetitive process. It interpolates itself as a temporary activity satisfying in itself and ending there. Such at least is the way in which play presents itself to us in the first instance: as an intermezzo, an *interlude* in our daily lives. As a regularly recurring relaxation, however, it becomes the accompaniment, the complement, in fact an integral part of life in general. It adorns life, amplifies it and is to that extent a necessity both for the individual—as a life function—and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function. The expression of it satisfies all kinds of communal ideals. It thus has its place in a sphere superior to the strictly biological processes of nutrition, reproduction and self-preservation. This assertion is apparently contradicted by the fact that play, or rather sexual display, is predominant in animal life precisely at the mating-season. But would it be too absurd to assign a place *outside* the purely physiological, to the singing, cooing and strutting of birds just as we do to human play? In all its higher forms the latter at any rate always belongs to the sphere of festival and ritual—the sacred sphere.

Now, does the fact that play is a necessity, that it subserves culture, or indeed that it actually becomes culture, detract from its disinterested character? No, for the purposes it serves are external to immediate material interests or the individual satisfaction of biological needs. As a sacred activity play naturally contributes to the well-being of the group, but in quite another way and by other means than the acquisition of the necessities of life.

Play is distinct from "ordinary" life both as to locality and duration. This is the third main characteristic of play: its secludedness, its limitedness. It is "played out" within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning.

Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is "over". It plays itself to an end. While it is in progress all is movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation. But immediately connected with its limitation as to time there is a further curious feature of play: it at once assumes fixed form as a cultural phenomenon. Once played, it endures as a new-found creation of the

mind, a treasure to be retained by the memory. It is transmitted, it becomes tradition. It can be repeated at any time, whether it be "child's play" or a game of chess, or at fixed intervals like a mystery. In this faculty of repetition lies one of the most essential qualities of play. It holds good not only of play as a whole but also of its inner structure. In nearly all the higher forms of play the elements of repetition and alternation (as in the *refrain*), are like the warp and woof of a fabric.

More striking even than the limitation as to time is the limitation as to space. All play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course. Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the "consecrated spot" cannot be formally distinguished from the play-ground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart.

Inside the play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns. Here we come across another, very positive feature of play: it creates order, *is* order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection. Play demands order absolute and supreme. The least deviation from it "spoils the game", robs it of its character and makes it worthless. The profound affinity between play and order is perhaps the reason why play, as we noted in passing, seems to lie to such a large extent in the field of aesthetics. Play has a tendency to be beautiful. It may be that this aesthetic factor is identical with the impulse to create orderly form, which animates play in all its aspects. The words we use to denote the elements of play belong for the most part to aesthetics, terms with which we try to describe the effects of beauty: tension, poise, balance, contrast, variation, solution, resolution, etc. Play casts a spell over us; it is "enchanting", "captivating". It is invested with the noblest qualities we are capable of perceiving in things: rhythm and harmony.

The element of tension in play to which we have just referred plays a particularly important part. Tension means uncertainty, chanciness; a striving to decide the issue and so end it. The player wants something to "go", to "come off"; he wants to "succeed"

by his own exertions. Baby reaching for a toy, pussy patting a bobbin, a little girl playing ball—all want to achieve something difficult, to succeed, to end a tension. Play is “tense”, as we say. It is this element of tension and solution that governs all solitary games of skill and application such as puzzles, jig-saws, mosaic-making, patience, target-shooting, and the more play bears the character of competition the more fervent it will be. In gambling and athletics it is at its height. Though play as such is outside the range of good and bad, the element of tension imparts to it a certain ethical value in so far as it means a testing of the player’s prowess: his courage, tenacity, resources and, last but not least, his spiritual powers—his “fairness”; because, despite his ardent desire to win, he must still stick to the rules of the game.

These rules in their turn are a very important factor in the play-concept. All play has its rules. They determine what “holds” in the temporary world circumscribed by play. The rules of a game are absolutely binding and allow no doubt. Paul Valéry once in passing gave expression to a very cogent thought when he said: “No scepticism is possible where the rules of a game are concerned, for the principle underlying them is an unshakable truth. . . .” Indeed, as soon as the rules are transgressed the whole play-world collapses. The game is over. The umpire’s whistle breaks the spell and sets “real” life going again.

The player who trespasses against the rules or ignores them is a “spoil-sport”. The spoil-sport is not the same as the false player, the cheat; for the latter pretends to be playing the game and, on the face of it, still acknowledges the magic circle. It is curious to note how much more lenient society is to the cheat than to the spoil-sport. This is because the spoil-sport shatters the play-world itself. By withdrawing from the game he reveals the relativity and fragility of the play-world in which he had temporarily shut himself with others. He robs play of its *illusion*—a pregnant word which means literally “in-play” (from *inlusio*, *illudere* or *inludere*). Therefore he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community. The figure of the spoil-sport is most apparent in boys’ games. The little community does not enquire whether the spoil-sport is guilty of defection because he dares not enter into the game or because he is not allowed to. Rather, it does not recognize “not being allowed” and calls it “not daring”. For it, the problem of obedience and conscience is no more than fear of punishment. The spoil-sport breaks the magic world, therefore

he is a coward and must be ejected. In the world of high seriousness, too, the cheat and the hypocrite have always had an easier time of it than the spoil-sports, here called apostates, heretics, innovators, prophets, conscientious objectors, etc. It sometimes happens, however, that the spoil-sports in their turn make a new community with rules of its own. The outlaw, the revolutionary, the cabbalist or member of a secret society, indeed heretics of all kinds are of a highly associative if not sociable disposition, and a certain element of play is prominent in all their doings.

A play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over. Of course, not every game of marbles or every bridge-party leads to the founding of a club. But the feeling of being "apart together" in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game. The club pertains to play as the hat to the head. It would be rash to explain all the associations which the anthropologist calls "phratria"—e.g. clans, brotherhoods, etc.—simply as play-communities; nevertheless it has been shown again and again how difficult it is to draw the line between, on the one hand, permanent social groupings—particularly in archaic cultures with their extremely important, solemn, indeed sacred customs—and the sphere of play on the other.

The exceptional and special position of play is most tellingly illustrated by the fact that it loves to surround itself with an air of secrecy. Even in early childhood the charm of play is enhanced by making a "secret" out of it. This is for *us*, not for the "others". What the "others" do "outside" is no concern of ours at the moment. Inside the circle of the game the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count. We are different and do things differently. This temporary abolition of the ordinary world is fully acknowledged in child-life, but it is no less evident in the great ceremonial games of savage societies. During the great feast of initiation when the youths are accepted into the male community, it is not the neophytes only that are exempt from the ordinary laws and regulations: there is a truce to all feuds in the tribe. All retaliatory acts and vendettas are suspended. This temporary suspension of normal social life on account of the sacred play-season has numerous traces in the more advanced civilizations as well. Everything that pertains to saturnalia and carnival customs

belongs to it. Even with us a bygone age of robuster private habits than ours, more marked class-privileges and a more complaisant police recognized the orgies of young men of rank under the name of a "rag". The saturnalian licence of young men still survives, in fact, in the ragging at English universities, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "an extensive display of noisy and disorderly conduct carried out in defiance of authority and discipline".

The "differentness" and secrecy of play are most vividly expressed in "dressing up". Here the "extra-ordinary" nature of play reaches perfection. The disguised or masked individual "plays" another part, another being. He is another being. The terrors of childhood, open-hearted gaiety, mystic fantasy and sacred awe are all inextricably entangled in this strange business of masks and disguises.

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious", but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

The function of play in the higher forms which concern us here can largely be derived from the two basic aspects under which we meet it: as a contest *for* something or a representation *of* something. These two functions can unite in such a way that the game "represents" a contest, or else becomes a contest for the best representation of something.

Representation means display, and this may simply consist in the exhibition of something naturally given, before an audience. The peacock and the turkey merely display their gorgeous plumage to the females, but the essential feature of it lies in the parading of something out of the ordinary and calculated to arouse admiration. If the bird accompanies this exhibition with dance-steps we have a performance, a *stepping out of* common reality into a higher order. We are ignorant of the bird's sensations while so engaged. We know, however, that in child-life performances of this kind are full of imagination. The child is

making an image of something different, something more beautiful, or more sublime, or more dangerous than what he usually *is*. One is a Prince, or one is Daddy or a wicked witch or a tiger. The child is quite literally "beside himself" with delight, transported beyond himself to such an extent that he almost believes he actually is such and such a thing, without, however, wholly losing consciousness of "ordinary reality". His representation is not so much a sham-reality as a realization in appearance: "imagination" in the original sense of the word.

Passing now from children's games to the sacred performances in archaic culture we find that there is more of a mental element "at play" in the latter, though it is excessively difficult to define. The sacred performance is more than an actualization in appearance only, a sham reality; it is also more than a symbolical actualization—it is a mystical one. In it, something invisible and inactual takes beautiful, actual, holy form. The participants in the rite are convinced that the action actualizes and effects a definite beatification, brings about an order of things higher than that in which they customarily live. All the same this "actualization by representation" still retains the formal characteristics of play in every respect. It is played or performed within a play-ground that is literally "staked out", and played moreover as a feast, i.e. in mirth and freedom. A sacred space, a temporarily real world of its own, has been expressly hedged off for it. But with the end of the play its effect is not lost; rather it continues to shed its radiance on the ordinary world outside, a wholesome influence working security, order and prosperity for the whole community until the sacred play-season comes round again.

Examples can be taken from all over the world. According to ancient Chinese lore the purpose of music and the dance is to keep the world in its right course and to force Nature into benevolence towards man. The year's prosperity will depend on the right performance of sacred contests at the seasonal feasts. If these gatherings do not take place the crops will not ripen.¹

The rite is a *dromenon*, which means "something acted", an act, action. That which is enacted, or the stuff of the action, is a *drama*, which again means act, action represented on a stage. Such action may occur as a performance or a contest. The rite, or "ritual act" represents a cosmic happening, an event in the natural

¹M. Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China; Dances and Legends of Ancient China; Chinese Civilization* (Routledge).

process. The word "represents", however, does not cover the exact meaning of the act, at least not in its looser, modern connotation; for here "representation" is really *identification*, the mystic repetition or *re-presentation* of the event. The rite produces the effect which is then not so much *shown figuratively* as *actually reproduced* in the action. The function of the rite, therefore, is far from being merely imitative; it causes the worshippers to participate in the sacred happening itself. As the Greeks would say, "it is *methectic* rather than *mimetic*".¹ It is "a helping-out of the action".²

Anthropology is not primarily interested in how psychology will assess the mental attitude displayed in these phenomena. The psychologist may seek to settle the matter by calling such performances an *identification compensatrice*, a kind of substitute, "a representative act undertaken in view of the impossibility of staging real, purposive action".³ Are the performers mocking, or are they mocked? The business of the anthropologist is to understand the significance of these "imaginings" in the mind of the peoples who practise and believe in them.

We touch here on the very core of comparative religion: the nature and essence of ritual and mystery. The whole of the ancient Vedic sacrificial rites rests on the idea that the ceremony—be it sacrifice, contest or performance—by representing a certain desired cosmic event, compels the gods to effect that event in reality. We could well say, by "playing" it. Leaving the religious issues aside we shall only concern ourselves here with the play-element in archaic ritual.

Ritual is thus in the main a matter of shows, representations, dramatic performances, imaginative actualizations of a vicarious nature. At the great seasonal festivals the community celebrates the grand happenings in the life of nature by staging sacred performances, which represent the change of seasons, the rising and setting of the constellations, the growth and ripening of crops, birth, life and death in man and beast. As Leo Frobenius puts it, archaic man *plays* the order of nature as imprinted on his consciousness.⁴ In the remote past, so Frobenius thinks, man first

¹ Jane Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1912), p. 125.

² R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, 1912, p. 48.

³ Buytendijk, *Het Spel van Mensch en Dier als openbaring van levensdriften* (Amsterdam, 1932), pp. 70-71.

⁴ *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas, Prolegomena zu einer historischen Gestaltlehre; Schicksalskunde im Sinne des Kulturwerdens* (Leipzig, 1932).

assimilated the phenomena of vegetation and animal life and then conceived an idea of time and space, of months and seasons, of the course of the sun and moon. And now he plays this great processional order of existence in a sacred play, in and through which he actualizes anew, or "recreates", the events represented and thus helps to maintain the cosmic order. Frobenius draws even more far-reaching conclusions from this "playing at nature". He deems it the starting-point of all social order and social institutions, too. Through this ritual play, savage society acquires its rude forms of government. The king is the sun, his kingship the image of the sun's course. All his life the king plays "sun" and in the end he suffers the fate of the sun: he must be killed in ritual forms by his own people.

We can leave aside the question of how far this explanation of ritual regicide and the whole underlying conception can be taken as "proved". The question that interests us here is: what are we to think of this concrete projection of primitive nature-consciousness? What are we to make of a mental process that begins with an unexpressed experience of cosmic phenomena and ends in an imaginative rendering of them in play?

Frobenius is right to discard the facile hypothesis which contents itself with hypothecating an innate "play instinct". The term "instinct", he says, is "a makeshift, an admission of helplessness before the problem of reality".¹ Equally explicitly and for even better reasons he rejects as a vestige of obsolete thinking the tendency to explain every advance in culture in terms of a "special purpose", a "why" and a "wherefore" thrust down the throat of the culture-creating community. "Tyranny of causality at its worst," "antiquated utilitarianism" he calls such a point of view.²

The conception Frobenius has of the mental process in question is roughly as follows. In archaic man the experience of life and nature, still unexpressed, takes the form of a "seizure"—being seized on, thrilled, enraptured. "The creative faculty in a people as in the child or every creative person, springs from this state of being seized." "Man is seized by the revelation of fate." "The reality of the natural rhythm of genesis and extinction has seized hold of his consciousness, and this, inevitably and by reflex action, leads him to represent his emotion in an act." So that according

¹*Kulturgeschichte*, pp. 23, 122.

²*Ibid.* p. 21.

to him we are dealing with a necessary mental process of transformation. The thrill, the "being seized" by the phenomena of life and nature is condensed by reflex action, as it were, to poetic expression and art. It is difficult to describe the process of creative imagination in words that are more to the point, though they can hardly be called a true "explanation". The mental road from aesthetic or mystical, or at any rate meta-logical, perception of cosmic order to ritual play remains as dark as before.

While repeatedly using the term "play" for these performances the great anthropologist omits, however, to state what exactly he understands by it. He would even seem to have surreptitiously re-admitted the very thing he so strongly deprecates and which does not altogether fit in with the essential quality of play: the concept of purpose. For, in Frobenius' description of it, play quite explicitly *serves* to represent a cosmic event and thus bring it about. A quasi-rationalistic element irresistibly creeps in. For Frobenius, play and representation have their *raison d'être* after all, in the expression of something else, namely, the "being seized" by a cosmic event. But the very fact that the dramatization is *played* is, apparently, of secondary importance for him. Theoretically at least, the emotion could have been communicated in some other way. In our view, on the contrary, the whole point is the *playing*. Such ritual play is essentially no different from one of the higher forms of common child-play or indeed animal-play. Now in the case of these two latter forms one could hardly suppose their origin to lie in some cosmic emotion struggling for expression. Child-play possesses the play-form in its veriest essence, and most purely.

We might, perhaps, describe the process leading from "seizure" by nature to ritual performance, in terms that would avoid the above-mentioned inadequacy without, however, claiming to lay bare the inscrutable. Archaic society, we would say, plays as the child or animal plays. Such playing contains at the outset all the elements proper to play: order, tension, movement, change, solemnity, rhythm, rapture. Only in a later phase of society is play associated with the idea of something to be expressed in and by it, namely, what we would call "life" or "nature". Then, what was wordless play assumes poetic form. In the form and function of play, itself an independent entity which is senseless and irrational, man's consciousness that he is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest, and holiest expression.

Gradually the significance of a sacred act permeates the playing. Ritual grafts itself upon it; but the primary thing is and remains play.

We are hovering over spheres of thought barely accessible either to psychology or to philosophy. Such questions as these plumb the depths of our consciousness. Ritual is seriousness at its highest and holiest. Can it nevertheless be play? We began by saying that all play, both of children and of grown-ups, can be performed in the most perfect seriousness. Does this go so far as to imply that play is still bound up with the sacred emotion of the sacramental act? Our conclusions are to some extent impeded by the rigidity of our accepted ideas. We are accustomed to think of play and seriousness as an absolute antithesis. It would seem, however, that this does not go to the heart of the matter.

Let us consider for a moment the following argument. The child plays in complete—we can well say, in sacred—earnest. But it plays and knows that it plays. The sportsman, too, plays with all the fervour of a man enraptured, but he still knows that he is playing. The actor on the stage is wholly absorbed in his playing, but is all the time conscious of “the play”. The same holds good of the violinist, though he may soar to realms beyond this world. The play-character, therefore, may attach to the sublimest forms of action. Can we now extend the line to ritual and say that the priest performing the rites of sacrifice is only playing? At first sight it seems preposterous, for if you grant it for one religion you must grant it for all. Hence our ideas of ritual, magic, liturgy, sacrament and mystery would all fall within the play-concept. In dealing with abstractions we must always guard against overstraining their significance. We would merely be playing with words were we to stretch the play-concept unduly. But, all things considered, I do not think we are falling into that error when we characterize ritual as play. The ritual act has all the formal and essential characteristics of play which we enumerated above, particularly in so far as it transports the participants to another world. This identity of ritual and play was unreservedly recognized by Plato as a given fact. He had no hesitation in comprising the *sacra* in the category of play. “I say that a man must be serious with the serious,” he says (*Laws*, vii, 803). “God alone is worthy of supreme seriousness, but man is made God’s plaything, and that is the best part of him. Therefore every man and woman

should live life accordingly, and play the noblest games and be of another mind from what they are at present. . . . For they deem war a serious thing, though in war there is neither play nor culture worthy the name (οὐτ' οὖν παιδιὰ . . . οὐτ' αὖ παιδεία), which are the things *we* deem most serious. Hence all must live in peace as well as they possibly can. What, then, is the right way of living? Life must be lived as play, playing certain games, making sacrifices, singing and dancing, and then a man will be able to propitiate the gods, and defend himself against his enemies, and win in the contest."¹

The close connections between mystery and play have been touched on most tellingly by Romano Guardini in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (Ecclesia Orans 1, Freiburg, 1922), particularly the chapter entitled "Die Liturgie als Spiel". He does not actually cite Plato, but comes as near the above quotation as may be. He ascribes to liturgy more than one of the features we held to be characteristic of play, amongst others the fact that, in its highest examples, liturgy is "zwecklos aber doch sinnvoll"—"pointless but significant".

The Platonic identification of play and holiness does not defile the latter by calling it play, rather it exalts the concept of play to the highest regions of the spirit. We said at the beginning that play was anterior to culture; in a certain sense it is also superior to it or at least detached from it. In play we may move below the level of the serious, as the child does; but we can also move above it—in the realm of the beautiful and the sacred.

From this point of view we can now define the relationship between ritual and play more closely. We are no longer astonished at the substantial similarity of the two forms, and the question as to how far every ritual act falls within the category of play continues to hold our attention.

We found that one of the most important characteristics of play was its spatial separation from ordinary life. A closed space is marked out for it, either materially or ideally, hedged off from the everyday surroundings. Inside this space the play proceeds, inside it the rules obtain. Now, the marking out of some sacred spot is also the primary characteristic of every sacred act. This requirement of isolation for ritual, including magic and law, is much

¹Cf. *Laws*, vii, 796, where Plato speaks of the sacred dances of the Kouretes of Crete, calling them ἐνόπλια παίγνια.

more than merely spatial and temporal. Nearly all rites of consecration and initiation entail a certain artificial seclusion for the performers and those to be initiated. Whenever it is a question of taking a vow or being received into an Order or confraternity, or of oaths and secret societies, in one way or another there is always such a delimitation of room for play. The magician, the augur, the sacrificer begins his work by circumscribing his sacred space. Sacrament and mystery presuppose a hallowed spot.

Formally speaking, there is no distinction whatever between marking out a space for a sacred purpose and marking it out for purposes of sheer play. The turf, the tennis-court, the chess-board and pavement-hopsotch cannot formally be distinguished from the temple or the magic circle. The striking similarity between sacrificial rites all over the earth shows that such customs must be rooted in a very fundamental, an aboriginal layer of the human mind. As a rule people reduce this over-all congruity of cultural forms to some "reasonable", "logical" cause by explaining the need for isolation and seclusion as an anxiety to protect the consecrated individual from noxious influences—because, in his consecrated state, he is particularly exposed to the malign workings of ghosts, besides being himself a danger to his surroundings. Such an explanation puts intellection and utilitarian purpose at the beginning of the cultural process: the very thing Frobenius warned against. Even if we do not fall back here on the antiquated notion of a priestcraft inventing religion, we are still introducing a rationalistic element better avoided. If, on the other hand, we accept the essential and original identity of play and ritual we simply recognize the hallowed spot as a play-ground, and the misleading question of the "why and the wherefore" does not arise at all.

If ritual proves to be formally indistinguishable from play the question remains whether this resemblance goes further than the purely formal. It is surprising that anthropology and comparative religion have paid so little attention to the problem of how far such sacred activities as proceed within the forms of play also proceed in the attitude and mood of play. Even Frobenius has not, to my knowledge, asked this question.

Needless to say, the mental attitude in which a community performs and experiences its sacred rites is one of high and holy earnest. But let it be emphasized again that genuine and spontaneous play can also be profoundly serious. The player can

abandon himself body and soul to the game, and the consciousness of its being "merely" a game can be thrust into the background. The joy inextricably bound up with playing can turn not only into tension, but into elation. Frivolity and ecstasy are the twin poles between which play moves.

The play-mood is *labile* in its very nature. At any moment "ordinary life" may reassert its rights either by an impact from without, which interrupts the game, or by an offence against the rules, or else from within, by a collapse of the play spirit, a sobering, a disenchantment.

What, then, is the attitude and mood prevailing at holy festivals? The sacred act is "celebrated" on a "holiday"—i.e. it forms part of a general feast on the occasion of a holy day. When the people foregather at the sanctuary they gather together for collective rejoicing. Consecrations, sacrifices, sacred dances and contests, performances, mysteries—all are comprehended within the act of celebrating a festival. The rites may be bloody, the probations of the young men awaiting initiation may be cruel, the masks may be terrifying, but the whole thing has a festal nature. Ordinary life is at a standstill. Banquets, junketings and all kinds of wanton revels are going on all the time the feast lasts. Whether we think of the Ancient Greek festivities or of the African religions to-day we can hardly draw any sharp line between the festival mood in general and the holy frenzy surrounding the central mystery.

Almost simultaneously with the appearance of the Dutch edition of this book the Hungarian scholar Karl Kerényi published a treatise on the nature of the festival which has the closest ties with our theme.¹ According to Kerényi, the festival too has that character of primacy and absolute independence which we predicated of play. "Among the psychic realities," he says, "the feast is a thing in itself, not to be confused with anything else in the world." Just as we thought the play-concept somewhat negligently treated by the anthropologist, so in his view is the feast. "The phenomenon of the feast appears to have been completely passed over by the ethnologist." "For all science is concerned it might not exist at all." Neither might play, we would like to add.

In the very nature of things the relationship between feast and

¹*Vom Wesen des Festes*, Paideuma, Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde 1, Heft 2 (Dez., 1938), pp. 59-74.

play is very close. Both proclaim a standstill to ordinary life. In both mirth and joy dominate, though not necessarily—for the feast too can be serious; both are limited as to time and place; both combine strict rules with genuine freedom. In short, feast and play have their main characteristics in common. The two seem most intimately related in dancing. According to Kerényi, the Cora Indians inhabiting the Pacific coast of Mexico call their sacred feast of the young corn-cobs and the corn-roasting the “play” of their highest god.

Kerényi's ideas about the feast as an autonomous culture-concept amplify and corroborate those on which this book is built. For all that, however, the establishment of a close connection between the spirit of play and ritual does not explain everything. Genuine play possesses besides its formal characteristics and its joyful mood, at least one further very essential feature, namely, the consciousness, however latent, of “only pretending”. The question remains how far such a consciousness is compatible with the ritual act performed in devotion.

If we confine ourselves to the sacred rites in archaic culture it is not impossible to adumbrate the degree of seriousness with which they are performed. As far as I know, ethnologists and anthropologists concur in the opinion that the mental attitude in which the great religious feasts of savages are celebrated and witnessed is not one of complete illusion. There is an underlying consciousness of things “not being real”. A vivid picture of this attitude is given by Ad. E. Jensen in his book on the circumcision and puberty ceremonies in savage society.¹ The men seem to have no fear of the ghosts that are hovering about everywhere during the feast and appear to everyone at its height. This is small wonder, seeing that these same men have had the staging of the whole ceremony: they have carved and decorated the masks, wear them themselves and after use conceal them from the women. They make the noises heralding the appearance of the ghosts, they trace their footprints in the sand, they blow the flutes that represent the voices of the ancestors, and brandish the bull-roarers. In short, says Jensen, “their position is much like that of parents playing Santa Claus for their children: they know of the mask, but hide it from them”. The men tell the women gruesome tales about the goings-on in the sacred bush. The attitude of the neophytes alternates between ecstasy, feigned madness, flesh-

¹*Beschneidung und Reifezeremonien bei Naturvölkern* (Stuttgart, 1933).

creeping and boyish swagger. Nor, in the last resort, are the women wholly duped. They know perfectly well who is hiding behind this mask or that. All the same they get fearfully excited when a mask comes up to them with minatory gestures, and fly shrieking in all directions. These expressions of terror, says Jensen, are in part quite genuine and spontaneous, and in part only acting up to a part imposed by tradition. It is "the done thing". The women are, as it were, the chorus to the play and they know that they must not be "spoil-sports".

In all this it is impossible to fix accurately the lower limit where holy earnest reduces itself to mere "fun". With us, a father of somewhat childish disposition might get seriously angry if his children caught him in the act of preparing Christmas presents. A Kwakiutl father in British Columbia killed his daughter who surprised him whilst carving things for a tribal ceremony.¹ The unstable nature of religious feeling among the Loango negroes is described by Pechuel-Loesche in terms similar to those used by Jensen. Their belief in the sanctities is a sort of half-belief, and goes with scoffing and pretended indifference. The really important thing is the *mood*, he concludes by saying.² R. R. Marett, in his chapter on "Primitive Credulity" in *The Threshold of Religion*, develops the idea that a certain element of "make-believe" is operative in all primitive religions. Whether one is sorcerer or sorcerized one is always knower and dupe at once. But one chooses to be the dupe. "The savage is a good actor who can be quite absorbed in his role, like a child at play; and, also like a child, a good spectator who can be frightened to death by the roaring of something he knows perfectly well to be no 'real' lion." The native, says Malinowski, feels and fears his belief rather than formulates it clearly to himself.³ He uses certain terms and expressions, and these we must collect as documents of belief just as they are, without working them up into a consistent theory. The behaviour of those to whom the savage community attributes "supernatural" powers can often be best expressed by "acting up to the part".⁴

Despite this partial consciousness of things "not being real" in magic and supernatural phenomena generally, these authorities

¹F. Boas, *The Social Organisation and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, Washington, 1897, p. 435.

²*Volkskunde von Loango*, Stuttgart, 1907, p. 345.

³*The Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, 1922, p. 339.

⁴*Ibid.* p. 240.

still warn against drawing the inference that the whole system of beliefs and practices is only a fraud invented by a group of "unbelievers" with a view to dominating the credulous. It is true that such an interpretation is given not only by many travellers but sometimes even by the traditions of the natives themselves. Yet it cannot be the right one. "The origin of any sacred act can only lie in the credulity of all, and the spurious maintaining of it in the interests of a special group can only be the final phase of a long line of development." As I see it, psychoanalysis tends to fall back on this antiquated interpretation of circumcision and puberty practices, so rightly rejected by Jensen.¹

From the foregoing it is quite clear, to my mind at least, that where savage ritual is concerned we never lose sight of the play-concept for a single moment. To describe the phenomena we have to use the term "play" over and over again. What is more, the unity and indivisibility of belief and unbelief, the indissoluble connection between sacred earnest and "make-believe" or "fun", are best understood in the concept of play itself. Jensen, though admitting the similarity of the child's world to that of the savage, still tries to distinguish in principle between the mentality of the two. The child, he says, when confronted with the figure of Santa Claus, has to do with a "ready-made concept", in which he "finds his way" with a lucidity and endowment of his own. But "the creative attitude of the savage with regard to the ceremonies here in question is quite another thing. He has to do not with ready-made concepts but with his natural surroundings, which themselves demand interpretation; he grasps their mysterious daemonism and tries to give it in representative form".² Here we recognize the views of Frobenius, who was Jensen's teacher. Still, two objections occur. Firstly, when calling the process in the savage mind "quite another thing" from that in the child-mind, he is speaking of the *originators* of the ritual on the one hand and of the child of *to-day* on the other. But we know nothing of these originators. All we can study is a ritualistic community which receives its religious imagery as traditional material just as "ready-made" as the child does, and responds to it similarly. Secondly, even if we ignore this, the process of "interpreting" the natural surroundings, of "grasping" them and "representing" them in a ritual image remains altogether inaccessible to our observation. It is only by fanciful metaphors that Frobenius and Jensen force

¹Jensen, *op. cit.* p. 152.

²*Op. cit.* p. 149 f.

an approach to it. The most we can say of the function that is operative in the process of image-making or imagination is that it is a poetic function; and we define it best of all by calling it a function of play—the *ludic* function, in fact.

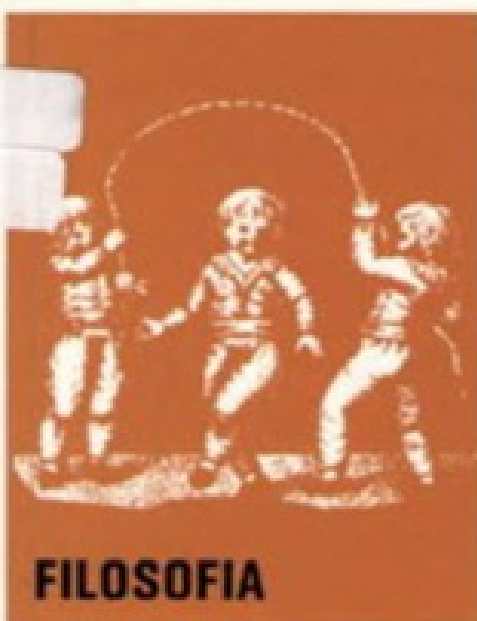
So that the apparently quite simple question of what play really is, leads us deep into the problem of the nature and origin of religious concepts. As we all know, one of the most important basic ideas with which every student of comparative religion has to acquaint himself is the following. When a certain form of religion accepts a sacred identity between two things of a different order, say a human being and an animal, this relationship is not adequately expressed by calling it a "symbolical correspondence" as we conceive this. The identity, the essential oneness of the two goes far deeper than the correspondence between a substance and its symbolic image. It is a mystic unity. The one has *become* the other. In his magic dance the savage *is* a kangaroo. We must always be on our guard against the deficiencies and differences of our means of expression. In order to form any idea at all of the mental habits of the savage we are forced to give them in our terminology. Whether we will or not we are always transposing the savage's ideas of religion into the strictly logical modes of our own thought. We express the relationship between him and the animal he "identifies" himself with, as a "being" for him but a "playing" for us. He has taken on the "essence" of the kangaroo, says the savage; he is playing the kangaroo, say we. The savage, however, knows nothing of the conceptual distinctions between "being" and "playing"; he knows nothing of "identity", "image" or "symbol". Hence it remains an open question whether we do not come nearest to the mental attitude of the savage performing a ritual act, by adhering to this primary, universally understandable term "play". In play as we conceive it the distinction between belief and make-believe breaks down. The concept of play merges quite naturally with that of holiness. Any Prelude of Bach, any line of tragedy proves it. By considering the whole sphere of so-called primitive culture as a play-sphere we pave the way to a more direct and more general understanding of its peculiarities than any meticulous psychological or sociological analysis would allow.

Primitive, or let us say, archaic ritual is thus sacred play, indispensable for the well-being of the community, fecund of cosmic insight and social development but always play in the sense Plato

gave to it—an action accomplishing itself outside and above the necessities and seriousness of everyday life. In this sphere of sacred play the child and the poet are at home with the savage. His aesthetic sensibility has brought the modern man closer to this sphere than the “enlightened” man of the 18th century ever was. Think of the peculiar charm that the mask as an *objet d’art* has for the modern mind. People nowadays try to feel the essence of savage life. This kind of exoticism may sometimes be a little affected, but it goes a good deal deeper than the 18th century *engouement* for Turks, “Chinamen” and Indians. Modern man is very sensitive to the far-off and the strange. Nothing helps him so much in his understanding of savage society as his feeling for masks and disguise. While ethnology has demonstrated their enormous social importance, they arouse in the educated layman and art-lover an immediate aesthetic emotion compounded of beauty, fright, and mystery. Even for the cultured adult of to-day the mask still retains something of its terrifying power, although no religious emotions are attached to it. The sight of the masked figure, as a purely aesthetic experience, carries us beyond “ordinary life” into a world where something other than daylight reigns; it carries us back to the world of the savage, the child and the poet, which is the world of play.

Even if we can legitimately reduce our ideas on the significance of primitive ritual to an irreducible play-concept, one extremely troublesome question still remains. What if we now ascend from the lower religions to the higher? From the rude and outlandish ritual of the African, American or Australian aborigines our vision shifts to Vedic sacrificial lore, already, in the hymns of the *Rig-Veda*, pregnant with the wisdom of the Upanishads, or to the profoundly mystical identifications of god, man, and beast in Egyptian religion, or to the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries. In form and practice all these are closely allied to the so-called primitive religions even to bizarre and bloody particulars. But the high degree of wisdom and truth we discern, or think we can discern in them, forbids us to speak of them with that air of superiority which, as a matter of fact, is equally out of place in “primitive” cultures. We must ask whether this formal similarity entitles us to extend the qualification “play” to the consciousness of the holy, the faith embodied in these higher creeds. If we accept the Platonic definition of play there is nothing preposterous or

irreverent in doing so. Play consecrated to the Deity, the highest goal of man's endeavour—such was Plato's conception of religion. In following him we in no way abandon the holy mystery, or cease to rate it as the highest attainable expression of that which escapes logical understanding. The ritual act, or an important part of it, will always remain within the play category, but in this seeming subordination the recognition of its holiness is not lost.



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Prefácio

Em época mais otimista que a atual, nossa espécie recebeu a designação de *Homo sapiens*. Com o passar do tempo, acabamos por compreender que afinal de contas não somos tão racionais quanto a ingenuidade e o culto da razão do século XVIII nos fizeram supor, e passou a ser de moda designar nossa espécie como *Homo faber*. Embora *faber* não seja uma definição do ser humano tão inadequada como *sapiens*, ela é, contudo, ainda menos apropriada do que esta, visto poder servir para designar grande número de animais. Mas existe uma terceira função, que se verifica tanto na vida humana como na animal, e é tão importante como o raciocínio e o fabrico de objetos: o jogo. Creio que, depois de *Homo faber* e talvez ao mesmo nível de *Homo sapiens*, a expressão *Homo ludens* merece um lugar em nossa nomenclatura.

Seria mais ou menos óbvio, mas também um pouco fácil, considerar "jogo" toda e qualquer atividade humana. Aqueles que preferirem contentar-se com uma conclusão metafísica deste gênero farão melhor não lerem este livro. Não vejo, todavia, razão alguma para abandonar a noção de jogo como um fator distinto e fundamental, presente em tudo o que acontece no mundo. Já há muitos anos que vem crescendo em mim a convicção de que é no jogo e pelo jogo que a civilização surge e se desenvolve. É possível encontrar indícios dessa opinião em minhas obras desde 1903. Foi ela o tema de meu discurso anual como Reitor da Universidade de Leyden, em 1933, e posteriormente de conferências em Zurique, Viena e Londres, neste último caso sob o título *The Play Element of Culture* (*O jogo como elemento da cultura*). Em todas as vezes, meus hóspedes pretenderam corrigir o título para "na" cultura, mas sempre protestei e insisti no uso do genitivo, pois minha intenção não era definir o lugar do jogo entre todas as outras manifestações culturais, e sim determinar até que ponto a própria cultura possui um caráter lúdico. O objetivo deste estudo mais desenvolvido é procurar integrar o conceito de jogo no de cultura.

Assim, jogo é aqui tomado como fenômeno cultural e não biológico, e é estudado em uma perspectiva histórica, não propriamente científica em sentido restrito. O leitor notará que pouca ou nenhuma interpretação psicológica utilizei, por mais importante que fosse, e que só raras vezes recorri a conceitos e explicações antropológicos, mesmo nos casos em que me refiro a fatos etnológicos. Não se encontrará uma única vez o termo *maná* e outros semelhantes, *magia*, só muito pouco. Se eu quisesse resumir meus argumentos sob a forma de teses, uma destas seria que a antropologia e as ciências a ela ligadas têm, até hoje, prestado muito pouca atenção ao conceito de jogo e à importância fundamental do fator lúdico para a civilização.

O leitor destas páginas não deve ter esperança de encontrar uma justificação pormenorizada de todas as palavras usadas. No exame dos problemas gerais da cultura, somos constantemente obrigados a efetuar incursões predatórias em regiões que o atacante ainda não explorou suficientemente. Estava fora de questão, para mim, preencher previamente todas as lacunas de meus conhecimentos. Tinha que escolher entre escrever agora ou nunca mais; e optei pela primeira solução.

Leyden, 15 de junho de 1938

Sumário

1. Natureza e Significado do Jogo como Fenômeno Cultural
 2. A Noção de Jogo e sua Expressão na Linguagem
 3. O Jogo e a Competição como Funções Culturais
 4. O Jogo e o Direito
 5. O Jogo e a Guerra
 6. O Jogo e o Conhecimento
 7. O Jogo e a Poesia
 8. A Função da Forma Poética
 9. Formas Lúdicas da Filosofia
 10. Formas Lúdicas da Arte
 11. Culturas e Períodos *sub specie lude*
 12. O Elemento Lúdico da Cultura Contemporânea
- índice

1. Natureza e Significado do Jogo como Fenômeno Cultural

O jogo é fato mais antigo que a cultura, pois esta, mesmo em suas definições menos rigorosas, pressupõe sempre a sociedade humana; mas, os animais não esperaram que os homens os iniciassem na atividade lúdica. É-nos possível afirmar com segurança que a civilização humana não acrescentou característica essencial alguma à idéia geral de jogo. Os animais brincam tal como os homens¹. Bastará que observemos os cachorrinhos para constatar que, em suas alegres evoluções, encontram-se presentes todos os elementos essenciais do jogo humano. Convidam-se uns aos outros para brincar mediante um certo ritual de atitudes e gestos. Respeitam a regra que os proíbe morderem, ou pelo menos com violência, a orelha do próximo. Fingem ficar zangados e, o que é mais importante, eles, em tudo isto, experimentam evidentemente imenso prazer e divertimento. Essas brincadeiras dos cachorrinhos constituem apenas uma das formas mais simples de jogo entre os animais. Existem outras formas muito mais complexas, verdadeiras competições, belas representações destinadas a um público.

Desde já encontramos aqui um aspecto muito importante: mesmo em suas formas mais simples, ao nível animal, o jogo é mais do que um fenômeno fisiológico ou um reflexo psicológico. Ultrapassa os limites da atividade puramente física ou biológica. É uma função *significante*, isto é, encerra um determinado sentido. No jogo existe alguma coisa "em jogo" que transcende as necessidades imediatas da vida e confere um sentido à ação. Todo jogo significa alguma coisa. Não se explica nada chamando "instinto" ao princípio ativo que constitui a essência do jogo; chamar-lhe "espírito" ou "vontade" seria dizer demasiado. Seja qual for a maneira como o considerem, o simples fato de o jogo encerrar um sentido implica a presença de um elemento não material em sua própria essência.

A psicologia e a fisiologia procuram observar, descrever e explicar o jogo dos animais, crianças e adultos. Procuram determinar a natureza e o significado do jogo, atribuindo-lhe um lugar no sistema da vida. A extrema importância deste lugar e a necessidade, ou pelo menos a utilidade da função do jogo são geralmente consideradas coisa assente, constituindo o ponto de partida de todas as investigações científicas desse gênero. Há uma extraordinária divergência entre as numerosas tentativas de definição da função biológica do jogo. Umas definem as origens e fundamento do jogo em termos de descarga da energia vital superabundante, outras como satisfação de um certo "instinto de imitação", ou ainda simplesmente como uma "necessidade" de distensão. Segundo uma teoria, o jogo constitui uma preparação do jovem para as tarefas sérias que mais tarde a vida dele exigirá, segundo outra, trata-se de um exercício de autocontrole indispensável ao indivíduo. Outras vêem o princípio do jogo como um impulso inato para exercer uma certa faculdade, ou como desejo de dominar ou competir. Teorias há, ainda, que o consideram uma "ab-reação", um escape para impulsos prejudiciais, um restaurador da energia dispendida por uma atividade unilateral, ou "realização do desejo", ou uma ficção destinada a preservar o sentimento do valor pessoal etc.².

¹ A diferença entre as principais línguas européias (onde *spielen*, *to play*, *jouer*, *jugar* significam tanto *jogar* como *brincar*) e a nossa nos obriga freqüentemente a escolher um ou outro destes dois, sacrificando assim à exatidão da tradução uma unidade terminológica que só naqueles idiomas seria possível. (N. do T.)

² Sobre estas teorias, consultar H. Zondervan, *Het Spel bij Dieren, Kinderen en Volwassen Menschen* (Amsterdã, 1928) e F. J. J. Buytendijk, *Het Spel van Mensch en Dier als openbaring van levensdriften* (Amsterdã, 1932).

Há um elemento comum a todas estas hipóteses: todas elas partem do pressuposto de que o jogo se acha ligado a alguma coisa que não seja o próprio jogo, que nele deve haver alguma espécie de finalidade biológica. Todas elas se interrogam sobre o porquê e os objetivos do jogo. As diversas respostas tendem mais a completar-se do que a excluir-se mutuamente. Seria perfeitamente possível aceitar quase todas sem que isso resultasse numa grande confusão de pensamento, mas nem por isso nos aproximariamos de uma verdadeira compreensão do conceito de jogo. Todas as respostas, porém, não passam de soluções parciais do problema.

NATUREZA E SIGNIFICADO DO JOGO

Se alguma delas fosse realmente decisiva, ou eliminaria as demais ou englobaria todas em uma unidade maior. A grande maioria, contudo, preocupa-se apenas superficialmente em saber o que o jogo é *em si mesmo* e o que ele significa para os jogadores. Abordam diretamente o jogo, utilizando-se dos métodos quantitativos das ciências experimentais, sem antes disso prestarem atenção a seu caráter profundamente estético. Por via de regra, deixam praticamente de lado a característica fundamental do jogo. A todas as "explicações" acima referidas poder-se-ia perfeitamente objetar: "Está tudo muito bem, mas o que há de realmente *divertido* no jogo? Por que razão o bebê grita de prazer? Por que motivo o jogador se deixa absorver inteiramente por sua paixão? Por que uma multidão imensa pode ser levada até ao delírio por um jogo de futebol?" A intensidade do jogo e seu poder de fascinação não podem ser explicados por análises biológicas. E, contudo, é nessa intensidade, nessa fascinação, nessa capacidade de excitar que reside a própria essência e a característica primordial do jogo. O mais simples raciocínio nos indica que a natureza poderia igualmente ter oferecido a suas criaturas todas essas úteis funções de descarga de energia excessiva, de distensão após um esforço, de preparação para as exigências da vida, de compensação de desejos insatisfeitos etc., sob a forma de exercícios e reações puramente mecânicos. Mas não, ela nos deu a tensão, a alegria e o divertimento do jogo.

Este último elemento, o *divertimento* do jogo, resiste a toda análise e interpretação lógicas. A palavra holandesa *aardigheid* é extremamente significativa a esse respeito. Sua derivação de *aard* (natureza, essência) mostra bem que a idéia não pode ser submetida a uma explicação mais prolongada. Essa irredutibilidade tem sua manifestação mais notável, para o moderno sentido da linguagem, na palavra inglesa *fun*, cujo significado mais corrente é ainda bastante recente. É curioso que o francês não possua palavra que lhe corresponda exatamente e que tanto em holandês (*grap* e *aardigheid*) como em alemão (*Spass* e *Witz*) sejam necessários dois termos para exprimir esse conceito³. É ele precisamente que define a essência do jogo. Encontramo-nos aqui perante uma categoria absolutamente primária da vida, que qualquer um é capaz de identificar desde o próprio nível animal. É legítimo considerar o jogo uma "totalidade", no moderno sentido da palavra, e é como totalidade que devemos procurar avaliá-lo e compreendê-lo.

Como a realidade do jogo ultrapassa a esfera da vida humana, é impossível que tenha seu fundamento em qualquer elemento racional, pois nesse caso, limitar-se-ia à humanidade. A existência do jogo não está ligada a qualquer grau determinado de civilização, ou a qualquer concepção do universo. Todo ser pensante é capaz de entender à primeira vista que o jogo possui uma realidade autônoma, mesmo que sua língua não possua um termo

³ Também em português a palavra *divertimento* é apenas a maneira menos inadequada de exprimir esse conceito, que para o autor corresponde à própria essência do jogo (v. infra), e está ligado também a noções como as de prazer, agrado, alegria etc. (N. do T.)

geral capaz de defini-lo. A existência do jogo é inegável. É possível negar, se se quiser, quase todas as abstrações: a justiça, a beleza, a verdade, o bem, Deus. É possível negar-se a seriedade, mas não o jogo.

Mas reconhecer o jogo é, forçosamente, reconhecer o espírito, pois o jogo, seja qual for sua essência, não é material. Ultrapassa, mesmo no mundo animal, os limites da realidade física. Do ponto de vista da concepção determinista de um mundo regido pela ação de forças cegas, o jogo seria inteiramente supérfluo. Só se torna possível, pensável e compreensível quando a presença do espírito destrói o determinismo absoluto do cosmos. A própria existência do jogo é uma confirmação permanente da natureza supralógica da situação humana. Se os animais são capazes de brincar, é porque são alguma coisa mais do que simples seres mecânicos. Se brincamos e jogamos, e temos consciência disso, é porque somos mais do que simples seres racionais, pois o jogo é irracional.

Ao tratar o problema do jogo diretamente como função da cultura, e não tal como aparece na vida do animal ou da criança, estamos iniciando a partir do momento em que as abordagens da biologia e da psicologia chegam ao seu termo. Encontramos o jogo na cultura, como um elemento dado existente antes da própria cultura, acompanhando-a e marcando-a desde as mais distantes origens até a fase de civilização em que agora nos encontramos. Em toda a parte encontramos presente o jogo, como uma qualidade de ação bem determinada e distinta da vida "comum". Podemos deixar de lado o problema de saber se até agora a ciência conseguiu reduzir esta qualidade a fatores quantitativos. Em minha opinião não o conseguiu. De qualquer modo, o que importa é justamente aquela qualidade que é característica da forma de vida a que chamamos "jogo". O objeto de nosso estudo é o jogo como forma específica de atividade, como "forma significante", como função social. Não procuraremos analisar os impulsos e hábitos naturais que condicionam o jogo em geral, tomando-o em suas múltiplas formas concretas, enquanto estrutura propriamente social. Procuraremos considerar o jogo como o fazem os próprios jogadores, isto é, em sua significação primária. Se verificarmos que o jogo se baseia na manipulação de certas imagens, numa certa "imaginação" da realidade (ou seja, a transformação desta em imagens), nossa preocupação fundamental será, então, captar o valor e o significado dessas imagens e dessa "imaginação". Observaremos a ação destas no próprio jogo, procurando assim compreendê-lo como fator cultural da vida

As grandes atividades arquetípicas da sociedade humana são, desde início, inteiramente marcadas pelo jogo. Como por exemplo, no caso da linguagem, esse primeiro e supremo instrumento que o homem forjou a fim de poder comunicar, ensinar e comandar. É a linguagem que lhe permite distinguir as coisas, defini-las e constatar-las, em resumo, designá-las e com essa designação elevá-las ao domínio do espírito. Na criação da fala e da linguagem, brincando com essa maravilhosa faculdade de designar, é como se o espírito estivesse constantemente saltando entre a matéria e as coisas pensadas. Por detrás de toda expressão abstrata se oculta uma metáfora, e toda metáfora é jogo de palavras. Assim, ao dar expressão à vida, o homem cria um outro mundo, um mundo poético, ao lado do da natureza.

Outro exemplo é o mito, que é também uma transformação ou uma "imaginação" do mundo exterior, mas implica em um processo mais elaborado e complexo do que ocorre no caso das palavras isoladas. O homem primitivo procura, através do mito, dar conta do mundo dos fenômenos atribuindo a este um fundamento divino. Em todas as caprichosas invenções da mitologia, há um espírito fantasista que joga no extremo limite entre a brincadeira e a seriedade. Se, finalmente, observarmos o fenômeno do culto, verificaremos que as sociedades

primitivas celebram seus ritos sagrados, seus sacrifícios, consagrações e mistérios, destinados a assegurarem a tranqüilidade do mundo, dentro de um espírito de puro jogo, tomando-se aqui o verdadeiro sentido da palavra.

Ora, é no mito e no culto que têm origem as grandes forças instintivas da vida civilizada: o direito e a ordem, o comércio e o lucro, a indústria e a arte, a poesia, a sabedoria e a ciência. Todas elas têm suas raízes no solo primevo⁴ do jogo.

A finalidade deste estudo consiste em mostrar que o exame da cultura *sub specie ludi* é mais do que uma comparação retórica. Não se trata de modo algum de uma idéia nova. Houve uma época em que era geralmente aceita, embora num sentido limitado e muito diferente daquele que aqui se adotou: o início do século XVII, quando surgiu o grande teatro laico. Numa brilhante série de figuras, desde as de Shakespeare até as de Calderón e Racine, o teatro dominava a literatura ocidental. Era costume comparar o mundo a um palco, no qual cada homem desempenhava seu papel. Todavia, isto não significa que o elemento lúdico da civilização fosse claramente reconhecido. O costume de comparar a vida a um palco, bem analisada, revela-se como pouco mais que um eco do neoplatonismo então dominante, com um tom moralista fortemente acentuado. Era uma variante do velho tema do caráter vão de todas as coisas. A estreita ligação entre o jogo e a cultura não era observada nem expressa, ao passo que a nós importa apenas mostrar que o puro e simples jogo constitui uma das principais bases da civilização.

Em nossa maneira de pensar, o jogo é diametralmente oposto à seriedade. À primeira vista, esta oposição parece tão irredutível a outras categorias como o próprio conceito de jogo. Todavia, caso o examinemos mais de perto, verificaremos que o contraste entre jogo e seriedade não é decisivo nem imutável. É lícito dizer que o jogo é a não-seriedade, mas esta afirmação, além do fato de nada nos dizer quanto às características positivas do jogo, é extremamente fácil de refutar. Caso pretendamos passar de "o jogo é a não-seriedade" para "o jogo não é sério", imediatamente o contraste tornar-se-á impossível, pois certas formas de jogo podem ser extraordinariamente sérias. Além disso, é fácil designar várias outras categorias fundamentais que também são abrangidas pela categoria da "não-seriedade" e não apresentam qualquer relação com o jogo. O riso, por exemplo, está de certo modo em oposição à seriedade, sem de maneira alguma estar diretamente ligado ao jogo. Os jogos infantis, o futebol e o xadrez são executados dentro da mais profunda seriedade, não se verificando nos jogadores a menor tendência para o riso. É curioso notar que o ato puramente fisiológico de rir é exclusivo dos homens, ao passo que a função significativa do jogo é comum aos homens e aos animais. O *animal ridens* de Aristóteles caracteriza o homem, em oposição aos animais, de maneira quase tão absoluta quanto o *homo sapiens*.

O que vale para o riso vale igualmente para o cômico. O cômico é compreendido pela categoria da não-seriedade e possui certas afinidades com o riso, na medida em que o provoca, mas sua relação com o jogo é perfeitamente secundária. Considerado em si mesmo, o jogo não é cômico nem para os jogadores nem para o público. Os animais muito jovens, ou as crianças, podem por vezes ser extremamente cômicos em suas brincadeiras, mas observar cães adultos perseguindo-se mutuamente dificilmente suscita em nós o riso. Quando chamamos "cômica" a uma farsa ou uma comédia, fazemo-lo levando em conta o não jogo da representação propriamente dito, mas, sim, a situação e os pensamentos expressos. A arte mímica do palhaço, cômica e risível, dificilmente pode ser considerada um verdadeiro jogo.

⁴ Primitivo.

A categoria do cômico está estreitamente ligada à da *loucura*, ao mesmo tempo no sentido mais elevado e no mais baixo do termo. Mas não há loucura no jogo, já que se situa para além da antítese entre a sabedoria e a loucura. Na baixa Idade Média, os dois modos fundamentais de vida, o jogo e a seriedade, eram expressos de maneira bastante imperfeita através da oposição entre *folie et sem*, até o momento em que, em seu *Laus stultitiae*, Erasmo mostrou a improcedência desse contraste.

Todas as idéias, aqui vagamente reunidas num mesmo grupo — jogo, riso, loucura, piada, gracejo, cômico etc. — participou daquela mesma característica que nos vimos obrigados a atribuir ao jogo, isto é, a de resistir a qualquer tentativa de redução a outros termos. Sem dúvida, sua *ratio* e sua mútua dependência residem numa camada muito profunda de nosso ser espiritual.

Quanto mais nos esforçamos por estabelecer uma separação entre a forma a que chamamos "jogo" e outras formas aparentemente relacionadas a ela, mais se evidencia a absoluta independência do conceito de jogo. E sua exclusão do domínio das grandes oposições entre categorias não se detém aí. O jogo não é compreendido pela antítese entre sabedoria e loucura, ou pelas que opõem a verdade e a falsidade, ou o bem e o mal. Embora seja uma atividade não material, não desempenha uma função moral, sendo impossível aplicar-lhe as noções de vício e virtude.

Se, portanto, não for possível ao jogo referir-se diretamente às categorias do bem ou da verdade, não poderia ele talvez ser incluído no domínio da estética? Cabe aqui uma dúvida porque, embora a beleza não seja atributo inseparável do jogo enquanto tal, este tem tendência a assumir acentuados elementos de beleza. A vivacidade e a graça estão originalmente ligadas às formas mais primitivas do jogo. É neste que a beleza do corpo humano em movimento atinge seu apogeu. Em suas formas mais complexas o jogo está saturado de ritmo e de harmonia, que são os mais nobres dons de percepção estética de que o homem dispõe. São muitos, e bem íntimos, os laços que unem o jogo e a beleza.

Apesar disso, não podemos afirmar que a beleza seja inerente ao jogo enquanto tal. Devemos, portanto, limitar--nos ao seguinte: o jogo é uma função da vida, mas não é passível de definição exata em termos lógicos, biológicos ou estéticos. O conceito de jogo deve permanecer distinto de todas as outras formas de pensamento através das quais exprimimos a estrutura da vida espiritual e social. Teremos, portanto, de limitar-nos a descrever suas principais características.

Dado que nosso tema são as relações entre o jogo e a cultura, não é indispensável fazer referência a todas as formas possíveis de jogo, sendo possível limitarmo-nos a suas manifestações sociais. Poderíamos considerar estas as formas mais elevadas de jogo. Geralmente são muito mais fáceis de descrever do que os jogos mais primitivos das crianças e dos animais jovens, por possuírem forma mais nítida e articulada e traços mais variados e visíveis, ao passo que na interpretação dos jogos primitivos deparamos imediatamente com aquela característica irredutível, puramente lúdica, que em nossa opinião resiste inabalavelmente à análise. Faremos referência aos concursos e às corridas, às representações e aos espetáculos, à dança e à música, às mascaradas e aos torneios. Algumas das características que vamos indicar são próprias do jogo em geral, enquanto outras pertencem aos jogos sociais em particular.

Antes de mais nada, o jogo é uma atividade voluntária. Sujeito a ordens, deixa de ser jogo, podendo no máximo ser uma imitação forçada. Basta esta característica de liberdade para afastá-lo definitivamente do curso da

evolução natural. É um elemento a esta acrescentado, que a recobre como um ornamento ou uma roupagem. É evidente que, aqui, se entende liberdade em seu sentido mais lato, sem referência ao problema filosófico do determinismo. Poder-se-ia objetar que esta liberdade não existe para o animal e a criança, por serem estes levados ao jogo pela força de seu instinto e pela necessidade de desenvolverem suas faculdades físicas e seletivas. Todavia, o termo "instinto" levanta uma incógnita e, além disso, a pressuposição inicial da utilidade do jogo constitui uma petição de princípio. As crianças e os animais brincam porque gostam de brincar, e é precisamente em tal fato que reside sua liberdade.

Seja como for, para o indivíduo adulto e responsável o jogo é uma função que facilmente poderia ser dispensada, é algo supérfluo. Só se torna uma necessidade urgente na medida em que o prazer por ele provocado o transforma numa necessidade. É possível, em qualquer momento, adiar ou suspender o jogo. Jamais é imposto pela necessidade física ou pelo dever moral, e nunca constitui uma tarefa, sendo sempre praticado nas "horas de ócio". Liga-se a noções de obrigação e dever apenas quando constitui uma função cultural reconhecida, como no culto e no ritual.

Chegamos, assim, à primeira das características fundamentais do jogo: o fato de ser livre, de ser ele próprio liberdade. Uma segunda característica, intimamente ligada à primeira, é que o jogo não é vida "corrente" nem vida "real". Pelo contrário, trata-se de uma evasão da vida "real" para uma esfera temporária de atividade com orientação própria. Toda criança sabe perfeitamente quando está "só fazendo de conta" ou quando está "só brincando". A seguinte estória, que me foi contada pelo pai de um menino, constitui um excelente exemplo de como essa consciência está profundamente enraizada no espírito das crianças. O pai foi encontrar seu filhinho de quatro anos brincando "de trenzinho" na frente de uma fila de cadeiras. Quando foi beijá-lo, disse-lhe o menino: "Não dê beijo na máquina, Papai, senão os carros não vão acreditar que é de verdade". Esta característica de "faz de conta" do jogo exprime um sentimento da inferioridade do jogo em relação à "seriedade", o qual parece ser tão fundamental quanto o próprio jogo. Todavia, conforme já salientamos, esta consciência do fato de "só fazer de conta" no jogo não impede de modo algum que ele se processe com a maior seriedade, com um enlevo e um entusiasmo que chegam ao arrebatamento e, pelo menos temporariamente, tiram todo o significado da palavra "só" da frase acima. Todo jogo é capaz, a qualquer momento, de absorver inteiramente o jogador. Nunca há um contraste bem nítido entre ele e a seriedade, sendo a inferioridade do jogo sempre reduzida pela superioridade de sua seriedade. Ele se toma seriedade e a seriedade, jogo. É possível ao jogo alcançar extremos de beleza e de perfeição que ultrapassam em muito a seriedade. Voltaremos a referir-nos a problemas difíceis deste tipo quando analisarmos mais minuciosamente as relações entre o jogo e o culto.

No que diz respeito às características formais do jogo, todos os observadores dão grande ênfase ao fato de ser ele *desinteressado*. Visto que não pertence à vida "comum", ele se situa fora do mecanismo de satisfação imediata das necessidades e dos desejos e, pelo contrário, interrompe este mecanismo. Ele se insinua como atividade temporária, que tem uma finalidade autônoma e se realiza tendo em vista uma satisfação que consiste nessa própria realização. É pelo menos assim que, em primeira instância, o ele se nos apresenta: como um *intervalo* em nossa vida quotidiana. Todavia, em sua qualidade de distensão regularmente verificada, ele se torna um acompanhamento, um complemento e, em última análise, uma parte integrante da vida em geral. Ornamenta a vida, ampliando-a, e nessa medida toma-se uma necessidade tanto para o indivíduo, como função vital, quanto para a sociedade, devido ao

sentido que encerra, à sua significação, a seu valor expressivo, a suas associações espirituais e sociais, em resumo, como função cultural. Dá satisfação a todo o tipo de ideais comunitários. Nesta medida, situa-se numa esfera superior aos processos estritamente biológicos de alimentação, reprodução e autoconservação. Esta afirmação está em aparente contradição com o fato de que os jogos ligados à atividade sexual se verificam justamente na época do cio. Mas seria assim tão absurdo atribuir ao canto, à dança e o "paradear" das aves um lugar exterior ao domínio puramente fisiológico, tal como no caso do jogo humano? Seja como for, este último pertence sempre, em todas as suas formas mais elevadas, ao domínio do ritual e do culto, ao domínio do sagrado.

Mas o fato de ser necessário, de ser culturalmente útil e, até, de se tornar cultura diminuirá em alguma coisa o caráter desinteressado do jogo? Não, porque a finalidade a que obedece é exterior aos interesses materiais imediatos e à satisfação individual das necessidades biológicas. Em sua qualidade de atividade sagrada, o jogo naturalmente contribui para a prosperidade do grupo social, mas de outro modo e através de meios totalmente diferentes da aquisição de elementos de subsistência.

O jogo distingue-se da vida "comum" tanto pelo lugar quanto pela duração que ocupa. É esta a terceira de suas características principais: o isolamento, a limitação. É "jogado até ao fim" dentro de certos limites de tempo e de espaço. Possui um caminho e um sentido próprios.

O jogo inicia-se e, em determinado momento, "acabou". Joga-se até que se chegue a um certo fim. Enquanto está decorrendo tudo é movimento, mudança, alternância, sucessão, associação, separação. E há, diretamente ligada à sua limitação no tempo, uma outra característica interessante do jogo, a de se fixar imediatamente como fenômeno cultural. Mesmo depois de o jogo ter chegado ao fim, ele permanece como uma criação nova do espírito, um tesouro a ser conservado pela memória. É transmitido, toma-se tradição. Pode ser repetido a qualquer momento, quer seja "jogo infantil" ou jogo de xadrez, ou em períodos determinados, como um mistério. Uma de suas qualidades fundamentais reside nesta capacidade de repetição, que não se aplica apenas ao jogo em geral, mas também à sua estrutura interna. Em quase todas as formas mais elevadas de jogo, os elementos de repetição e de alternância (como no *refrain*) constituem como que o fio e a tessitura do objeto.

A limitação no espaço é ainda mais flagrante do que a limitação no tempo. Todo jogo se processa e existe no interior de um campo previamente delimitado, de maneira material ou imaginária, deliberada ou espontânea. Tal como não há diferença formal entre o jogo e o culto, do mesmo modo o "lugar sagrado" não pode ser formalmente distinguido do terreno de jogo. A arena, a mesa de jogo, o círculo mágico, o templo, o palco, a tela, o campo de tênis, o tribunal etc., têm todos a forma e a função de terrenos de jogo, isto é, lugares proibidos, isolados, fechados, sagrados, em cujo interior se respeitam determinadas regras. Todos eles são mundos temporários dentro do mundo habitual, dedicados à prática de uma atividade especial.

Reina dentro do domínio do jogo uma ordem específica e absoluta. E aqui chegamos a sua outra característica, mais positiva ainda: ele cria ordem e é ordem. Introduz na confusão da vida e na imperfeição do mundo uma perfeição temporária e limitada, exige uma ordem suprema e absoluta: a menor desobediência a esta "estraga o jogo", privando-o de seu caráter próprio e de todo e qualquer valor. É talvez devido a esta afinidade profunda entre a ordem e o jogo que este, como assinalamos de passagem, parece estar em tão larga medida ligado ao domínio da estética. Há nele uma tendência para ser belo. Talvez este fator estético seja idêntico aquele impulso de criar formas ordenadas que penetra o jogo em todos os seus aspectos. As palavras que empregamos para

designar seus elementos pertencem quase todas à estética. São as mesmas palavras com as quais procuramos descrever os efeitos da beleza: tensão, equilíbrio, compensação, contraste, variação, solução, união e desunião. O jogo lança sobre nós um feitiço: é "fascinante", "cativante". Está cheio das duas qualidades mais nobres que somos capazes de ver nas coisas: o ritmo e a harmonia.

O elemento de tensão, a que acabamos de nos referir, desempenha no jogo um papel especialmente importante.

Tensão significa incerteza, acaso. Há um esforço para levar o jogo até ao desenlace, o jogador quer que alguma coisa "vá" ou "saia", pretende "ganhar" à custa de seu próprio esforço. Uma criança estendendo a mão para um brinquedo, um gatinho brincando com um novelo, uma garotinha jogando bola, todos eles procuram conseguir alguma coisa difícil, ganhar, acabar com uma tensão. O jogo é "tenso", como se costuma dizer. É este elemento de tensão e solução que domina em todos os jogos solitários de destreza e aplicação, como os quebra-cabeças, as charadas, os jogos de armar, as paciências, o tiro ao alvo, e quanto mais estiver presente o elemento competitivo mais apaixonante se torna o jogo. Esta tensão chega ao extremo nos jogos de azar e nas competições esportivas. Embora o jogo enquanto tal esteja para além do domínio do bem e do mal, o elemento de tensão lhe confere um certo valor ético, na medida em que são postas à prova as qualidades do jogador: sua força e tenacidade, sua habilidade e coragem e, igualmente, suas capacidades espirituais, sua "lealdade". Porque, apesar de seu ardente desejo de ganhar, deve sempre obedecer às regras do jogo.

Por sua vez, estas regras são um fator muito importante para o conceito de jogo. Todo jogo tem suas regras. São estas que determinam aquilo que "vale" dentro do mundo temporário por ele circunscrito. As regras de todos os jogos são absolutas e não permitem discussão. Uma vez, de passagem, Paul Valéry exprimiu uma idéia das mais importantes: "No que diz respeito às regras de um jogo, nenhum ceticismo é possível, pois o princípio no qual elas assentam é uma verdade apresentada como inabalável". E não há dúvida de que a desobediência às regras implica a derrocada do mundo do jogo. O jogo acaba: O apito do árbitro quebra o feitiço e a vida "real" recomeça.

O jogador que desrespeita ou ignora as regras é um "desmancha-prazeres". Este, porém, difere do jogador desonesto, do batoteiro, já que o último finge jogar seriamente o jogo e aparenta reconhecer o círculo mágico. É curioso notar como os jogadores são muito mais indulgentes para com o batoteiro do que com o desmancha-prazeres; o que se deve ao fato de este último abalar o próprio mundo do jogo. Retirando-se do jogo, denuncia o caráter relativo e frágil desse mundo no qual, temporariamente, se havia encerrado com os outros. Priva o jogo da *ilusão* — palavra cheia de sentido que significa literalmente "em jogo" (de *inlusio*, *illudere* ou *inludere*). Torna-se, portanto, necessário expulsá-lo, pois ele ameaça a existência da comunidade dos jogadores.

A figura do desmancha-prazeres desenha-se com mais nitidez nos jogos infantis. A pequena comunidade não procura averiguar se o desmancha-prazeres abandona o jogo por incapacidade ou por imposição alheia, ou melhor, não reconhece sua incapacidade e acusa-o de falta de audácia. Para ela, o problema da obediência e da consciência é reduzido ao do medo ao castigo. O desmancha-prazeres destrói o mundo mágico, portanto, é um covarde e precisa ser expulso. Mesmo no universo da seriedade, os hipócritas e os batoteiros sempre tiveram mais sorte do que os desmancha-prazeres: os apóstatas, os hereges, os reformadores, os profetas e os objetores de consciência.

Todavia, freqüentemente acontece que, por sua vez, os desmancha-prazeres fundam uma nova comunidade, dotada de regras próprias. Os fora da lei, os revolucionários, os membros das sociedades secretas, os hereges de todos os tipos têm tendências fortemente associativas, se não sociáveis, e todas as suas ações são marcadas por um certo elemento lúdico.

As comunidades de jogadores geralmente tendem a tornar-se permanentes, mesmo depois de acabado o jogo. É claro que nem todos os jogos de bola de gude, ou de bridge, levam à fundação de um clube. Mas a sensação de estar "separadamente juntos", numa situação excepcional, de partilhar algo importante, afastando-se do resto do mundo e recusando as normas habituais, conserva sua magia para além da duração de cada jogo. O clube pertence ao jogo tal como o chapéu pertence à cabeça. Seria demasiado simplista explicar todas as associações a que os antropólogos chamam "fratrias" (como por exemplo os clãs, as irmandades etc.) apenas como sociedades lúdicas. Mas, mais de uma vez se verificou como é difícil estabelecer uma separação nítida entre, de um lado, os agrupamentos sociais permanentes (sobretudo nas culturas arcaicas, com seus costumes extremamente importantes, solenes e sagrados) e, de outro, o domínio lúdico.

O caráter especial e excepcional do jogo é ilustrado de maneira flagrante pelo ar de mistério em que freqüentemente se envolve. Desde a mais tenra infância, o encanto do jogo é reforçado por se fazer dele um segredo. Isto é, para *nós*, e não para os outros. O que os outros fazem, "lá fora", é coisa de momento não nos importa. Dentro do círculo do jogo, as leis e costumes da vida quotidiana perdem validade. Somos diferentes e fazemos coisas diferentes. Esta supressão temporária do mundo habitual é inteiramente manifesta no mundo infantil, mas não é menos evidente nos grandes jogos rituais dos povos primitivos. Na grande festa de iniciação em que os jovens são aceitos na comunidade dos homens, não são apenas os neófitos que ficam isentos das leis e regras da tribo; há uma trégua geral de todas as querelas e uma suspensão de todos os atos de vingança. Desta suspensão temporária da vida social normal, durante a época dos jogos sagrados, existem também numerosos indícios em civilizações mais evoluídas. Todas as saturnais e costumes carnavalescos são exemplos disso. Ainda recentemente entre nós, em época de costumes locais mais rudes, privilégios de classe mais acentuados e uma polícia mais tolerante, aceitavam-se as orgias dos jovens de classe alta como "estudentadas". Estas ainda subsistem nas universidades inglesas, sob o nome de *ragging*, o qual o *Oxford English Dictionary* define como *an extensive display of noisy and disorderly con-duct carried out in defiance of authority and discipline*⁵.

A capacidade de tornar-se outro e o mistério do jogo manifestara-se de modo marcante no costume da mascarada. Aqui atinge o máximo a natureza "extra-ordinária" do jogo. O indivíduo disfarçado ou mascarado desempenha um papel como se fosse outra pessoa, ou melhor, *é* outra pessoa. Os terrores da infância, a alegria esfusiente, a fantasia mística e os rituais sagrados encontram-se inextricavelmente misturados nesse estranho mundo do disfarce e da máscara.

Numa tentativa de resumir as características formais do jogo, poderíamos considerá-lo uma atividade livre, conscientemente tomada como "não-séria" e exterior à vida habitual, mas ao mesmo tempo capaz de absorver o jogador de maneira intensa e total. É uma atividade desligada de todo e qualquer interesse material, com a qual não se pode obter qualquer lucro, praticada dentro de limites espaciais e temporais próprios, segundo uma certa ordem

⁵ Uma intensa manifestação de comportamento barulhento e desordeiro, levada a cabo num espírito de desrespeito à autoridade e à disciplina. (N. do T.)

e certas regras. Promove a formação de grupos sociais com tendência a rodearem-se de segredo e a sublinharem sua diferença em relação ao resto do mundo por meio de disfarces ou outros meios semelhantes.

A função do jogo, nas formas mais elevadas que aqui nos interessam, pode de maneira geral ser definida pelos dois aspectos fundamentais que nele encontramos: uma luta *por* alguma coisa ou a representação *de* alguma coisa. Estas duas funções podem também por vezes confundir-se, de tal modo que o jogo passe a "representar" uma luta, ou, então, se torne uma luta para melhor representação de alguma coisa.

Representar significa mostrar, e isto pode consistir simplesmente na exibição, perante um público, de uma característica natural. O pavão e o peru limitam-se a mostrar às fêmeas o esplendor de sua plumagem, mas aqui o aspecto essencial é a exibição de um fenômeno invulgar destinado a provocar admiração. Se a ave acompanha essa exibição com alguns passos de dança passamos a ter um espetáculo, uma passagem da realidade vulgar para um plano mais elevado. Nada sabemos daquilo que o animal sente durante esses atos, mas sabemos que as exibições das crianças mostram, desde a mais tenra infância, um alto grau de imaginação. A criança representa alguma coisa diferente, ou mais bela, ou mais nobre, ou mais perigosa do que habitualmente é. Finge ser um príncipe, um papai, uma bruxa malvada ou um tigre. A criança fica literalmente "transportada" de prazer, superando-se a si mesma a tal ponto que quase chega a acreditar que realmente é esta ou aquela coisa, sem contudo perder inteiramente o sentido da "realidade habitual". Mais do que uma realidade falsa, sua representação é a realização de uma aparência: é "imaginação", no sentido original do termo.

Se passarmos agora das brincadeiras infantis para as representações sagradas das civilizações primitivas, veremos que nestas se encontra "em jogo" um elemento espiritual diferente, que é muito difícil de definir. A representação sagrada é mais do que a simples realização de uma aparência é até mais do que uma realização simbólica: é uma realização mística. Algo de invisível e inefável adquire nela uma forma bela, real e sagrada. Os participantes do ritual estão certos de que o ato concretiza e efetua uma certa beatificação, faz surgir uma ordem de coisas mais elevada do que aquela em que habitualmente vivem. Mas tudo isto não impede que essa "realização pela representação" conserve, sob todos os aspectos, as características formais do jogo. É executada no interior de um espaço circunscrito sob a forma de festa, isto é, dentro de um espírito de alegria e liberdade. Em sua intenção é delimitado um universo próprio de valor temporário. Mas seus efeitos não cessam depois de acabado o jogo; seu esplendor continua sendo projetado sobre o mundo de todos os dias, influência benéfica que garante a segurança, a ordem e a prosperidade de todo o grupo até à próxima época dos rituais sagrados.

Em toda a parte do mundo podem encontrar-se exemplos disso. Segundo uma velha crença chinesa, a música e a dança têm a finalidade de manter o mundo em seu devido curso e obrigar a natureza a proteger o homem. A prosperidade de cada ano depende da fiel execução de competições sagradas na época das festas. Caso essas reuniões não se realizem, as colheitas não poderão amadurecer⁶.

O ritual é um *dromenon*, isto é, uma coisa que é feita, uma ação. A matéria desta ação é um *drama*, isto é, uma vez mais, um ato, uma ação representada num palco. Esta ação pode revestir a forma de um espetáculo ou de uma competição. O rito, ou "ato ritual", representa um acontecimento cósmico, um evento dentro do processo natural. Contudo, a palavra "representa" não exprime o sentido exato da ação, pelo menos na conotação mais vaga que atualmente predomina; porque aqui "representação" é realmente *identificação*, a repetição mística ou a *representação* do

⁶ M. Granet: *Fêtes et Chansons anciennes de la Chine*, Paris, 1914, pp. 15Ü, 292; *Danses et Legendes de la Chine ancienne*, Paris, 1926, p. 351 e ss.; *La civilisation chinoise*, Paris, 1929, p.231.

acontecimento. O ritual produz um efeito que, mais do que *figurativamente mostrado*, é *realmente reproduzido* na ação. Portanto, a função do rito está longe de ser simplesmente imitativa, leva a uma verdadeira participação no próprio ato sagrado⁷. É um fator *helping the action out*⁸.

Para a ciência da cultura, o problema não é determinar como a psicologia concebe o processo que se exprime nestes fenômenos. A psicologia poderá tentar arrumar a questão definindo o ritual como *identificação compensadora*, uma espécie de substituto, "um ato representativo devido à impossibilidade de levar a cabo uma ação real e intencional"⁹. O que é importante para a ciência da cultura é procurar compreender o significado dessas figurações no espírito dos povos que as praticam e nelas crêem.

Tocamos aqui no próprio âmago da religião comparada: a natureza e a essência do ritual e do mistério. Todos os antigos sacrifícios rituais dos Vedas baseiam-se na idéia de que a cerimônia — seja ela sacrifício, competição ou representação, — representando um certo acontecimento cósmico que se deseja, obriga os deuses a provocar sua realização efetiva. Há, portanto, um *jogo*, no sentido pleno do termo. Deixaremos agora de lado os aspectos especificamente religiosos, concentrando-nos na análise dos elementos lúdicos nos rituais primitivos.

O culto é, portanto, um espetáculo, uma representação dramática, uma figuração imaginária de uma realidade desejada. Na época das grandes festas, o grupo social celebra os acontecimentos principais da vida da natureza levando a efeito representações sagradas, que representam a mudança das estações, o surgimento e o declínio dos astros, o crescimento e o amadurecimento das colheitas, a vida e a morte dos homens e dos animais. Como escreve Leo Frobenius, a humanidade "joga", representa a ordem da natureza tal como ela está impressa em sua consciência¹⁰. Num passado remoto, segundo Frobenius, os homens começaram por tomar consciência dos fenômenos do mundo vegetal e animal só depois, adquirindo as idéias de tempo e espaço, dos meses e das estações, do percurso do sol e da lua. Passaram depois a representar esta grande ordem da existência em cerimônias sagradas, nas quais e através das quais realizavam de novo, ou "recriavam", os acontecimentos representados, contribuindo assim para a preservação da ordem cósmica. E há mais. As formas desse jogo litúrgico deram origem à ordem da própria comunidade, às instituições políticas primitivas. O rei é o sol, e seu reinado é a imagem do curso do sol. Durante toda sua vida o rei desempenha o papel do sol, e no final sofre o mesmo destino que o sol: deve ser morto, de forma ritual, por seu próprio povo.

Podemos deixar de lado o problema de saber até que ponto esta explicação do regicídio ritual e toda a concepção em que ela assenta podem ser consideradas "demonstradas". O problema que aqui nos interessa é o seguinte: que devemos pensar desta projeção concreta da primitiva consciência da natureza? Como devemos encarar um processo espiritual que se inicia com uma experiência inexpressa dos fenômenos cósmicos e conduz a sua representação imaginária no jogo?

Frobenius tem razão ao rejeitar a fácil explicação que se contenta com a noção de um "instinto de jogo" inato. Alega ele que o termo "instinto" é "uma invenção, uma confissão de impotência perante o problema da realidade"¹¹. Com idêntica clareza, e com mais razão ainda, rejeita, como vestígio de uma maneira ultrapassada de pensar, a tendência para explicar todo progresso cultural em termos de uma "finalidade especial", de um "porquê"

⁷ *As the Greeks would say, rather methectic than mimetic.* Jane E. Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, 1912, p. 125.

⁸ R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, Londres, 1912, p. 48.

⁹ Buytendijk, *Het Spel van Mensch en Dier als openbaring van levens-driften*. Amsterdã, 1932, pp. 70-71.

¹⁰ Leo Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas. Prolegomena zu einer histo-rischen Gestaltlehre*, Phaidon Verlag, 1933; *Schicksalskunde in Sine des Kul-turverdens*, Leipzig, 1932.

¹¹ *Kulturgeschichte*, pp. 23, 122.

ou um "por que razão", como critério para julgar a capacidade criadora de cultura de uma comunidade. Ponto de vista este que qualifica como "a pior forma de tirania da causalidade" e como "utilitarismo antiquado"¹².

A concepção deste processo espiritual defendida por Frobenius é mais ou menos a seguinte: a experiência, ainda inexpressa da natureza e da vida, manifesta-se no homem primitivo sob a forma de "arrebatamento"¹³. "A capacidade criadora, tanto nos povos quanto nas crianças ou em qualquer indivíduo criador, deriva desse estado de arrebatamento. "Os homens são arrebatados pela revelação do destino". "A realidade do ritmo natural da gênese e da extinção arrebatava sua consciência e este fato leva-o a representar sua emoção em um ato, inevitável e como que reflexo"¹⁴. Assim, segundo ele, trata-se aqui de um processo espiritual de transformação que é absolutamente necessário. A emoção, o arrebatamento perante os fenômenos da vida e da natureza é condensado pela ação reflexa e elevado à expressão poética e à arte. É esta a maneira mais aproximada para dar conta do processo de imaginação criadora, mas está longe de poder ser considerada uma verdadeira explicação. Continua tão obscuro como antes o caminho que leva da percepção estética ou mística, ou pelo menos metalógica, da ordem cósmica até aos rituais sagrados.

O grande estudioso da cultura emprega freqüentemente o termo *jogo*, sem contudo definir com exatidão qual o sentido que lhe atribui. Parece até por vezes aceitar sub-repticiamente aquilo mesmo que tão energicamente repudia e que, de maneira alguma, corresponde à característica essencial do jogo: o conceito de finalidade. Porque na descrição proposta por Frobenius, o jogo serve explicitamente para *representar*¹⁵ um acontecimento cósmico, de certo modo tornando-o presente. Há um elemento quase racionalista que irresistivelmente se impõe. Afinal de contas, o jogo e a representação têm para Frobenius sua razão de ser na expressão de qualquer coisa de diferente, que é o "arrebatamento" por um acontecimento cósmico. Mas o próprio fato de a dramatização ser *representada* parece ter para ele importância secundária. Pelo menos teoricamente, a emoção poderia ser transmitida de maneira diferente. De nosso ponto de vista, pelo contrário, o que é importante é o próprio jogo. O ritual não difere de maneira essencial das formas superiores dos jogos infantis ou animais, e dificilmente poderia afirmar-se, que estas duas últimas formas tenham sua origem numa tentativa de expressão de qualquer emoção cósmica. Os jogos infantis possuem a qualidade lúdica em sua própria essência, e na forma mais pura dessa qualidade.

Seria talvez possível descrever o processo que conduz do "arrebatamento" pela natureza até à realização do ritual em termos ligeiramente diferentes dos de Frobenius, sem pretender oferecer a explicação de uma realidade inteiramente impenetrável, mas procurando apenas dar conta de uma situação de fato. Diríamos, então, que, na sociedade primitiva, verifica-se a presença do jogo, tal como nas crianças e nos animais, e que, desde a origem, nele se verificam todas as características lúdicas: ordem, tensão, movimento, mudança, solenidade, ritmo, entusiasmo. Só em fase mais tardia da sociedade o jogo se encontra associado à expressão de alguma coisa, nomeadamente aquilo a que podemos chamar "vida" ou "natureza". O que era jogo desprovido de expressão verbal adquire agora uma forma poética. Na forma e na função do jogo, que em si mesmo é uma entidade independente desprovida de sentido e de racionalidade, a consciência que o homem tem de estar integrado numa ordem cósmica encontra sua

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 122. A *Ergriffenheit* (arrebatamento) como momento dos jogos infantis, p. 147; veja-se o termo de Buytendijk, tomado de Erwin Strauss, que significa "disposição patética" ou "estado de comoção", como fundamento dos jogos infantis. Obra citada, p. 20.

¹⁴ *Schicksalskunde*, p. 142.

¹⁵ o termo alemão *spielen* significa ao mesmo tempo *jogar* e *representar*, tanto no sentido de *figurar* como no da representação teatral (tal como em inglês *to play* e o francês *jouer*). (N. do T.)

expressão primeira, mais alta e mais sagrada. Pouco a pouco, o jogo vai adquirindo a significação de ato sagrado. O culto vem-se juntar ao jogo; foi este, contudo, o fato inicial.

Encontramo-nos aqui em regiões difíceis de penetrar, tanto pela psicologia quanto pela filosofia. São questões que tocam no que há de mais profundo em nossa consciência. O culto é a forma mais alta e mais sagrada da seriedade. Como pode ele, apesar disso, ser jogo? Começamos por dizer que todo jogo, tanto das crianças como dos adultos, pode efetuar-se dentro do mais completo espírito de seriedade. Mas irá isto a ponto de implicar que o jogo continua sempre ligado à emoção sagrada do ato sacramental? Quanto a isto, nossas conclusões são de certa maneira obstruídas pela rigidez de nossas idéias habituais. Estamos habituados a considerar o jogo e a seriedade como constituindo uma antítese absoluta. Contudo, parece que isto não permite chegar ao nó do problema.

Prestemos um momento de atenção aos seguintes aspectos. A criança joga e brinca dentro da mais perfeita seriedade, que a justo título podemos considerar sagrada. Mas sabe perfeitamente que o que está fazendo é um jogo.

Também o esportista joga com o mais fervoroso entusiasmo, ao mesmo tempo que sabe estar jogando. O mesmo verificamos no ator, que, quando está no palco, deixa-se absorver inteiramente pelo "jogo" da representação teatral, ao mesmo tempo que tem consciência da natureza desta. O mesmo é válido para o violinista, que se eleva a um mundo superior ao de todos os dias, sem perder a consciência do caráter lúdico de sua atividade. Portanto, a qualidade lúdica pode ser própria das ações mais elevadas. Mas permitirá isto que prolonguemos a série de maneira a incluir o culto, afirmando ser também meramente lúdica a atividade do sacerdote que executa os rituais do sacrifício? À primeira vista isto parece absurdo, pois, aceitá-lo para uma religião nos obrigaria a aceitá-lo para todas. Assim, nossas idéias de culto, magia, liturgia, sacramento e mistério seriam todas abrangidas pelo conceito de jogo. Ora, quando lidamos com abstrações devemos sempre evitar o exagero de sua importância, e estender demasiado o conceito de jogo não levaria a mais do que a um mero jogo de palavras. Mas, levando em conta todos os aspectos do problema, não creio que seja um erro definirmos o ritual em termos lúdicos. O ato de culto possui todas as características formais e essenciais do jogo, que anteriormente enumeramos, sobretudo na medida em que transfere os participantes para um mundo diferente. Esta identidade do ritual e do jogo era reconhecida sem reservas por Platão, que não hesitava em incluir o sagrado na categoria de jogo. "É preciso tratar com seriedade aquilo que é sério", diz ele¹⁶. "Só Deus é digno da suprema seriedade, e o homem não passa de um brinquedo de Deus, e é esse o melhor aspecto de sua natureza. Portanto, todo homem e mulher devem viver a vida de acordo com essa natureza, jogando os jogos mais nobres, contrariando suas inclinações atuais. Pois eles consideram a guerra uma coisa séria, embora não haja na guerra jogo ou cultura dignos desse nome"¹⁷, justamente as coisas que *nós* consideramos mais sérias. Portanto, todos devem esforçar-se ao máximo por viver em paz. Qual é, então, a maneira mais certa de viver? A vida deve ser vivida como jogo, jogando certos jogos, fazendo sacrifícios, cantando e dançando, e assim o homem poderá conquistar o favor dos deuses e defender-se de seus inimigos, triunfando no combate"¹⁸.

A identificação platônica entre o jogo e o sagrado não desqualifica este último, reduzindo-o ao jogo, mas, pelo contrário, equivale a exaltar o primeiro, elevando-o às mais altas regiões do espírito. Dissemos no início que o jogo é anterior à cultura; e, em certo sentido, é também superior, ou pelo menos autônomo em relação a ela.

¹⁶ *Leis*. VII. 803 CD

¹⁷ οὐτ' οὖν παιδία ... οὐτ' αὐ παιδεία ... ἀξίολογο.

¹⁸ Cf. *Leis*, VII, 796 B, onde Platão fala das danças sagradas dos curetas como των χορηγιῶν εὐοπλίας παιγνία. As íntimas relações existentes entre o jogo e os mistérios sagrados são tratadas de maneira extremamente sugestiva por Romano Guanini no capítulo *Die Liturgie als Spiel* de seu *Vom Grisi des Liturgie*, pp. 56-70 (Ecclesia Orans, herausg. von Dr. Ildefons Herwegen, I, Freiburg i. B. 1922). Sem fazer referência a Platão, aproxima o mais possível das idéias deste acima citadas. Atribui à liturgia grande número de caracteres comumente aceitos como próprios do jogo. Também a liturgia é, em última análise, zwecklos *aber doch sinnvoll* sem finalidade. e contudo rica de sentido.

Podemos situar--nos, no jogo, abaixo do nível da seriedade, como faz a criança; mas podemos também situar-nos acima desse nível, quando atingimos as regiões do belo e do sagrado.

Adotando este ponto de vista, podemos agora definir de maneira mais rigorosa as relações entre o ritual e o jogo. A extrema semelhança das duas formas não nos deixa mais perplexos, e nossa atenção continua presa ao problema de saber até que ponto todos os atos de culto são abrangidos pela categoria do jogo.

Verificamos que uma das características mais importantes do jogo é sua separação espacial em relação à vida quotidiana. É-lhe reservado, quer material ou idealmente, um espaço fechado, isolado do ambiente quotidiano, e é dentro desse espaço que o jogo se processa e que suas regras têm validade. Ora, a delimitação de um lugar sagrado é também a característica primordial de todo ato de culto. Esta exigência de isolamento para o ritual, incluindo a magia e a vida jurídica, tem um alcance superior ao meramente espacial e temporal. Quase todos os rituais de consagração e iniciação implicam um certo isolamento artificial tanto dos ministros como dos neófitos. Sempre que se trata de proferir um voto, de ser recebido numa Ordem ou numa confraria, de fazer um juramento ou de entrar para uma sociedade secreta, de uma maneira ou de outra há sempre essa delimitação de um lugar do jogo. O mágico, o áugure e o sacrificador começam sempre por circunscrever seu espaço sagrado. O sacramento e o mistério implicam sempre um lugar santificado.

De um ponto de vista formal, não existe diferença alguma entre a delimitação de um espaço para fins sagrados e a mesma operação para fins de simples jogo. A pista de corridas, o campo de tênis, o tabuleiro de xadrez ou o terreno da amarelinha não se distinguem, formalmente, do templo ou do círculo mágico. A extrema semelhança que se verifica entre os rituais dos sacrifícios de todo o mundo mostra que esses costumes devem ter suas raízes em alguma característica fundamental e essencial do espírito humano. É costume reduzir esta analogia geral das formas de cultura a qualquer causa "racional" ou "lógica", explicando a necessidade de isolamento e separação pela ânsia de proteger os indivíduos consagrados de influências maléficas, pois eles, em seu estado de consagração, são particularmente vulneráveis às práticas dos espíritos malignos, além de constituírem eles mesmos um perigo para os que os rodeiam. É uma explicação que coloca na origem do processo cultural em causa uma reflexão de ordem racional e uma intenção utilitária, precisamente aquilo que Frobenius recomendava evitar. Mesmo que não voltemos aqui a cair na antiquada teoria da invenção da religião pela classe sacerdotal, continuamos, mesmo assim, a introduzir um elemento racionalista que deveria ser evitado. Se, por outro lado, aceitarmos a identidade essencial e original do jogo e do ritual, limitamo-nos a reconhecer o lugar santificado como um campo de jogo, sem chegar a colocar a ilusória questão do "por que e para que".

Mesmo estabelecida a identidade formal do ritual e do jogo, continua sendo necessário saber se esta semelhança vai mais longe que o aspecto puramente formal. É surpreendente que a antropologia e a religião comparada tenham prestado tão pouca atenção ao problema de saber até que ponto as práticas rituais, desenrolando-se dentro do quadro formal do jogo, são marcadas também pela atitude e pela atmosfera do jogo. Mesmo Frobenius, que eu saiba, não colocou este problema.

Escusado seria dizer que a atitude espiritual de um grupo social, ao efetuar e experimentar seus ritos sagrados, é da mais extrema e mais santa gravidade. Mas insistamos uma vez mais: o jogo autêntico e espontâneo também pode ser profundamente sério. O jogador pode entregar-se de corpo e alma ao jogo, e a consciência de tratar-se "apenas" de um jogo pode passar para segundo plano. A alegria que está indissolivelmente ligada ao jogo

pode transformar-se, não só em tensão, mas também em arrebatamento. A frivolidade e o êxtase são os dois pólos que limitam o âmbito do jogo.

O jogo tem, por natureza, um ambiente instável. A qualquer momento é possível à "vida quotidiana" reafirmar seus direitos, seja devido a um impacto exterior, que venha interromper o jogo, ou devido a uma quebra das regras, ou então do interior, devido ao afrouxamento do espírito do jogo, a uma desilusão, um desencanto.

Quais são, então, a atitude e o ambiente predominantes nas celebrações sagradas? A palavra *celebrar* quase diz tudo: o ato sagrado é celebrado, isto é, serve de pretexto para uma festa. A caminho dos santuários, o povo prepara-se para uma manifestação de alegria coletiva. As consagrações, os sacrifícios, as danças e competições sagradas, as representações, os mistérios, tudo isto vai constituir parte integrante de uma festa. Pode acontecer que os ritos sejam sangrentos, que as provas a que é submetido o iniciado sejam cruéis, que as máscaras sejam atemorizantes, mas tudo isso não impede que o ambiente dominante seja de festividade, implicando a interrupção da vida quotidiana. A festa é acompanhada, em toda sua duração, por banquetes, festins e toda a espécie de extravagâncias. Tanto nas festividades da Grécia antiga como nas das religiões da África atual, seria difícil traçar um limite preciso entre o ambiente da festa em geral e a santa emoção suscitada pelo mistério central.

Quase ao mesmo tempo que a primeira edição deste livro, o sábio húngaro Karl Kerényi publicou um estudo sobre a natureza da festa cuja ligação com nosso tema é das mais estreitas¹⁹. Segundo Kerényi, também as festas possuem aquele caráter de independência primeira e absoluta que atribuímos ao jogo. "Entre as realidades psíquicas", diz ele, "a festa é uma entidade autônoma, impossível de se assimilar a qualquer outra coisa que exista no mundo"²⁰. Tal como nós em relação ao conceito de jogo, também Kerényi considera que a festa foi tratada de maneira insuficiente pelos estudiosos da cultura. "O fenômeno da festa parece ter sido inteiramente ignorado pelos etnólogos"²¹. O fato real da festa é ignorado, "como se não existisse para a ciência"²². Exatamente da mesma maneira que o jogo, poderíamos nós acrescentar.

Existem entre a festa e o jogo, naturalmente, as mais estreitas relações. Ambos implicam uma eliminação da vida quotidiana. Em ambos predominam a alegria, embora não necessariamente, pois também a festa pode ser séria. Ambos são limitados no tempo e no espaço. Em ambos encontramos uma combinação de regras estritas com a mais autêntica liberdade. Em resumo, a festa e o jogo têm em comuns suas características principais. O modo mais íntimo de união de ambos parece poder encontrar-se na dança. Segundo Kerényi, os índios Cora, da costa oriental do México, chamam a suas festas religiosas realizadas por ocasião da trituração e da torrefação do milho o "jogo" de seu deus supremo²³. As idéias de Kerényi sobre a festa como conceito cultural autônomo consolidam e ampliam as idéias que servem de base a este livro. Não se pense, todavia, que o estabelecimento de uma estreita relação entre o espírito do jogo e o ritual possa servir para explicar tudo. O jogo autêntico possui, além de suas características formais e de seu ambiente de alegria, pelo menos um outro traço dos mais fundamentais, a saber a consciência, mesmo que seja latente, de estar "apenas fazendo de conta". Permanece de pé a questão de saber até que ponto essa consciência é compatível com os atos rituais efetuados dentro de um espírito de devoção.

¹⁹ *Vom Wesen des Festes*, Paideuma, Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde, I, Heft 2 (dezembro de 1938), pp. 59-74.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*, p. 63.

²¹ *Id.*, p. 65.

²² *Id.*, p. 63.

²³ *Id.*, p. 60, segundo K. Th. Preuss, *Die Nairit-Expedition*, I, 1912, p. 106 e seguintes.

Se nos limitarmos aos ritos sagrados das culturas primitivas, não será impossível determinar o grau de seriedade com que são efetuados. Tanto quanto me consta, os etnólogos e antropólogos concordam todos com a idéia de que o estado de espírito que preside às festas religiosas dos povos selvagens não é de ilusão total. Existe uma consciência subjacente de que as coisas "não são reais". Podemos encontrar uma viva descrição desta atitude no livro de Ad. E. Jensen sobre as cerimônias de circuncisão e puberdade nas sociedades primitivas²⁴. Os indivíduos parecem não sentir terror algum em relação aos espíritos que circulam por toda a parte no decorrer da festa e aparecem perante os olhos de todos no ponto culminante desta. Não é de se admirar, pois são sempre os mesmos, os homens encarregados da direção do conjunto das cerimônias; foram eles mesmos que confeccionaram as máscaras que usam e que, depois de tudo terminado, ocultam-se dos olhos das mulheres. São eles que emitem os ruídos que anunciam o aparecimento dos espíritos, que desenham as pegadas destes na areia, que tocam as flautas que representam as vozes dos antepassados, que agitam os ruidosos tamborins. Em resumo, conclui, Jensen, sua situação assemelha-se em tudo à dos pais que brincam de Papai Noel com seus filhos: conhecem a máscara, mas escondem-na deles²⁵. Os homens contam às mulheres histórias fictícias acerca do que se passa nos bosques sagrados²⁶. A atitude dos neófitos oscila entre o êxtase, a loucura fingida, o frêmito de horror e a afetação dos garotos²⁷. Além disso, nem as mulheres, em última análise, são inteiramente iludidas. Elas sabem exatamente quem se esconde por trás desta ou daquela máscara. Apesar disso, quando uma máscara se aproxima em atitude ameaçadora apoderam-se delas uma extrema agitação e terror, e fogem gritando para todas as direções. Segundo Jensen, estas manifestações de terror são, em parte, inteiramente autênticas e espontâneas, e, apenas em parte, um papel imposto pela tradição. É assim que "é costume fazer". Em resumo, as mulheres desempenham o papel do coro da peça, e sabem que não podem comportar-se como "desmancha-prazeres"²⁸.

É impossível determinar de maneira rigorosa qual é o limite mínimo a partir do qual a gravidade religiosa passa a ser simples divertimento (*fun*). Entre nós, um pai que seja um tanto ou quanto pueril poderá ficar seriamente zangado se seus filhos o surpreenderem no exato momento em que estiver preparando os presentes de Natal. Na Colômbia Britânica, um pai Kwakiutl matou a filha por esta o ter surpreendido no momento em que talhava os objetos para uma cerimônia tribal²⁹. A natureza instável do sentimento religioso entre os negros Loango é descrita por Pechuel-Loesche em termos muito semelhantes aos de Jensen. A crença desses selvagens nos espetáculos e nas cerimônias sagradas é uma espécie de semicrença, sempre acompanhada por uma atitude de troça e de indiferença. O essencial, conclui esse autor, reside no *ambiente*³⁰. No capítulo intitulado *Primitive Credulity*, de seu livro *The Threshold of Religion*, R. R. Marett expõe a idéia de que em todas as religiões primitivas se encontra um certo elemento de "faz de conta" (*make-believe*). Tanto o feiticeiro como o enfeitado são ao mesmo tempo conscientes e iludidos. Mas um deles escolhe o papel do iludido³¹. "O selvagem é um bom ator, capaz de deixar-se absorver inteiramente por seu papel, tal como a criança quando brinca; e, também tal como a criança, é um bom espectador, capaz de ficar mortalmente assustado com o rugido de uma coisa que sabe perfeitamente não ser um verdadeiro

²⁴ *Beschneidung und Reifezeremonien bei Naturvölkern*, Stuttgart, 1933.

²⁵ *Id.*, p. 151.

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 156.

²⁷ *Id.*, p. 158.

²⁸ *Id.*, p. 150.

²⁹ F. Boas, *The Social Organisation and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, Washington, 1897, p. 435.

³⁰ *Völkenskunde von Loango*, Stuttgart, 1907, p. 345.

³¹ *Id.*, pp. 41-44.

leão³²." O indígena, diz Malinowski, sente e teme sua crença, mais do que a fórmula de maneira clara para si mesmo³³. Emprega certos termos e expressões, que devemos recolher como documentos da crença, tais como são, sem procurar integrá-los numa teoria estruturada. O comportamento dos indivíduos aos quais a sociedade primitiva atribui poderes sobrenaturais pode freqüentemente ser definido como um *playing up to the role* (manter-se fiel ao papel)³⁴.

Apesar desta consciência parcial do caráter fictício das coisas na magia e nos fenômenos sobrenaturais em geral, os mesmos observadores insistem que daí não deve concluir-se que todo o sistema de crenças e práticas seja apenas uma fraude inventada por um grupo de "incrédulos", tendo em vista dominar os "crédulos". É certo que esta interpretação não só é defendida por muitos viajantes, mas aparece até nas tradições dos próprios indígenas, mas, mesmo assim, não é possível que ela seja correta. "A origem de qualquer ato religioso só pode assentar na credulidade de todos, e sua manutenção espúria em defesa dos interesses de um grupo só pode ser a fase final de uma longa evolução³⁵. Em minha opinião, também a psicanálise tende a cair nesta antiquada interpretação das cerimônias da circuncisão e da puberdade, que Jensen com tanta razão rejeita³⁶.

De tudo isto decorre claramente, pelo menos para mim, uma consequência: que é impossível perder de vista, por um momento só que seja, o conceito de jogo, em tudo quanto diz respeito à vida religiosa dos povos primitivos. Somos forçados constantemente, para descrever numerosos fenômenos, a empregar a palavra "jogo". Mais ainda: a unidade e a indivisibilidade da crença e da incredulidade, a indissolúvel ligação entre a gravidade do sagrado e o "faz de conta" e o divertimento, são melhor compreendidas no interior do próprio conceito de jogo. Embora admita a semelhança entre o mundo da criança e o do selvagem, Jensen pretende estabelecer uma distinção de princípio entre a mentalidade de ambos. Quando colocada em presença da figura de Papai Noel, a criança, segundo Jensen, encontra-se perante um "conceito acabado", no qual "se encontra imediatamente" graças a seu próprio talento e lucidez. Mas "a atitude criadora do selvagem em relação às cerimônias aqui em questão é algo de inteiramente diferente. Ele não se encontra perante conceitos acabados, e sim perante seu meio ambiente natural, o qual exige uma interpretação; ele capta o misterioso demonismo desse meio ambiente e procura dar-lhe uma forma representativa³⁷". Reconhecemos aqui os pontos de vista de Frobenius, que foi professor de Jensen. Há, contudo, duas objeções que se impõem. Em primeiro lugar, quando afirma que o processo mental do selvagem é "algo de inteiramente diferente" do da criança, Jensen está se referindo, de um lado, aos *originadores* do culto, e, de outro, à criança *de hoje*. Mas nada sabemos desses originadores. Tudo aquilo que se nos oferece como objeto de estudo é uma comunidade religiosa que recebe as imagens de seu culto sob a forma de um material tradicional tão "acabado" como acontece no caso de criança, e que reage a essas imagens de maneira semelhante. Em segundo lugar, e mesmo que desprezemos este primeiro aspecto, continua inteiramente fora do alcance de nossa observação o processo de "interpretação" do meio ambiente natural, assim como o de sua "captação" e "representação" numa imagem ritual. Só através de metáforas fantasiosas Frobenius e Jensen conseguem forçar a uma abordagem do problema. Sobre a

³² *Id.*, p. 45.

³³ *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, 1922, p. 239.

³⁴ *Id.*, p. 240.

³⁵ Jensen, *loc. cit.*, p. 152.

³⁶ *Id.*, pp. 153, 173-7.

³⁷ *Id.*, p. 149 e ss

função que opera no processo de construção de imagens, ou imaginação, o máximo que podemos afirmar é que se trata de uma função poética; e a melhor maneira de defini-la será chamar-lhe função de jogo ou função lúdica.

Assim, o problema aparentemente simples de saber o que é na realidade o jogo nos faz penetrar profundamente no problema da natureza e origem dos conceitos religiosos. Como se sabe, esta é uma das idéias básicas mais importantes para todo estudioso de religião comparada. Quando uma certa forma de religião aceita uma identidade sagrada entre duas coisas de natureza diferente, como por exemplo um ser humano e um animal, não podemos definir corretamente esta relação como uma "ligação simbólica", no sentido em que a entendemos. A identidade e unidade essencial de ambos é muito mais profunda do que a relação entre uma substância e sua imagem simbólica. É uma identidade mística. Um *se tornou* o outro. Em sua dança mágica, o selvagem *é* um canguru. Devemos sempre ter o máximo cuidado com as deficiências e as diferenças de nossos meios de expressão. Para formularmos uma idéia mínima dos hábitos mentais do selvagem, somos obrigados a traduzi-los em nossa terminologia. Quer queiramos quer não, sempre transpomos as concepções religiosas do selvagem para o plano de exatidão rigorosamente lógica de nosso tipo de pensamento. Expressimos a relação entre ele e o animal com o qual se identifica como sendo uma "realidade" para ele, e um "jogo" para nós. O selvagem diz que se apoderou da "essência" do canguru, e nós dizemos que ele "brinca" de canguru. Mas o selvagem nada sabe das distinções conceptuais entre "ser" e "jogo", nada sabe sobre "identidade", "imagem" ou "símbolo". Portanto, continua em aberto a questão de saber se a melhor maneira de apreender o estado de espírito do selvagem no momento em que celebra seus rituais não será o recurso à noção primária e universalmente compreensível de "jogo". Em nossa concepção do jogo, desaparece a distinção entre a crença e o "faz de conta". A noção de jogo associa-se naturalmente à de sagrado. Qualquer prelúdio de Bach, um verso de qualquer tragédia é prova disso. Decidindo considerar toda a esfera da chamada cultura primitiva como um domínio lúdico, abrimos caminho para uma compreensão mais direta e mais geral de sua natureza, de maneira mais eficaz do que se recorrêssemos a uma meticulosa análise psicológica ou sociológica.

O jogo sagrado, pelo fato de ser indispensável ao bem-estar da comunidade e um germe de intuição cósmica e de desenvolvimento social, não deixa de ser um jogo que, como dizia Platão, se processa fora e acima das austeras necessidades da vida quotidiana.

É nos domínios do jogo sagrado que a criança, o poeta e o selvagem encontram um elemento comum. O homem moderno, graças à sua sensibilidade estética, conseguiu aproximar-se desses domínios muito mais do que o homem "esclarecido" do século XVIII. Pensamos aqui no encanto especial da máscara, como objeto artístico, para o espírito moderno. Há hoje um esforço para sentir a essência da vida primitiva. Esta forma de exotismo é por vezes acompanhada de uma certa afetação, mas mesmo assim é muito mais profunda do que a moda dos turcos, dos indianos e dos chineses no século XVIII. O homem moderno tem uma aguda sensibilidade para tudo quanto é longínquo e estranho. Nada o ajuda melhor a compreender as sociedades primitivas do que seu gosto pelas máscaras e disfarces. A etnologia demonstrou a imensa importância social deste fato, e por seu lado todo indivíduo culto sente perante a máscara uma emoção estética imediata, composta de beleza, de temor e de mistério. Mesmo para o adulto civilizado de hoje, a máscara conserva algo de seu poder misterioso, inclusive quando a ela não está ligada emoção religiosa alguma. A visão de uma figura mascarada, como pura experiência estética, nos transporta

para além da vida quotidiana, para um mundo onde reina algo diferente da claridade do dia: o mundo do selvagem, da criança e do poeta, o mundo do jogo.

Mesmo se pudermos legitimamente resumir nossa concepção do significado dos ritos primitivos a um irreduzível conceito de jogo, continuará de pé uma questão embaraçosa. Poderemos passar das formas religiosas inferiores para as mais elevadas? Dos estranhos e bárbaros rituais dos indígenas da África, da América e da Austrália o olhar passa naturalmente para os sacrifícios rituais dos Vedas, os quais contêm já, nos hinos do *Rig-Veda*, toda a sabedoria dos Upanishads, para as profundamente místicas homologias entre deus, homem e animal na religião dos egípcios, para os mistérios de Orfeu ou de Elêusis. Tanto quanto à forma como quanto à prática, todos estes estão intimamente ligados às chamadas religiões primitivas, mesmo quanto aos pormenores mais cruéis e bizarros. Mas o elevado grau de sabedoria e de verdade que neles vemos, ou julgamos ver, nos impede de a eles nos referirmos com aquele ar de superioridade que, afinal de contas, era igualmente despropositado no caso das culturas "primitivas". É preciso determinar se esta semelhança formal nos autoriza a aplicar a noção de jogo à consciência do sagrado, à crença que essas formas superiores contêm. Se aceitarmos a definição platônica do jogo, nada haverá de incorreto ou irreverente em que o façamos. Segundo a concepção de Platão, a religião é essencialmente constituída pelos jogos dedicados à divindade, os quais são para os homens a mais elevada atividade possível. Seguir esta concepção não implica de maneira alguma que se abandone o mistério sagrado, ou que se deixe de considerar este a mais alta expressão possível daquilo que escapa às regras da lógica. Os atos de culto, pelo menos sob uma parte importante de seus aspectos, serão sempre abrangidos pela categoria de jogo, mas esta aparente subordinação em nada implica o não reconhecimento de seu caráter sagrado.

The Game Design Reader

A Rules of Play Anthology

Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman

Roger Caillois: The Definition of Play, The Classification of Games

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The Definition of Play *and* The Classification of Games

Roger Caillois

Context

*The ideas that reached fruition in **Man, Play and Games** began as an appendix to Caillois' 1959 book **Man and the Sacred**. Much of Caillois' work on play and games is a direct critique of Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*. In **Man, Play and Games**, he expands Huizinga's more contest-oriented notion of play to include a range of cultural forms. Driven by a desire to study play in and of itself, during the two chapters included here Caillois establishes his well-known taxonomy of play forms. In the rest of the book, Caillois applies this taxonomy to play activities from a range of world cultures. "The Definition of Play," and "The Classification of Games" come from **Man, Play and Games**, copyright 1958 by Librairie Gallimard. English translation by Meyer Barash, copyright 1961 by the Free Press of Glencoe, Inc. Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.*

The Player Experience

Player and Character

What Is a Game?

What Is Play?

Roger Caillois (1913–1978) was a French writer and philosopher whose books ranged on topics from psychoanalysis and sociology to anthropology and art. He was the founding editor of *Diogenes*, the journal of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, and is considered by many to be one of the most influential thinkers on games and play.

The Definition of Play

In 1933, the rector of the University of Leyden, J. Huizinga, chose as the theme of an important oration, "The Cultural Limits of Play and the Serious." He took up and developed this topic in an original and powerful work published in 1938, *Homo Ludens*. This work, although most of its premises are debatable, is nonetheless capable of opening extremely fruitful avenues to research and reflection. In any case, it is permanently to J. Huizinga's credit that he has masterfully analyzed several of the fundamental characteristics of play and has demonstrated the importance of its role in the very development of civilization. First, he sought an exact definition of the essence of play; second, he tried to clarify the role of play present in or animating the essential aspects of all culture: in the arts as in philosophy, in poetry as well as in juridical institutions and even in the etiquette of war.

Huizinga acquitted himself brilliantly in this task, but even if he discovers play in areas where no one before him had done so, he deliberately omits, as obvious, the description and classification of games themselves, since they all respond to the same needs and reflect, without qualification, the same psychological attitude. His work is not a study of games, but an inquiry into the creative quality of the play principle in the domain of culture, and more precisely, of the spirit that rules certain kinds of games—those which are competitive. The examination of the criteria used by Huizinga to demarcate his universe of discourse is helpful in understanding the strange gaps in a study which is in every other way remarkable. Huizinga defines play as follows:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.¹

Such a definition, in which all the words are important and meaningful, is at the same time too broad and too narrow. It is meritorious and fruitful to have grasped the affinity which exists between play and the secret or mysterious, but this relationship cannot be part

of the definition of play, which is nearly always spectacular or ostentatious. Without doubt, secrecy, mystery, and even travesty can be transformed into play activity, but it must be immediately pointed out that this transformation is necessarily to the detriment of the secret and mysterious, which play exposes, publishes, and somehow *expends*. In a word, play tends to remove the very nature of the mysterious. On the other hand, when the secret, the mask, or the costume fulfills a sacramental function one can be sure that not play, but an institution is involved. All that is mysterious or make-believe by nature approaches play: moreover, it must be that the function of fiction or diversion is to remove the mystery; i.e. the mystery may no longer be awesome, and the counterfeit may not be a beginning or symptom of metamorphosis and possession.

In the second place, the part of Huizinga's definition which views play as action denuded of all material interest, simply excludes bets and games of chance—for example, gambling houses, casinos, racetracks, and lotteries—which, for better or worse, occupy an important part in the economy and daily life of various cultures. It is true that the kinds of games are almost infinitely varied, but the constant relationship between chance and profit is very striking. Games of chance played for money have practically no place in Huizinga's work. Such an omission is not without consequence.

It is certainly much more difficult to establish the cultural functions of games of chance than of competitive games. However, the influence of games of chance is no less considerable, even if deemed unfortunate, and not to consider them leads to a definition of play which affirms or implies the absence of economic interest. Therefore a distinction must be made.

In certain of its manifestations, play is designed to be extremely lucrative or ruinous. This does not preclude the fact that playing for money remains completely unproductive. The sum of the winnings at best would only equal the losses of the other players. Nearly always the winnings are less, because of large overhead, taxes, and the profits of the entrepreneur. He alone does not play, or if he plays he is protected against loss by the law of averages. In effect, he is the only one who cannot take pleasure in gambling.

Property is exchanged, but no goods are produced. What is more, this exchange affects only the players, and only to the degree that they accept, through a free decision remade at each game, the probability of such transfer. A characteristic of play, in fact, is that it creates no wealth or goods, thus differing from work or art. At the end of the game, all can and must

start over again at the same point. Nothing has been harvested or manufactured, no masterpiece has been created, no capital has accrued. Play is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money for the purchase of gambling equipment or eventually to pay for the establishment. As for the professionals—the boxers, cyclists, jockeys, or actors who earn their living in the ring, track, or hippodrome or on the stage, and who must think in terms of prize, salary, or title—it is clear that they are not players but workers. When they play, it is at some other game.

There is also no doubt that play must be defined as a free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement. A game which one would be forced to play would at once cease being play. It would become constraint, drudgery from which one would strive to be freed. As an obligation or simply an order, it would lose one of its basic characteristics: the fact that the player devotes himself spontaneously to the game, of his free will and for his pleasure, each time completely free to choose retreat, silence, meditation, idle solitude, or creative activity. From this is derived Valéry's proposed definition of play: it occurs when *"l'ennui peut délier ce que l'entrain avait lié."*² It happens only when the players have a desire to play, and play the most absorbing, exhausting game in order to find diversion, escape from responsibility and routine. Finally and above all, it is necessary that they be free to leave whenever they please, by saying: "I am not playing any more."

In effect, play is essentially a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life, and generally is engaged in with precise limits of time and place. There is place for play: as needs dictate, the space for hopscotch, the board for checkers or chess, the stadium, the racetrack, the list, the ring, the stage, the arena, etc. Nothing that takes place outside this ideal frontier is relevant. To leave the enclosure by mistake, accident, or necessity, to send the ball out of bounds, may disqualify or entail a penalty.

The game must be taken back within the agreed boundaries. The same is true for time: the game starts and ends at a given signal. Its duration is often fixed in advance. It is improper to abandon or interrupt the game without a major reason (in children's games, crying "I give up," for example). If there is occasion to do so, the game is prolonged, by agreement between the contestants or by decision of an umpire. In every case, the game's domain is therefore a restricted, closed, protected universe: a pure space.

The confused and intricate laws of ordinary life are replaced, in this fixed space and for this given time, by precise, arbitrary, unexceptionable rules that must be accepted

as such and that govern the correct playing of the game. If the cheat violates the rules, he at least pretends to respect them. He does not discuss them: he takes advantage of the other players' loyalty to the rules. From this point of view, one must agree with the writers who have stressed the fact that the cheat's dishonesty does not destroy the game. The game is ruined by the nihilist who denounces the rules as absurd and conventional, who refuses to play because the game is meaningless. His arguments are irrefutable. The game has no other but an intrinsic meaning. That is why its rules are imperative and absolute, beyond discussion. There is no reason for their being as they are, rather than otherwise. Whoever does not accept them as such must deem them manifest folly.

One plays only if and when one wishes to. In this sense, play is free activity. It is also uncertain activity. Doubt must remain until the end, and hinges upon the denouement. In a card game, when the outcome is no longer in doubt, play stops and the players lay down their hands. In a lottery or in roulette, money is placed on a number which may or may not win. In a sports contest, the powers of the contestants must be equated, so that each may have a chance until the end. Every game of skill, by definition, involves the risk for the player of missing his stroke, and the threat of defeat, without which the game would no longer be pleasing. In fact, the game is no longer pleasing to one who, because he is too well trained or skillful, wins effortlessly and infallibly.

An outcome known in advance, with no possibility of error or surprise, clearly leading to an inescapable result, is incompatible with the nature of play. Constant and unpredictable definitions of the situation are necessary, such as are produced by each attack or counterattack in fencing or football, in each return of the tennis ball, or in chess, each time one of the players moves a piece. The game consists of the need to find or continue at once a response *which is free within the limits set by the rules*. This latitude of the player, this margin accorded to his action is essential to the game and partly explains the pleasure which it excites. It is equally accountable for the remarkable and meaningful uses of the term "play," such as are reflected in such expressions as the *playing* of a performer or the *play* of a gear, to designate in the one case the personal style of an interpreter, in the other the range of movement of the parts of a machine.

Many games do not imply rules. No fixed or rigid rules exist for playing with dolls, for playing soldiers, cops and robbers, horses, locomotives, and airplanes—games, in general, which presuppose free improvisation, and the chief attraction of which lies in the pleasure of

playing a role, of acting *as if* one were someone or something else, a machine for example. Despite the assertion's paradoxical character, I will state that in this instance the fiction, the sentiment of as if, replaces and performs the same function as do rules. Rules themselves create fictions. The one who plays chess, prisoner's base, polo, or baccara, by the very fact of complying with their respective rules, is separated from real life where there is no activity that literally corresponds to any of these games. That is why chess, prisoner's base, polo, and baccara are played *for real*. *As if* is not necessary. On the contrary, each time that play consists in imitating life, the player on the one hand lacks knowledge of how to invent and follow rules that do not exist in reality, and on the other hand the game is accompanied by the knowledge that the required behavior is pretense, or simple mimicry. This awareness of the basic unreality of the assumed behavior is separate from real life and from the arbitrary legislation that defines other games. The equivalence is so precise that the one who breaks up a game, the one who denounces the absurdity of the rules, now becomes the one who breaks the spell, who brutally refuses to acquiesce in the proposed illusion, who reminds the boy that he is not really a detective, pirate, horse, or submarine, or reminds the little girl that she is not rocking a real baby or serving a real meal to real ladies on her miniature dishes.

Thus games are not ruled and make-believe. Rather, they are ruled *or* make-believe. It is to the point that if a game with rules seems in certain circumstances like a serious activity and is beyond one unfamiliar with the rules, i.e. if it seems to him like real life, this game can at once provide the framework for a diverting make-believe for the confused and curious layman. One easily can conceive of children, in order to imitate adults, blindly manipulating real or imaginary pieces on an imaginary chessboard, and by pleasant example, playing at "playing chess."

This discussion, intended to define the nature and the largest common denominator of all games, has at the same time the advantage of placing their diversity in relief and enlarging very meaningfully the universe ordinarily explored when games are studied. In particular, these remarks tend to add two new domains to this universe: that of wagers and games of chance, and that of mimicry and interpretation. Yet there remain a number of games and entertainments that still have imperfectly defined characteristics—for example, kite-flying and top-spinning, puzzles such as crossword puzzles, the game of patience, horsemanship, seesaws, and certain carnival attractions. It will be necessary to return to this problem.

But for the present, the preceding analysis permits play to be defined as an activity which is essentially:

1. **Free:** in which playing is not obligatory; if it were, it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion;
2. **Separate:** circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance;
3. **Uncertain:** the course of which cannot be determined, nor the result attained beforehand, and some latitude for innovations being left to the player's initiative;
4. **Unproductive:** creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and, except for the exchange of property among the players, ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game;
5. **Governed by rules:** under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts;
6. **Make-believe:** accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life.

These diverse qualities are purely formal. They do not prejudge the content of games. Also, the fact that the two last qualities—rules and make-believe—may be related, shows that the intimate nature of the facts that they seek to define implies, perhaps requires, that the latter in their turn be subdivided. This would attempt to take account not of the qualities that are opposed to reality, but of those that are clustered in groups of games with unique, irreducible characteristics.

The Classification of Games

The multitude and infinite variety of games at first causes one to despair of discovering a principle of classification capable of subsuming them under a small number of well-defined categories. Games also possess so many different characteristics that many approaches are possible. Current usage sufficiently demonstrates the degree of hesitance and uncertainty: indeed, several classifications are employed concurrently. To oppose card games to games of skill, or to oppose parlor games to those played in a stadium is meaningless. In effect, the implement used in the game is chosen as a classificatory instrument in the one case; in the other, the qualifications required; in a third the number of players and the atmosphere of the game, and lastly the place in which the contest is waged. An additional over-all complication is that the same game can be played alone or with others. A particular game may require several skills simultaneously, or none.

Very different games can be played in the same place. Merry-go-rounds and the diabolos are both open-air amusements. But the child who passively enjoys the pleasure of riding by means of the movement of the carousel is not in the same state of mind as the one who tries as best he can to correctly whirl his diabolos. On the other hand, many games are played without implements or accessories. Also, the same implement can fulfill different functions, depending on the game played. Marbles are generally the equipment for a game of skill, but one of the players can try to guess whether the marbles held in his opponent's hand are an odd or even number. They thus become part of a game of chance.

This last expression must be clarified. For one thing, it alludes to the fundamental characteristic of a very special kind of game. Whether it be a bet, lottery, roulette, or baccara, it is clear that the player's attitude is the same. He does nothing, he merely awaits the outcome. The boxer, the runner, and the player of chess or hopscotch, on the contrary, work as hard as they can to win. It matters little that some games are athletic and others intellectual. The player's attitude is the same: he tries to vanquish a rival operating under the same conditions as himself. It would thus appear justified to contrast games of chance with competitive games. Above all, it becomes tempting to investigate the possibility of discovering other attitudes, no less fundamental, so that the categories for a systematic classification of games can eventually be provided.

* * * * *

After examining different possibilities, I am proposing a division into four main rubrics, depending upon whether, in the games under consideration, the role of competition, chance, simulation, or vertigo is dominant. I call these *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*, respectively. All four indeed belong to the domain of play. One *plays* football, billiards, or chess [*agôn*]; roulette or a lottery [*alea*]; pirate, Nero, or Hamlet (*mimicry*); or one produces in oneself, by a rapid whirling or falling movement, a state of dizziness and disorder (*ilinx*). Even these designations do not cover the entire universe of play. It is divided into quadrants, each governed by an original principle. Each section contains games of the same kind. But inside each section, the different games are arranged in a rank order of progression. They can also be placed on a continuum between two opposite poles. At one extreme an almost indivisible principle, common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety is dominant. It manifests a kind of uncontrolled fantasy that can be designated by the term *paidia*. At the opposite extreme, this frolicsome and impulsive exuberance is almost entirely absorbed or disciplined by a complementary, and in some respects inverse, tendency to its anarchic and capricious nature: there is a growing tendency to bind it with arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions, to oppose it still more by ceaselessly practicing the most embarrassing chicanery upon it, in order to make it more uncertain of attaining its desired effect. This latter principle is completely impractical, even though it requires an ever greater amount of effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity. I call this second component *ludus*.

I do not intend, in resorting to these strange concepts, to set up some kind of pedantic, totally meaningless mythology. However, obligated as I am to classify diverse games under the same general category, it seemed to me that the most economical means of doing so was to borrow, from one language or another, the most meaningful and comprehensive term possible, so that each category examined should avoid the possibility of lacking the particular quality on the basis of which the unifying concept was chosen. Also, to the degree that I will try to establish the classification to which I am committed, each concept chosen will not relate too directly to concrete experience, which in turn is to be divided according to an as yet untested principle.

In the same spirit, I am compelled to subsume the games most varied in appearance under the same rubric, in order to better demonstrate their fundamental kinship. I have mixed physical and mental games, those dependent upon force with those requiring skill or reasoning. Within each class, I have not distinguished between children's and adults' games, and wherever possible I have sought instances of homologous behavior in the animal world.

The point in doing this was to stress the very principle of the proposed classification. It would be less burdensome if it were perceived that the divisions set up correspond to essential and irreducible impulses.

1. Fundamental Categories

Agôn. A whole group of games would seem to be competitive, that is to say, like a combat in which equality of chances is artificially created, in order that the adversaries should confront each other under ideal conditions, susceptible of giving precise and incontestable value to the winner's triumph. It is therefore always a question of a rivalry which hinges on a single quality (speed, endurance, strength, memory, skill, ingenuity, etc.), exercised, within defined limits and without outside assistance, in such a way that the winner appears to be better than the loser in a certain category of exploits. Such is the case with sports contests and the reason for their very many subdivisions. Two individuals or two teams are in opposition (polo, tennis, football, boxing, fencing, etc.), or there may be a varying number of contestants (courses of every kind, shooting matches, golf, athletics, etc.). In the same class belong the games in which, at the outset, the adversaries divide the elements into equal parts and value. The games of checkers, chess, and billiards are perfect examples. The search for equality is so obviously essential to the rivalry that it is re-established by a handicap for players of different classes; that is, within the equality of chances originally established, a secondary inequality, proportionate to the relative powers of the participants, is dealt with. It is significant that such a usage exists in the *agôn* of a physical character (sports) just as in the more cerebral type (chess games for example, in which the weaker player is given the advantage of a pawn, knight, castle, etc.).

As carefully as one tries to bring it about, absolute equality does not seem to be realizable. Sometimes, as in checkers or chess, the fact of moving first is an advantage, for this priority permits the favored player to occupy key positions or to impose a special strategy. Conversely, in bidding games, such as bridge, the last bidder profits from the clues afforded by the bids of his opponents. Again, at croquet, to be last multiplies the player's resources. In sports contests, the exposure, the fact of having the sun in front or in back; the wind which aids or hinders one or the other side; the fact, in disputing for positions on a circular track, of finding oneself in the inside or outside lane constitutes a crucial test, a trump or disadvantage whose influence may be considerable. These inevitable imbalances are negated or modified by drawing lots at the beginning, then by strict alternation of favored positions.

The point of the game is for each player to have his superiority in a given area recognized. That is why the practice of *agôn* presupposes sustained attention, appropriate training, assiduous application, and the desire to win. It implies discipline and perseverance. It leaves the champion to his own devices, to evoke the best possible game of which he is capable, and it obliges him to play the game within the fixed limits, and according to the rules applied equally to all, so that in return the victor's superiority will be beyond dispute.

In addition to games, the spirit of *agôn* is found in other cultural phenomena conforming to the game code: in the duel, in the tournament, and in certain constant and noteworthy aspects of so-called courtly war.

In principle, it would seem that *agôn* is unknown among animals, which have no conception of limits or rules, only seeking a brutal victory in merciless combat. It is clear that horse races and cock fights are an exception, for these are conflicts in which men make animals compete in terms of norms that the former alone have set up. Yet, in considering certain facts, it seems that animals already have the competitive urge during encounters where limits are at least implicitly accepted and spontaneously respected, even if rules are lacking. This is notably the case in kittens, puppies, and bear cubs, which take pleasure in knocking each other down yet not hurting each other.

Still more convincing are the habits of bovines, which, standing face to face with heads lowered, try to force each other back. Horses engage in the same kind of friendly dueling: to test their strength, they rear up on their hind legs and press down upon each other with all their vigor and weight, in order to throw their adversaries off balance. In addition, observers have noted numerous games of pursuit that result from a challenge or invitation. The animal that is overtaken has nothing to fear from the victor. The most impressive example is without doubt that of the little ferocious "fighting" willow wrens. "A moist elevation covered with short grass and about two meters in diameter is chosen for the arena," says Karl Groos.³ The males gather there daily. The first to arrive waits for an adversary, and then the fight begins. The contenders tremble and bow their heads several times. Their feathers bristle. They hurl themselves at each other, beaks advanced, and striking at one another. *Never is there any pursuit or conflict outside the space delimited for the journey.* That is why it seems legitimate for me to use the term *agôn* for these cases, for the goal of the encounters is not for the antagonist to cause serious injury to his rival, but rather to demonstrate his own superiority. Man merely adds refinement and precision by devising rules.

In children, as soon as the personality begins to assert itself, and before the emergence of regulated competition, unusual challenges are frequent, in which the adversaries try to prove their greater endurance. They are observed competing to see which can stare at the sun, endure tickling, stop breathing, not wink his eye, etc., the longest. Sometimes the stakes are more serious, where it is a question of enduring hunger or else pain in the form of whipping, pinching, stinging, or burning. Then these ascetic games, as they have been called, involve severe ordeals. They anticipate the cruelty and hazing which adolescents must undergo during their initiation. This is a departure from *agôn*, which soon finds its perfect form, be it in legitimately competitive games and sports, or in those involving feats of prowess (hunting, mountain climbing, crossword puzzles, chess problems, etc.) in which champions, without directly confronting each other, are involved in ceaseless and diffuse competition.

Alea. This is the Latin name for the game of dice. I have borrowed it to designate, in contrast to *agôn*, all games that are based on a decision independent of the player, an outcome over which he has no control, and in which winning is the result of fate rather than triumphing over an adversary. More properly, destiny is the sole artisan of victory, and where there is rivalry, what is meant is that the winner has been more favored by fortune than the loser. Perfect examples of this type are provided by the games of dice, roulette, heads or tails, baccara, lotteries, etc. Here, not only does one refrain from trying to eliminate the injustice of chance, but rather it is the very capriciousness of chance that constitutes the unique appeal of the game.

Alea signifies and reveals the favor of destiny. The player is entirely passive; he does not deploy his resources, skill, muscles, or intelligence. All he need do is await, in hope and trembling, the cast of the die. He risks his stake. Fair play, also sought but now taking place under ideal conditions, lies in being compensated exactly in proportion to the risk involved. Every device intended to equalize the competitors' chances is here employed to scrupulously equate risk and profit.

In contrast to *agôn*, *alea* negates work, patience, experience, and qualifications. Professionalization, application, and training are eliminated. In one instant, winnings may be wiped out. *Alea* is total disgrace or absolute favor. It grants the lucky player infinitely more than he could procure by a lifetime of labor, discipline, and fatigue. It seems an insolent and sovereign insult to merit. It supposes on the player's part an attitude exactly opposite to that reflected in *agôn*. In the latter, his only reliance is upon himself; in the former, he counts on

everything, even the vaguest sign, the slightest outside occurrence, which he immediately takes to be an omen or token—in short, he depends on everything except himself.

Agôn is a vindication of personal responsibility; *alea* is a negation of the will, a surrender to destiny. Some games, such as dominoes, backgammon, and most card games, combine the two. Chance determines the distribution of the hands dealt to each player, and the players then play the hands that blind luck has assigned to them as best they can. In a game like bridge, it is knowledge and reasoning that constitute the player's defense, permitting him to play a better game with the cards that he has been given. In games such as poker, it is the qualities of psychological acumen and character that count.

The role of money is also generally more impressive than the role of chance, and therefore is the recourse of the weaker player. The reason for this is clear: *Alea* does not have the function of causing the more intelligent to win money, but tends rather to abolish natural or acquired individual differences, so that all can be placed on an absolutely equal footing to await the blind verdict of chance.

Since the result of *agôn* is necessarily uncertain and paradoxically must approximate the effect of pure chance, assuming that the chances of the competitors are as equal as possible, it follows that every encounter with competitive characteristics and ideal rules can become the object of betting, or *alea*, e.g. horse or greyhound races, football, basketball, and cock fights. It even happens that table stakes vary unceasingly during the game, according to the vicissitudes of *agôn*.⁴

Games of chance would seem to be peculiarly human. Animals play games involving competition, stimulation, and excess. K. Groos, especially, offers striking examples of these. In sum, animals, which are very much involved in the immediate and enslaved by their impulses, cannot conceive of an abstract and inanimate power, to whose verdict they would passively submit in advance of the game. To await the decision of destiny passively and deliberately, to risk upon it wealth proportionate to the risk of losing, is an attitude that requires the possibility of foresight, vision, and speculation, for which objective and calculating reflection is needed. Perhaps it is in the degree to which a child approximates an animal that games of chance are not as important to children as to adults. For the child, play is active. In addition, the child is immune to the main attraction of games of chance, deprived as he is of economic independence, since he has no money of his own. Games of chance have no power to thrill him. To be sure, marbles are money to him. However, he counts on his skill rather than on chance to win them.

Agôn and *alea* imply opposite and somewhat complementary attitudes, but they both obey the same law—the creation for the players of conditions of pure equality denied them in real life. For nothing in life is clear, since everything is confused from the very beginning, luck and merit too. Play, whether *agôn* or *alea*, is thus an attempt to substitute perfect situations for the normal confusion of contemporary life. In games, the role of merit or chance is clear and indisputable. It is also implied that all must play with exactly the same possibility of proving their superiority or, on another scale, exactly the same chances of winning. In one way or another, one escapes the real world and creates another. One can also escape himself and become another. This is *mimicry*.

Mimicry. All play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not of an illusion (indeed this last word means nothing less than beginning a game: *in-lusio*), then at least of a closed, conventional, and, in certain respects, imaginary universe. Play can consist not only of deploying actions or submitting to one's fate in an imaginary milieu, but of becoming an illusory character oneself, and of so behaving. One is thus confronted with a diverse series of manifestations, the common element of which is that the subject makes believe or makes others believe that he is someone other than himself. He forgets, disguises, or temporarily sheds his personality in order to feign another. I prefer to designate these phenomena by the term *mimicry*, the English word for mimetism, notably of insects, so that the fundamental, elementary, and quasi-organic nature of the impulse that stimulates it can be stressed.

The insect world, compared to the human world, seems like the most divergent of solutions provided by nature. This world is in contrast in all respects to that of man, but it is no less elaborate, complex, and surprising. Also, it seems legitimate to me at this point to take account of mimetic phenomena of which insects provide most perplexing examples. In fact, corresponding to the free, versatile, arbitrary, imperfect, and extremely diversified behavior of man, there is in animals, especially in insects, the organic, fixed, and absolute adaptation which characterizes the species and is infinitely and exactly reproduced from generation to generation in billions of individuals: e.g. the caste system of ants and termites as against class conflict, and the designs on butterflies' wings as compared to the history of painting. Reluctant as one may be to accept this hypothesis, the temerity of which I recognize, the inexplicable mimetism of insects immediately affords an extraordinary parallel to man's penchant for disguising himself, wearing a mask, or *playing a part*—except that in the insect's case the mask or guise becomes part of the body instead of a contrived accessory. But it serves the same purposes in both cases, viz. to change the wearer's appearance and to inspire fear in others.⁵

Among vertebrates, the tendency to imitate first appears as an entirely physical, quasi-irresistible contagion, analogous to the contagion of yawning, running, limping, smiling, or almost any movement. Hudson seems to have proved that a young animal "follows any object that is going away, and flees any approaching object." Just as a lamb is startled and runs if its mother turns around and moves toward the lamb without warning, the lamb trails the man, dog, or horse that it sees moving away. Contagion and imitation are not the same as simulation, but they make possible and give rise to the idea or the taste for mimicry. In birds, this tendency leads to nuptial parades, ceremonies, and exhibitions of vanity in which males or females, as the case may be, indulge with rare application and evident pleasure. As for the oxyrhinous crabs, which plant upon their carapaces any alga or polyp that they can catch, their aptitude for disguise leaves no room for doubt, whatever explanation for the phenomenon may be advanced.

Mimicry and travesty are therefore complementary acts in this kind of play. For children, the aim is to imitate adults. This explains the success of the toy weapons and miniatures which copy the tools, engines, arms, and machines used by adults. The little girl plays her mother's role as cook, laundress, and ironer. The boy makes believe he is a soldier, musketeer, policeman, pirate, cowboy, Martian,⁸ etc. An airplane is made by waving his arms and making the noise of a motor. However, acts of mimicry tend to cross the border between childhood and adulthood. They cover to the same degree any distraction, mask, or travesty, in which one participates, and which stresses the very fact that the play is masked or otherwise disguised, and such consequences as ensue. Lastly it is clear that theatrical presentations and dramatic interpretations rightly belong in this category.

The pleasure lies in being or passing for another. But in games the basic intention is not that of deceiving the spectators. The child who is playing train may well refuse to kiss his father while saying to him that one does not embrace locomotives, but he is not trying to persuade his father that he is a real locomotive. At a carnival, the masquerader does not try to make one believe that he is really a marquis, toreador, or Indian, but rather tries to inspire fear and take advantage of the surrounding license, a result of the fact that the mask disguises the conventional self and liberates the true personality. The actor does not try to make believe that he is "really" King Lear or Charles V. It is only the spy and the fugitive who disguise themselves to really deceive because they are not playing.

Activity, imagination, interpretation, and *mimicry* have hardly any relationship to *alea*, which requires immobility and the thrill of expectation from the player, but *agôn* is not excluded. I am not thinking of the masqueraders' competition, in which the relationship is obvious. A much more subtle complicity is revealed. For nonparticipants, every *agôn* is a spectacle. Only it is a spectacle which, to be valid, excludes simulation. Great sports events are nevertheless special occasions for *mimicry*, but it must be recalled that the simulation is now transferred from the participants to the audience. It is not the athletes who mimic, but the spectators. Identification with the champion in itself constitutes *mimicry* related to that of the reader with the hero of the novel and that of the moviegoer with the film star. To be convinced of this, it is merely necessary to consider the perfectly symmetrical functions of the champion and the stage or screen star. Champions, winners at *agôn*, are the stars of sports contests. Conversely, stars are winners in a more diffuse competition in which the stakes are popular favor. Both receive a large fan-mail, give interviews to an avid press, and sign autographs.

In fact, bicycle races, boxing or wrestling matches, football, tennis, or polo games are intrinsic spectacles, with costumes, solemn overture, appropriate liturgy, and regulated procedures. In a word, these are dramas whose vicissitudes keep the public breathless, and lead to denouements which exalt some and depress others. The nature of these spectacles remains that of an *agôn*, but their outward aspect is that of an exhibition. The audience are not content to encourage the efforts of the athletes or horses of their choice merely by voice and gesture. A physical contagion leads them to assume the position of the men or animals in order to help them, just as the bowler is known to unconsciously incline his body in the direction that he would like the bowling ball to take at the end of its course. Under these conditions, paralleling the spectacle, a competitive *mimicry* is born in the public, which doubles the true *agôn* of the field or track.

With one exception, *mimicry* exhibits all the characteristics of play: liberty, convention, suspension of reality, and delimitation of space and time. However, the continuous submission to imperative and precise rules cannot be observed—rules for the dissimulation of reality and the substitution of a second reality. *Mimicry* is incessant invention. The rule of the game is unique: it consists in the actor's fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell. The spectator must lend himself to the illusion without first challenging the decor, mask, or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself.

lilix. The last kind of game includes those which are based on the pursuit of vertigo and which consist of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind. In all cases, it is a question of surrendering to a kind of spasm, seizure, or shock which destroys reality with sovereign brusqueness.

The disturbance that provokes vertigo is commonly sought for its own sake. I need only cite as examples the actions of whirling dervishes and the Mexican *voladores*. I choose these purposely, for the former, in technique employed, can be related to certain children's games, while the latter rather recall the elaborate maneuvers of high-wire acrobatics. They thus touch the two poles of games of vertigo. Dervishes seek ecstasy by whirling about with movements accelerating as the drumbeats become ever more precipitate. Panic and hypnosis are attained by the paroxysm of frenetic, contagious, and shared rotation.⁷ In Mexico, the *voladores*—Huastec or Totonac—climb to the top of a mast sixty-five to one hundred feet high. They are disguised as eagles with false wings hanging from their wrists. The end of a rope is attached to their waists. The rope then passes between their toes in such a way that they can manage their entire descent with head down and arms outstretched. Before reaching the ground, they make many complete turns, thirty according to Torquemada, describing an ever-widening spiral in their downward flight. The ceremony, comprising several flights and beginning at noon, is readily interpreted as a dance of the setting sun, associated with birds, the deified dead. The frequency of accidents has led the Mexican authorities to ban this dangerous exercise.⁸

It is scarcely necessary to invoke these rare and fascinating examples. Every child very well knows that by whirling rapidly he reaches a centrifugal state of flight from which he regains bodily stability and clarity of perception only with difficulty. The child engages in this activity playfully and finds pleasure thereby. An example is the game of *teetotum*⁹ in which the player pivots on one foot as quickly as he is able. Analogously, in the Haitian game of *maïs d'or* two children hold hands, face to face, their arms extended. With their bodies stiffened and bent backward, and with their feet joined, they turn until they are breathless, so that they will have the pleasure of staggering about after they stop. Comparable sensations are provided by screaming as loud as one can, racing downhill, and tobogganing; in horsemanship, provided that one turns quickly; and in swinging.

Various physical activities also provoke these sensations, such as the tightrope, falling or being projected into space, rapid rotation, sliding, speeding, and acceleration of

vertilinear movement, separately or in combination with gyrating movement. In parallel fashion, there is a vertigo of a moral order, a transport that suddenly seizes the individual. This vertigo is readily linked to the desire for disorder and destruction, a drive which is normally repressed. It is reflected in crude and brutal forms of personality expression. In children, it is especially observed in the games of hot cockles, "winner-take-all," and leapfrog in which they rush and spin pell-mell. In adults, nothing is more revealing of vertigo than the strange excitement that is felt in cutting down the tall prairie flowers with a switch, or in creating an avalanche of the snow on a rooftop, or, better, the intoxication that is experienced in military barracks—for example, in noisily banging garbage cans.

To cover the many varieties of such transport, for a disorder that may take organic or psychological form, I propose using the term *ilinx*, the Greek term for whirlpool, from which is also derived the Greek word for vertigo (*ilingos*).

This pleasure is not unique to man. To begin with, it is appropriate to recall the gyrations of certain mammals, sheep in particular. Even if these are pathological manifestations, they are too significant to be passed over in silence. In addition, examples in which the play element is certain are not lacking. In order to catch their tails dogs will spin around until they fall down. At other times they are seized by a fever for running until they are exhausted. Antelopes, gazelles, and wild horses are often panic-stricken when there is no real danger in the slightest degree to account for it; the impression is of an overbearing contagion to which they surrender in instant compliance.¹⁰

Water rats divert themselves by spinning as if they were being drawn by an eddy in a stream. The case of the chamois is even more remarkable. According to Karl Groos, they ascend the glaciers, and with a leap, each in turn slides down a steep slope, while the other chamois watch.

The gibbon chooses a flexible branch and weighs it down until it unbends, thus projecting him into the air. He lands catch as catch can, and he endlessly repeats this useless exercise, inexplicable except in terms of its seductive quality. Birds especially love games of vertigo. They let themselves fall like stones from a great height, then open their wings when they are only a few feet from the ground, thus giving the impression that they are going to be crushed. In the mating season they utilize this heroic flight in order to attract the female. The American nighthawk, described by Audubon, is a virtuoso at these impressive acrobatics.¹¹

Following the teetotum, *mais d'or*, sliding, horsemanship, and swinging of their childhood, men surrender to the intoxication of many kinds of dance, from the common but insidious giddiness of the waltz to the many mad, tremendous, and convulsive movements of other dances. They derive the same kind of pleasure from the intoxication stimulated by high speed on skis, motorcycles, or in driving sports cars. In order to give this kind of sensation the intensity and brutality capable of shocking adults, powerful machines have had to be invented. Thus it is not surprising that the Industrial Revolution had to take place before vertigo could really become a kind of game. It is now provided for the avid masses by thousands of stimulating contraptions installed at fairs and amusement parks.

These machines would obviously surpass their goals if it were only a question of assaulting the organs of the inner ear, upon which the sense of equilibrium is dependent. But it is the whole body which must submit to such treatment as anyone would fear undergoing, were it not that everybody else was seen struggling to do the same. In fact, it is worth watching people leaving these vertigo-inducing machines. The contraptions turn people pale and dizzy to the point of nausea. They shriek with fright, gasp for breath, and have the terrifying impression of visceral fear and shrinking as if to escape a horrible attack. Moreover the majority of them, before even recovering, are already hastening to the ticket booth in order to buy the right to again experience the same pleasurable torture.

It is necessary to use the word "pleasure," because one hesitates to call such a transport a mere distraction, corresponding as it does more to a spasm than to an entertainment. In addition, it is important to note that the violence of the shock felt is such that the concessionaires try, in extreme cases, to lure the naive by offering free rides. They deceitfully announce that "this time only" the ride is free, when this is the usual practice. To compensate, the spectators are made to pay for the privilege of calmly observing from a high balcony the terrors of the cooperating or surprised victims, exposed to fearful forces or strange caprices.

It would be rash to draw very precise conclusions on the subject of this curious and cruel assignment of roles. This last is not characteristic of a kind of game, such as is found in boxing, wrestling, and in gladiatorial combat. Essential is the pursuit of this special disorder or sudden panic, which defines the term vertigo, and in the true characteristics of the games associated with it: viz. the freedom to accept or refuse the experience, strict and fixed limits, and separation from the rest of reality. What the experience adds to the spectacle does not diminish but reinforces its character as play.

2. From Turbulence to Rules

Rules are inseparable from play as soon as the latter becomes institutionalized. From this moment on they become part of its nature. They transform it into an instrument of fecund and decisive culture. But a basic freedom is central to play in order to stimulate distraction and fantasy. This liberty is its indispensable motive power and is basic to the most complex and carefully organized forms of play. Such a primary power of improvisation and joy, which I call *paidia*, is allied to the taste for gratuitous difficulty that I propose to call *ludus*, in order to encompass the various games to which, without exaggeration, a civilizing quality can be attributed. In fact, they reflect the moral and intellectual values of a culture, as well as contribute to their refinement and development.

I have chosen the term *paidia* because its root is the word for child, and also because of a desire not to needlessly disconcert the reader by resorting to a term borrowed from an antipodal language. However, the Sanskrit *kredati* and the Chinese *wan* seem both richer and more expressive through the variety and nature of their connotations. It is true that they also present the disadvantages of overabundance—a certain danger of confusion, for one. *Kredati* designates the play of adults, children, and animals. It applies more specifically to gambling, i.e., to the sudden and capricious movements provoked by a superabundance of gaiety and vitality. It applies equally to illicit sex relationships, the rise and fall of waves, and anything that undulates with the wind. The word *wan* is even more explicit, as much for what it defines as for what it avoids defining, i.e. specifying games of skill, competition, simulation, and chance. It manifests many refinements of meaning to which I will have occasion to return.

In view of these relationships and semantic qualifications, what can be the connotations and denotations of the term *paidia*? I shall define it, for my purposes, as a word covering the spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct: a cat entangled in a ball of wool, a dog sniffing, and an infant laughing at his rattle represent the first identifiable examples of this type of activity. It intervenes in every happy exuberance which effects an immediate and disordered agitation, an impulsive and easy recreation, but readily carried to excess, whose impromptu and unruly character remains its essential if not unique reason for being. From somersaults to scribbling, from squabble to uproar, perfectly clear illustrations are not lacking of the comparable symptoms of movements, colors, or noises.

This elementary need for disturbance and tumult first appears as an impulse to touch, grasp, taste, smell, and then drop any accessible object. It readily can become a taste

for destruction and breaking things. It explains the pleasure in endlessly cutting up paper with a pair of scissors, pulling cloth into thread, breaking up a gathering, holding up a queue, disturbing the play or work of others, etc. Soon comes the desire to mystify or to defy by sticking out the tongue or grimacing while seeming to touch or throw the forbidden object. For the child it is a question of expressing himself, of feeling he is the *cause*, of forcing others to pay attention to him. In this manner, K. Groos recalls the case of a monkey which took pleasure in pulling the tail of a dog that lived with it, each time that the dog seemed to be going to sleep. The primitive joy in destruction and upset has been notably observed by the sister of G. J. Romanes in precise and most meaningful detail.¹²

The child does not stop at that. He loves to play with his own pain, for example by probing a toothache with his tongue. He also likes to be frightened. He thus looks for a physical illness, limited and controlled, of which he is the cause, or sometimes he seeks an anxiety that he, being the cause, can stop at will. At various points, the fundamental aspects of play are already recognizable, i.e. voluntary, agreed upon, isolated, and regulated activity.

Soon there is born the desire to invent rules, and to abide by them whatever the cost. The child then makes all kinds of bets—which, as has been seen, are the elementary forms of *agôn*—with himself or his friends. He hops, walks backwards with his eyes closed, plays at who can look longest at the sun, and will suffer pain or stand in a painful position.

In general, the first manifestations of *paidia* have no name and could not have any, precisely because they are not part of any order, distinctive symbolism, or clearly differentiated life that would permit a vocabulary to consecrate their autonomy with a specific term. But as soon as conventions, techniques, and utensils emerge, the first games as such arise with them: e.g. leapfrog, hide and seek, kite-flying, teetotum, sliding, blindman's buff, and doll-play. At this point the contradictory roads of *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx* begin to bifurcate. At the same time, the pleasure experienced in solving a problem arbitrarily designed for this purpose also intervenes, so that reaching a solution has no other goal than personal satisfaction for its own sake.

This condition, which is *ludus* proper, is also reflected in different kinds of games, except for those which wholly depend upon the cast of a die. It is complementary to and a refinement of *paidia*, which it disciplines and enriches. It provides an occasion for training and normally leads to the acquisition of a special skill, a particular mastery of the operation of one or another contraption or the discovery of a satisfactory solution to problems of a more conventional type.

The difference from *agôn* is that in *ludus* the tension and skill of the player are not related to any explicit feeling of emulation or rivalry: the conflict is with the obstacle, not with one or several competitors. On the level of manual dexterity there can be cited games such as cup-and-ball, diabolo, and yo-yo. These simple instruments merely utilize basic natural laws, e.g. gravity and rotation in the case of the yo-yo, where the point is to transform a rectilinear alternating motion into a continuous circular movement. Kite-flying, on the contrary, relies on the exploitation of a specific atmospheric condition. Thanks to this, the player accomplishes a kind of auscultation upon the sky from afar. He projects his presence beyond the limits of his body. Again, the game of blindman's buff offers an opportunity to experience the quality of perception in the absence of sight.¹³ It is readily seen that the possibilities of *ludus* are almost infinite.

Games such as solitaire or the ring puzzle, although part of the same species, already belong to another group of games, since they constantly appeal to a spirit of calculation and contrivance. And lastly, crossword puzzles, mathematical recreations, anagrams, olorhymes¹⁴ and obscure poetry, addiction to detective stories (trying to identify the culprit), and chess or bridge problems constitute, even in the absence of gadgets, many varieties of the most prevalent and pure forms of *ludus*.

It is common knowledge that what to begin with seems to be a situation susceptible to indefinite repetition turns out to be capable of producing ever new combinations. Thus the player is stimulated to emulate himself, permitting him to take pride in his accomplishment, as against those who share his taste. There is a manifest relationship between *ludus* and *agôn*. In addition, it can happen that the same game may possess both, e.g. chess or bridge.

The combination of *ludus* and *alea* is no less frequent: it is especially recognizable in games of patience, in which ingenious maneuvers have little influence upon the result, and in playing slot machines in which the player can very crudely calculate the impulsion given to the ball at various points in directing its course. In both these examples, chance is still the deciding factor. Moreover, the fact that the player is not completely helpless and that he can at least minimally count on his skill or talent is sufficient reason to link *ludus* with *alea*.¹⁵

Ludus is also readily compatible with *mimicry*. In the simplest cases, it lends aspects of illusion to construction games such as the animals made out of millet stalks by Dogon children, the cranes or automobiles constructed by fitting together perforated steel parts and pulleys from an Erector set, or the scale-model planes or ships that even adults do not disdain meticulously

constructing. However, it is the theater which provides the basic connection between the two, by disciplining mimicry until it becomes an art rich in a thousand diverse routines, refined techniques, and subtly complex resources. By means of this fortunate development, the cultural fecundity of play is amply demonstrated.

In contrast, just as there could be no relationship between *paidia*, which is tumultuous and exuberant, and *alea*, which is passive anticipation of and mute immobility pending the outcome of the game, there also can be no connection between *ludus*, which is calculation and contrivance, and *ilinx*, which is a pure state of transport. The desire to overcome an obstacle can only emerge to combat vertigo and prevent it from becoming transformed into disorder or panic. It is, therefore, training in self-control, an arduous effort to preserve calm and equilibrium. Far from being compatible with *ilinx*, it provides the discipline needed to neutralize the dangerous effects of *ilinx*, as in mountain climbing or tightrope walking.

Ludus, in itself, seems incomplete, a kind of makeshift device intended to allay boredom. One becomes resigned to it while awaiting something preferable, such as the arrival of partners that makes possible the substitution of a contest for this solitary pleasure. Moreover, even in games of skill or contrivance (e.g. patience, crossword and other puzzles) which exclude or regard as undesirable the intervention of another person, *ludus* no less inspires in the player the hope of succeeding the next time when he may obtain a higher score. In this way, the influence of *agôn* is again manifested. Indeed, it enriches the pleasure derived from overcoming an arbitrarily chosen obstacle. In fact, even if each of these games is played alone and is not replaced by an openly competitive one, it can easily and quickly be converted into a contest, with or without prizes, such as newspapers organize on occasion.

There is also an aspect of *ludus* that, in my opinion, is explained by the presence of *agôn* within it: that is, that it is strongly affected by fashion. The yo-yo, cup-and-ball, diablo, and ring puzzle appear and disappear as if by magic and soon are replaced by other games. In parallel fashion, the vogues for amusements of a more intellectual nature are no less limited in time; e.g. the rebus, the anagram, the acrostic, and the charade have had their hours. It is probable that crossword puzzles and detective stories will run the same course. Such a phenomenon would be enigmatic if *ludus* were an individual amusement, as seems superficially to be the case. In reality, it is permeated with an atmosphere of competition. It only persists to the degree that the fervor of addicts transforms it into virtual *agôn*. When the latter is missing, *ludus* cannot persist independently. In fact, it is not sufficiently supported by the

spirit of organized competition, which is not essential to it, and does not provide the substance for a spectacle capable of attracting crowds. It remains transient and diffuse, or else it risks turning into an obsession for the isolated fanatic who would dedicate himself to it absolutely and in his addiction would increasingly withdraw from society.

Industrial civilization has given birth to a special form of *ludus*, the hobby, a secondary and gratuitous activity, undertaken and pursued for pleasure, e.g. collecting, unique accomplishments, the pleasure in billiards or inventing gadgets, in a word any occupation that is primarily a compensation for the injury to personality caused by bondage to work of an automatic and picayune character. It has been observed that the hobby of the worker-turned-artisan readily takes the form of constructing *complete* scale models of the machines in the fabrication of which he is fated to cooperate by always repeating the same movement, an operation demanding no skill or intelligence on his part. He not only avenges himself upon reality, but in a positive and creative way. The hobby is a response to one of the highest functions of the play instinct. It is not surprising that a technical civilization contributes to its development, even to providing compensations for its more brutal aspects. Hobbies reflect the rare qualities that make their development possible.

In a general way, *ludus* relates to the primitive desire to find diversion and amusement in arbitrary, perpetually recurrent obstacles. Thousands of occasions and devices are invented to satisfy simultaneously the desire for relaxation and the need, of which man cannot be rid, to utilize purposefully the knowledge, experience, and intelligence at his disposal, while disregarding self-control and his capacity for resistance to suffering, fatigue, panic, or intoxication.

What I call *ludus* stands for the specific element in play the impact and cultural creativity of which seems most impressive. It does not connote a psychological attitude as-precise as that of *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry* or *ilinx*, but in disciplining the *paidia*, its general contribution is to give the fundamental categories of play their purity and excellence.

Besides, *ludus* is not the only conceivable metamorphosis of *paidia*. A civilization like that of classical China worked out a different destiny for itself. Wisely and circumspectly, Chinese culture is less directed toward purposive innovation. The need for progress and the spirit of enterprise generally seem to them a kind of compulsion that is not particularly creative. Under these conditions the turbulence and surplus of energy characteristic of *paidia* is channelized in a direction better suited to its supreme values. This is the place to return to the term

wan. According to some, it would etymologically designate the act of indefinitely caressing a piece of jade while polishing it, in order to savor its smoothness or as an accompaniment to reverie. Perhaps this origin clarifies another purpose of *paidia*. The reservoir of free movement that is part of its original definition seems in this case to be oriented not toward process, calculation, or triumph over difficulties but toward calm, patience, and idle speculation. The term *wan* basically designates all kinds of semiautomatic activities which leave the mind detached and idle, certain complex games which are part of *ludus*, and at the same time, nonchalant meditation and lazy contemplation.

Tumult and din are covered by the expression *jeou-nao*, which means literally "passion-disorder." When joined to the term *nao*, the term *wan* connotes any exuberant or joyous behavior. But this term *wan* must be present. With the character *tchouang* (to pretend), it means "to find pleasure in simulating." Thus *wan* coincides fairly exactly with the various possible manifestations of *paidia*, although when used alone it may designate a particular kind of game. It is not used for competition, dice, or dramatic interpretation. That is to say, it excludes the various kinds of games that I have referred to as institutional.

The latter are designated by more specialized terms. The character *hsi* corresponds to games of disguise or simulation, covering the domain of the theater and the spectacle. The character *choua* refers to games involving skill and ability; however, it is also used for contests involving jokes or puns, for fencing, and for perfection in practicing a difficult art. The character *teou* refers to conflict as such, cock fighting or dueling. It is also used for card games. Lastly, the character *tou*, not to be applied to children's games, covers games of chance, feats of daring, bets, and ordeals. It also is the name for blasphemy, for to tempt chance is considered a sacrilegious wager against destiny.¹⁶

The vast semantic area of the term *wan* makes it even more deserving of interest. To begin with, it includes child's play and all kinds of carefree and frivolous diversion such as are suggested by the verbs to frolic, to romp, to trifle, etc. It is used to describe casual, abnormal, or strange sex practices. At the same time, it is used for games demanding reflection and *forbidding haste*, such as chess, checkers, puzzles (*tai Kiao*), and the game of nine rings.¹⁷ It also comprises the pleasure of appreciating the savor of good food or the bouquet of a wine, the taste for collecting works of art or even appreciating them, voluptuously handling and even fashioning delicate curios, comparable to the Occidental category of the hobby, collecting or puttering. Lastly, the transitory and relaxing sweetness of moonlight is suggested, the pleasure of a boat ride on a limpid lake or the prolonged contemplation of a waterfall.¹⁸

The example of the word *wan* shows that the destinies of cultures can be read in their games. The preference for *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, or *ilinx* helps decide the future of a civilization. Also, the channeling of the free energy in *paidia* toward invention or contemplation manifests an implicit but fundamental and most significant choice.

Table 1. Classification of Games

	AGÓN (Competition)	ALEA (Chance)	MIMICRY (Simulation)	ILINX (Vertigo)
PAIDIA Tumult Agitation Immoderate laughter	Racing Wrestling Etc. Athletics	Counting-out rhymes Heads or tails	Children's initiations Games of illusion Tag, Arms Masks, Disguises	Children "whirling" Horseback riding Swinging Waltzing
Kite-flying Solitaire Patience Crossword puzzles LUDUS	Boxing, Billiards Fencing, Checkers Football, Chess Contests, Sports in general	Betting Roulette Simple, complex, and continuing lotteries*	Theater Spectacles in general	Volador Traveling carnivals Skiing Mountain climbing Tightrope walking

N.B. In each vertical column games are classified in such an order that the *paidia* element is constantly decreasing while the *ludus* element is ever increasing.

* A simple lottery consists of the one basic drawing. In a complex lottery there are many possible combinations. A continuing lottery (e.g. Irish Sweepstakes) is one consisting of two or more stages, the winner of the first stage being granted the opportunity to participate in a second lottery. [From correspondence with Caillaud. M.B.]

Notes

1. J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (English translation; New York: Roy Publishers, 1950, p. 13). On p. 28 there is another definition not quite as eloquent, but less restricted: "Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy, and consciousness that it is different from ordinary life."
2. Paul Valéry, *Tel quel*, II (Paris, 1943), p. 21.
3. Karl Groos, *The Play of Animals* (English translation; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898, p. 151).
4. For example, in the Balearic Islands for jai-alai, and cockfights in the Antilles. It is obvious that it is not necessary to take into account the cash prizes that may motivate jockeys, owners, runners, boxers, football players, or other athletes. These prizes, however substantial, are not relevant to *alea*. They are a reward for a well-fought victory. This recompense for merit has nothing to do with luck or the result of chance, which remain the uncertain monopoly of gamblers; in fact it is the direct opposite.
5. Terrifying examples of mimicry or structural dissimulation among insects [the spectral attitude of the mantis and the fright offered by *Smerinthus ocellata*] will be found in my study entitled "*Mimétisme et psychasténie*," in *Le Mythe et L'Homme* (Paris, 1938), pp. 101–143. Unfortunately, this study treats the problem with a perspective that today seems fantastic to me. Indeed I no longer view mimetism as a disturbance of space perception and a tendency to return to the inanimate, but rather, as herein proposed, as the insect equivalent of human games of simulation. The examples utilized in *Le Mythe et L'Homme* nevertheless retain their value [translated by M. B. from French text]:

"In order to protect itself, an inoffensive animal assumes the appearance of a ferocious animal; for example the bee-shaped butterfly *Trochilium* and the wasp *Vespa crabro*: even to the smoky wings, brown feet and antennae, yellow-and-black striped abdomens and thoraxes, and the same impressive noisy flight in broad day. Sometimes the mimetic animal has a further goal. The caterpillar *Choerocampa elpenor*, for example, has two eyelike black-bordered spots on its fourth and fifth segments. When disturbed it retracts its anterior segments. The fourth swells enormously. The effect obtained is the illusion of a snake's head, a frightening apparition to lizards and small birds (L. Cuénot, *La génèse des espèces animales*, Paris, 1911, pp. 470 and 473). According to Weismann (*Vorträge über Descendenztheorie*, Vol. 1, pp. 78–79) *Smerinthus ocellata*, which like all sphinxes at rest hides its lower wings, when in danger suddenly masks them with two large blue eyes on a red background, thus unexpectedly frightening the aggressor. [This terrifying transformation is automatic. It is approximated in cutaneous reflexes which, although they do not extend as far as a change of color designed

to transform the animal, sometimes result in lending it a terrifying quality. A cat, confronted by a dog, is frightened; its hair stands on end, thus causing the cat to become frightening. Le Dantec by this analogy (*Lamarckiens et Darwiniens*, 3rd ed.; Paris, 1908, p. 139) explains the human phenomenon known as "goose pimples," a common result of extreme fright. Even though rendered dysfunctional by the comparative hairlessness of man, the reflex still persists.] This act is accompanied by a kind of nervousness. At rest, the animal resembles a thin, dessicated leaf. When disturbed, it clings to its perch, extends its antennae, inflates its thorax, retracts its head, exaggerates the curve of its abdomen, while its whole body shakes and shivers. The crisis past, it slowly returns to immobility. Standfuss' experiments have demonstrated the efficacy of this behavior in frightening the tomtit, the robin, the common nightingale and frequently the grey nightingale. [Cf. Standfuss, "Beispiel von Schutz und Trutzfärbung," *Mitt. Schweiz. Entomol. Ges.*, XI (1906), 155–157; P. Vignon, *Introduction a la biologie expérimentale*, Paris, 1930 (*Encycl. Biol.*, Vol. VIII), p. 356]. The moth, with extended wings, seems in fact like the head of an enormous bird of prey...

"Examples of homomorphism are not lacking: the *calappes* and round pebbles, the *chlamys* and seeds, the *moenas* and gravel, the prawns and fucus. The fish *Phylopteryx* of the Sargasso Sea is only an 'alga cut into the shape of a floating tanner' (L. Murat, *Les merveilles du monde animal*, 1914, pp. 37–38) like *Antennarius* and *Pterophryne* (L. Cuénot, *op. cit.*, p. 453). The polyp retracts its tentacles, crooks its back, and adapts its color so that it resembles a pebble. The white and green lower wings of *catocala nupta* resemble the umbelliferae. The embossments, nodes, and streaks of the pieridine, *Aurora*, make it identical with the bark of the poplars on which it lives. The lichens of *Lithinus nigrocristinus* of Madagascar and the Flatides cannot be distinguished (*ibid.*, Fig. 114). The extent of mimetism among the mantidae is known. Their paws simulate petals or are rounded into corollae, which resemble flowers, imitating the effects of the wind upon the flowers through a delicate mechanical balance (A. Lefèbvre, *Ann. de la Soc. entom. de France*, Vol. IV; Léon Binet, *La vie de la mante religieuse*, Paris, 1931; P. Vignon, *op. cit.*, pp. 374 ff.). *Cilix compressa* resembles a type of bird dung, and the *Ceroxylus laceratus* with its foliated, light olive-green excrescences resembles a stick covered with moss. This last insect belongs to the phasmidae family which generally hang from bushes in the forest and have the bizarre habit of letting their paws hang irregularly thus making the error even easier (Alfred R. Wallace, *Natural Selection and Tropical Nature*, London: Macmillan, 1895; p. 47). To the same family belong even the bacilli which resemble twigs. *Ceroys* and *Heteropteryx* resemble thorny dessicated branches; and the *membracides*, hemiptera of the Tropics, resemble buds or thorns, such as the impressive thorn-shaped insect, *Umbonia orozimbo*. Measuring worms, erect and rigid, can scarcely be distinguished from bush sprouts, equipped as they are with appropriate tegumentary wrinkles. Everyone is familiar with the insect of the genus *Phyllium* which resembles leaves. From here, the road leads to the perfect homomorphism of

certain butterflies: *Oxydia*, above all, which perches perpendicularly from the tip of a branch, upper wings folded over, so that it looks like a terminal leaf. This guise is accentuated by a thin, dark line continuing across the four wings in such a way that the main vein of a leaf is simulated (Rabaud, *Éléments de biologie générale*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1928, p. 412, Fig. 54).

"Other species are even more perfected, their lower wings being provided with a delicate appendix used as a petiole, thus obtaining 'a foothold in the vegetable world' (Vignon, *loc. cit.*). The total impression of the two wings on each side is that of the lanceolate oval characteristic of the leaf. There is also a longitudinal line, continuing from one wing to the other, a substitute for the median vein of the leaf; 'the organic driving force has had to design and cleverly organize each of the wings so that it should attain a form not self-determined, but through union with the other wing' (*ibid.*). The main examples are *Coenophlebia archidona* of Central America (Delage and Goldsmith, *Les théories de l'évolution*, Paris, 1909, Fig. 1, p. 74) and the various types of *Kallima* in India and Malaysia."

Additional examples: *Le Mythe et L'Homme*, pp. 133–136.

6. As has been aptly remarked, girls' playthings are designed to imitate practical, realistic, and domestic activities, while those of boys suggest distant, romantic, inaccessible, or even obviously unreal actions.

7. O. Depont and X. Coppolani, *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes* (Algiers, 1887), pp. 156–159, 329–339.

8. Description and photographs in Helga Larsen, "Notes on the Volador and Its Associated Ceremonies and Superstitions," *Ethnos*, 2, No. 4 (July, 1937), 179–192, and in Guy Stresser-Péan, "Les origines du volador et du comelagatoazte," *Actes du XXVIIIe Congrès International des Américanistes* (Paris, 1947), 327–334. I quote part of the description of the ceremony from this article [translated by M. B. from French text]:

"The chief of the dance or *K'ohal*, clad in a red and blue tunic, ascends in his turn and sits on the terminal platform. Facing east, he first invokes the benevolent deities, while extending his wings in their direction and using a whistle which imitates the puling of eagles. Then he climbs to the top of the mast. Facing the four points of the compass in succession, he offers them a chalice of calabash wrapped in white linen just like a bottle of brandy, from which he sips and spits some more or less vaporized mouthfuls. Once this symbolic offering has been made, he puts on his headdress of red feathers and dances, facing all four directions while beating his wings.

"These ceremonies executed at the summit of the mast mark what the Indians consider the most moving phase of the ritual, because it involves mortal risk. But the next stage of the 'flight' is even more spectacular. The four dancers, attached by the waist, pass underneath the structure, then let themselves go from behind. Thus suspended, they slowly descend to the

ground, describing a grand spiral in proportion to the unrolling of the ropes. The difficult thing for these dancers is to seize this rope between their toes in such a way as to keep their heads down and arms outspread just like descending birds which soar in great circles in the sky. As for the chief, first he waits for some moments, then he lets himself glide along one of the four dancers' ropes."

9. [*Toton* in the French text. M. B.]

10. Groos, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

12. Observation cited by Groos, *ibid.*, pp. 92-93:

"I notice that the love of mischief is very strong in him. Today he got hold of a wine-glass and an egg cup. The glass he dashed on the floor with all his might and of course broke it. Finding, however, that the egg cup would not break when thrown down, he looked round for some hard substance against which to dash it. The post of the brass bedstead appearing to be suitable for the purpose, he raised the egg cup high above his head and gave it several hard blows. When it was completely smashed he was quite satisfied. He breaks a stick by passing it down between a heavy object and the wall and then hanging onto the end, thus breaking it across the heavy object. He frequently destroys an article of dress by carefully pulling out the threads [thus unraveling it] before he begins to tear it with his teeth in a violent manner.

"In accordance with his desire for mischief he is, of course, very fond of upsetting things, but he always takes great care that they do not fall on himself. Thus he will pull a chair toward him till it is almost overbalanced, then he intently fixes his eyes on the top bar of the back, and when he sees it coming over his way, darts from underneath and watches the fall with great delight; and similarly with heavier things. There is a washstand, for example, with a heavy marble top, which he has with great labor upset several times, but always without hurting himself." (G. J. Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1897, p. 484.)

13. This had already been observed by Kant. Cf. Y. Hirn, *Les jeux d'enfants* (French translation; Paris, 1926), p. 63.

14. [*Olorimes* (in French) are two lines of poetry in which each syllable of the first line rhymes with the corresponding syllable of the second line. Caillois suggested the following couplet from Victor Hugo as an example:

Gal, amant de la reine, alle, tour magnanime

Galamment de l'arène a la Tour Magne, a Nîmes

From correspondence with Caillois, M. B.]

15. The development of slot machines in the modern world and the fascination or obsessive

behavior that they cause is indeed astonishing. The vogue for playing slot machines is often of unsuspected proportions. It causes true obsessions and sometimes is a contributing factor to a youth's entire way of life. The following account appeared in the press on March 25, 1957, occasioned by the investigation conducted by the United States Senate that same month:

"Three hundred thousand slot machines manufactured by 15,000 employees in 50 factories, most of which are located in the environs of Chicago, were sold in 1956. These machines are popular not only in Chicago, Kansas City, or Detroit—not to speak of Las Vegas, the capital of gambling—but also in New York. All day and all night in Times Square, the heart of New York, Americans of all ages, from schoolboy to old man, spend their pocket money or weekly pension in an hour, in the vain hope of winning a free game. At 1485 Broadway, 'Playland' in gigantic neon letters eclipses the sign of a Chinese restaurant. In an immense room without a door dozens of multicolored slot machines are aligned in perfect order. In front of each machine a comfortable leather stool, reminiscent of the stools in the most elegant bars on the Champs-Élysées, allows the player with enough money to sit for hours. He even has an ash tray and a special place for his hot dog and Coca Cola, the national repast of the poor in the United States, which he can order without budging from his place. With a dime or quarter, he tries to add up enough points to win a carton of cigarettes. In New York State it is illegal to pay off in cash. An infernal din muffles the recorded voice of Louis Armstrong or Elvis Presley which accompanies the efforts of the small-time gamblers. Youths in blue jeans and leather jackets rub shoulders with old ladies in flowered hats. The boys choose the atomic bomber or guided-missile machines and the women put their hand on the 'love meter' that reveals whether they are still capable of having a love affair, while little children for a nickel are shaken, almost to the point of heart failure, on a donkey that resembles a zebu. There are also the marines or aviators who listlessly fire revolvers." [D. Morgaine, translated by M.B.]

The four categories of play are represented: *agôn* and *alea* involved in most of the machines, *mimicry* and illusion in the imaginary maneuvering of the atomic bomber or guided missile, *ilinx* on the shaking dookey.

It is estimated that Americans spend \$400 million a year for the sole purpose of projecting nickel-plated balls against luminous blocks through various obstacles. In Japan, after the war, the mania was worse. It is estimated that about 12 per cent of the national budget was swallowed up annually by slot machines. There were some installed even in doctors' waiting rooms. Even today, in the shadow of the viaducts, in Tokyo, between the trains "is heard the piercing noise of the *pachencos*, the contraptions in which the player strikes a steel ball which gropingly traverses various tricky obstacles and then is lost forever. An absurd game, in which one can only lose, but which seduces those in whom the fury rages. That is why there are no less than 600,000 *pachencos* in Japan. I gaze at these rows of dark heads fascinated by a ball that gambols against some nails. The player holds the apparatus in both hands, no doubt so

that his will to win shall pass into the machine. The most compulsive do not even wait for one ball to run its course before hitting another. It is a painful spectacle." [James de Coquet, *Le Figaro*, Feb. 18, 1957, translated by M.B.]

This seduction is so strong that it contributes to the rise of juvenile delinquency. Thus, in April of 1957, the American newspapers reported the arrest in Brooklyn of a gang of juveniles led by a boy of ten and a girl of twelve. They burglarized neighborhood stores of about one thousand dollars. They were only interested in dimes and nickels, which could be used in slot machines. Bills were used merely for wrapping their loot, and were later thrown away as refuse.

Julius Siegal, in a recent article entitled "The Lure of Pinball" [*Harper's* 215, No. 1289 [Oct. 1957], 44–47] has tried to explain the incredible fascination of the game. His study emerges as both confession and analysis. After the inevitable allusions to sexual symbolism, the author especially stresses a feeling of victory over modern technology in the pleasure derived from slot machines. The appearance of calculation that the player reflects before projecting the ball has no significance, but to him it seems sublime. "It seems to me that when a pinballer invests his nickel he pits himself—his own skill—against the combined skills of American industry (p. 45)." The game is therefore a kind of competition between individual skill and an immense anonymous mechanism. For one (real) coin, he hopes to win (fictive) million, for scores are always expressed in numbers with multiple zeros.

Finally, the possibility must exist of cheating the apparatus. "Titt" indicates only an outer limit. This is a delicious menace, an added risk, a kind of secondary game grafted onto the first.

Curiously, Siegal admits that when depressed, he takes a half-hour's detour in order to find his favorite machine. Then he plays, confident that the game "... assumes positively therapeutic proportions—if I win (p. 46)." He leaves reassured as to his skill and chances of success. His despair is gone, and his aggression has been sublimated.

He deems a player's behavior at a slot machine to be as revealing of his personality as is the Rorschach test. Each player is generally trying to prove that he can beat the machine on its own ground. He masters the mechanism and amasses an enormous fortune shown in the luminous figures inscribed on the screen. He alone has succeeded, and can renew his exploit at will. "... He has freely expressed his irritation with reality, and made the world behave. All for only a nickel (p. 47)." The responsibility for such an ambitious conclusion is the author's. What is left is that the inordinate success of slot machines (in which nothing is won but the possibility of playing again) appears to be one of the most disconcerting enigmas posed by contemporary amusements.

16. The Chinese also use the word *yeou* to designate idling and games in space, especially kite-flying; and also great flights of fancy, mystic journeys of shamans, and the wanderings of ghosts and the damned.

17. Game analogous to ring puzzles: nine links form a chain and are traversed by a rod attached to a base. The point of the game is to unlink them. With experience, one succeeds at it, careful not to call attention to a quite delicate, lengthy, and complicated manipulation where the least error makes it necessary to start again from the beginning.

18. From data provided by Duyvendak in Huizinga (*op. cit.*, p. 32), a study by Chou Ling, the valuable observations of Andre d'Hormon, and Herbert A. Giles' *Chinese-English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London, 1912), pp. 510–511 (*hsi*), 1250 (*choua*), 1413 (*teou*), 1452 (*wan*), 1487–1488 (*tou*), 1662–1663 (*yeou*).