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The Elements of Sport

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I would like to advance the thesis that the elements of sport are essentially—although perhaps not totally—the same as the elements of game. I shall first propose an account of the elements of game-playing, then comment on the relation of game to sport, and finally suggest that the resulting view of sport has an important bearing on the question as to whether sport is or is not serious.

The Elements of Game

Since games are goal-directed activities which involve choice, ends and means are two of the elements of games. But in addition to being means–end oriented activities, games are also rule-governed activities, so that rules are a third element. And since, as we shall see, the rules of games make up a rather special kind of rule, it will be necessary to take account of one more element, namely, the attitudes of game-players *qua* game-players. I add "*qua* game-players" because I do not mean what might happen to be the attitude of this or that game player under these or those conditions (e.g., the hope of winning a cash prize or the satisfaction of exhibiting physical prowess to an admiring audience), but the attitude without which it is not possible to play a game. Let us call this attitude, of which more presently, the *lusory* (from the Latin *ludus,* game) attitude.

My task will be to persuade you that what I have called the lusory attitude is the element which unifies the other elements into a single formula which successfully states the necessary and sufficient conditions for any activity to be an instance of game-playing. I propose, then, that the elements of game are (1) the goal, (2) means for achieving the goal, (3) rules, and (4) lusory attitude. I shall briefly discuss each of these in order.

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The Goal

We should notice first of all that there are three distinguishable goals involved in game-playing. Thus, if we were to ask a long distance runner his purpose in entering a race, he might say any one or all of three things, each of which would be accurate, appropriate, and consistent with the other two. He might reply (1) that his purpose is to participate in a long distance race, or (2) that his purpose is to win the race, or (3) that his purpose is to cross the finish line ahead of the other contestants. It should be noted that these responses are not merely three different formulations of one and the same purpose. Thus, winning a race is not the same thing as crossing a finish line ahead of the other contestants, since it is possible to do the latter unfairly by, for example, cutting across the infield. Nor is participating in the race the same as either of these, since the contestant, while fully participating, may simply fail to cross the finish line first, either by fair means or foul. That there must be this triplet of goals in games will be accounted for by the way in which lusory attitude is related to rules and means. For the moment, however, it will be desirable to select just one of the three kinds of goal for consideration, namely, the kind illustrated in the present example by crossing the finish line ahead of the other contestants. This goal is literally the *simplest* of the three goals, since each of the other goals presupposes it, whereas it does not presuppose either of the other two. This goal, therefore, has the best claim to be regarded as an elementary component of game-playing. The others, since they are compounded components, can be defined only after the disclosure of additional elements.

The kind of goal at issue, then, is the kind illustrated by crossing a finish line first (but not necessarily fairly), having *x* number of tricks piled up before you on a bridge table (but not necessarily as a consequence of playing bridge), or getting a golf ball into a cup (but not necessarily by using a golf club). This kind of goal may be described generally as *a specific achievable state of affairs.* This description is, I believe, no more and no less than is required. By omitting to say *how* the state of affairs in question is to be brought about, it avoids confusion between this goal and the goal of winning. And because any achievable state of affairs whatever could, with sufficient ingenuity, be made the goal of a game, the description does not include too much. I suggest that this kind of goal be called the *pre-lusory* goal of a game, because it can be described before, or independently of, any game of which it may be, or come to be, a part. In contrast, the goal of winning can be described only in terms of the game in which it figures, and winning may accordingly be called the *lusory* goal of a game. (It is tempting to call what I have called the pre-lusory goal the goal *in* a game and the lusory goal the goal *of* a game, but the practice of philosophers like J.L. Austin has, I believe, sufficiently illustrated the hazards of trying to make prepositions carry a load of meaning which can much better be borne by adjectives and nouns.) Finally, the goal of participating in the game is not, strictly speaking, a part of the game at all. It is simply one of the goals that people have, such as wealth, glory, or security. As such it may be called a lusory goal, but a lusory goal of life rather than of games.

Means

Just as we saw that reference to the goal of game-playing was susceptible of three different (but proper and consistent) interpretations, so we shall find that the means in games can refer to more than one kind of thing; two, in fact, depending

upon whether we wish to refer to means for winning the game or for achieving the pre-lusory goal. Thus, an extremely effective way to achieve the pre-lusory goal in a boxing match—viz., the state of affairs consisting in your opponent being *down* for the count of ten—is to shoot him through the head, but this is obviously not a means to winning the match. In games, of course, we are interested only in means which are permitted for winning, and we are now in a position to define that class of means, which we may call *lusory* means. Lusory means are means which are permitted (are legal or legitimate) in the attempt to achieve pre-lusory goals. Thus a soccer player may use foot or head, but not hand, in his efforts to achieve that state of affairs wherein the ball is in the goal. And a player who does not confine himself to lusory means may not be said to win, even if he achieves the pre-lusory goal. But achievement of the lusory goal, winning, requires that the player confine himself to lusory means, so that confinement to lusory means is a necessary (but of course not a sufficient) condition for winning.

It should be noticed that we have been able to distinguish lusory from, if you will, illusory means only by assuming without analysis one of the elements necessary in making the distinction. We have defined lusory means as means which are *permitted* without examining the nature of that permission. This omission will be repaired directly by taking up the question of rules. But we may provisionally acknowledge the following definition: *lusory means,* means permitted in seeking pre-lusory goals.

Rules

As with goals and means, two kinds of rules figure in games, one kind associated with pre-lusory goals, the other with lusory goals. The rules of a game are, in effect, proscriptions of certain means useful in achieving pre-lusory goals. Thus, it is useful but proscribed to trip a competitor in a foot race. This kind of rule may be called constitutive of the game, since such rules together with specification of the pre-lusory goal set out all the conditions which must be met in playing the game (though not, of course, in playing the game skillfully). Let us call such rules *constitutive* rules. The other kind of rule operates, so to speak, *within* the area circumscribed by constitutive rules, and this kind of rule may be called a rule of skill. Examples are the familiar injunctions to keep your eye on the ball, to refrain from trumping your partner's ace, and the like. To break a rule of skill is usually to fail, at least to that extent, to play the game well, but to break a constitutive rule is to fail to play the game at all. (There is a third kind of rule in games which appears to be unlike either of these. This is the kind of rule for which there is a fixed penalty, such that violating the rule is neither to fail to play the game nor [necessarily] to fail to play the game well, since it is sometimes tactically correct to incur such a penalty [e.g., in hockey] for the sake of the advantage gained. But these rules and the lusory consequences of their violation are established by the constitutive rules, and are simply extensions of them.)

Having made the distinction between constitutive rules and rules of skill, I propose to ignore the latter, since my purpose is to define not well-played games, but games. It is, then, what I have called constitutive rules which determine the kind and range of means which will be permitted in seeking to achieve the pre-lusory goal.

What is the nature of the restrictions which constitutive rules impose on the means for reaching a pre-lusory goal? The effect of constitutive rules is to place obstacles in the path leading to a pre-lusory goal. I invite the reader to think of any game at random. Now identify the pre-lusory goal, being careful to remember that

the pre-lusory goal is simply any specific achievable state of affairs. I think you will agree that the simplest, easiest, and most direct approach to achieving such a goal is always ruled out in favour of a more complex, more difficult, and more indirect approach. Thus it is not uncommon for players of a new and difficult game to agree among themselves to *ease up* on the rules, that is, to allow themselves a greater degree of latitude than the official rules permit means removing some of the obstacles or, in terms of means, permitting certain means which the rules do not really permit. But if no means whatever are ruled out, then the game ceases to exist. Thus, we may think of the gamewright, when he invents games, as attempting to draw a line between permitted and prohibited means to a given end. If he draws this line too loosely there is danger of the game becoming too easy, and if he draws it with utter laxity the game simply falls apart. On the other hand, he must not draw the line too tight or, instead of falling apart, the game will be squeezed out of existence. For example, imagine a game where the pre-lusory goal is to cross a finish line, with an attendant rule that the player must not leave the track in his attempt to do so. Then imagine that there is a second rule which requires that the finish line be located some distance from the track.

We may define constitutive rules as rules which prohibit use of the most efficient means for reaching a pre-lusory goal.

Lusory Attitude

The attitude of the game-player must be an element in game-playing because there has to be an explanation of that curious state of affairs wherein one adopts rules which require him to employ worse rather than better means for reaching an end. Normally the acceptance of prohibitory rules is justified on the grounds that the means ruled out, although they are more efficient than the permitted means, have further undesirable consequences from the viewpoint of the agent involved. Thus, although the use of nuclear weapons is more efficient than is the use of conventional weapons in winning battles, the view still happily persists among nations that the additional consequences of nuclear assault are sufficient to rule it out. This kind of thing, of course, happens all the time, from the realm of international strategy to the common events of everyday life; thus one decisive way to remove a toothache is to cut your head off, but most people find good reason to rule out such highly efficient means. But in games, although more efficient means are—and must be—ruled out, the reason for doing so is quite different from the reasons for avoiding nuclear weaponry and self-decapitation. Foot racers do not refrain from cutting across the infield because the infield holds dangers for them, as would be the case if, for example, infields were frequently sown with land mines. Cutting across the infield is shunned solely because there is a rule against it. But in ordinary life this is usually—and rightly—regarded as the worst possible kind of justification one could give for avoiding a course of action. The justification for a prohibited course of action that there is simply a rule against it may be called the *bureaucratic* justification; that is, no justification at all.

But aside from bureaucratic practice, in anything but a game the gratuitous introduction of unnecessary obstacles to the achievement of an end is regarded as a decidedly irrational thing to do, whereas in games it appears to be an absolutely essential thing to do. This fact about games has led some observers to conclude that there is something inherently absurd about games, or that games must involve a fundamental paradox. (1) This kind of view seems to me to be mistaken. (2) The mistake consists

in applying the same standard to games that is applied to means-end activities which are not games. If playing a game is regarded as not essentially different from going to the office or writing a cheque, then there is certainly something absurd, or paradoxical, or simply stupid about game-playing.

But games are, I believe, essentially different from the ordinary activities of life, as perhaps the following exchange between Smith and Jones will illustrate. Smith knows nothing of games, but he does know that he wants to travel from A to C, and he also knows that making the trip by way of B is the most efficient means for getting to his destination. He is then told authoritatively that he may not go by way of B. "Why not," he asks, "are there dragons at B?" "No," is the reply. "B is perfectly safe in every respect. It is just that there is a rule against going to B if you are on your way to C." "Very well," grumbles Smith, "if you insist. But if I have to go from A to C very often I shall certainly try very hard to get that rule revoked." True to his word, Smith approaches Jones, who is also setting out for C from A. He asks Jones to sign a petition requesting the revocation of the rule which forbids travellers from A to C to go through B. Jones replies that he is very much opposed to revoking the rule, which very much puzzles Smith.

Smith—But if you want to get to C, why on earth do you support a rule which prevents your taking the fastest and most convenient route?

Jones—Ah, but you see I have no particular interest in being at C. *That* is not my goal, except in a subordinate way. My overriding goal is more complex. It is "to get from A to C without going through B." And I can't very well achieve that goal if I go through B, can I?

Smith—But why do you want to do that?

Jones—I want to do it before Robinson does, you see?

Smith—No, I don't. That explains nothing. Why should Robinson, whoever he may be, want to do it? I presume you will tell me that he, like you, has only a subordinate interest in being at C at all.

Jones—That is so.

Smith—Well, if neither of you wants, really, to be at C, then what possible difference can it make which of you gets there first? And why, for God's sake, should you avoid B?

Jones—Let me ask you a question. Why do you want to get to C?

Smith—Because there is a good concert there, and I want to hear it.

Jones—Why?

Smith—Because I like concerts, of course. Isn't that a good reason?

Jones—It's one of the best there is. And I like, among other things, trying to get from A to C without going through B before Robinson does.

Smith—Well, *I* don't. So why should they tell me I can't go through B?

Jones—Oh, I see. They must have thought you were in the race.

Smith—The what?

I believe that we are now in a position to define *lusory attitude:* the knowing acceptance of constitutive rules just so the activity made possible by such acceptance can occur.

Summary

The elements may now be assembled into the following definition. To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs *(pre-lusory goal),* using only means permitted by rules *(lusory means),* where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means *(constitutive rules),* and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity *(lusory attitude).* I also offer the following only approximately accurate, but more pithy, version of the above definition: Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles.

Games and Sport

As I indicated at the outset, I believe that sports are essentially games. What I mean by this is that the difference between sports and other games is much smaller than the difference between humans and other vertebrates. That is to say, sport is not a species within the genus *game.* The distinguishing characteristics of sport are more peripheral, more arbitrary, and more contingent than are the differences required to define a species.

I would like to submit for consideration four requirements which, if they are met by any given game, are sufficient to denominate that game a sport. They are: (1) that the game be a game of skill, (2) that the skill be physical, (3) that the game have a wide following, and (4) that the following achieve a certain level of stability. If I can persuade you that these features or something very much like them are at least the *kind* of differentiating marks we are seeking, I will be satisfied. I have no theory to support the list, except the theory that the features are more or less arbitrary, since they are simply facts about sport. Finally, I have little to say about them aside from presenting them, except as regards the question of skill, which I am interested in taking up on its own account.

Skill in Games

One may agree with my account of what it is to play a game and still find unanswered the rather pressing question why anyone would want to do such a thing (aside from professionals who do so for money and prestige). Smith was no doubt puzzled about this question even after Jones' explanation. Let me propose the following general answer. People play games so that they can realize in themselves capacities not realizable (or not readily so) in the pursuit of their ordinary activities. For example, some people enjoy running competitively, but the opportunities for this are severely limited in ordinary life. One can run for a bus, but even this small range of operations is further limited by the fact that one does not always have the good fortune to arrive tardily at a bus stop. One can, of course, intentionally allow less than enough time for getting punctually to the point of departure, in the hope that a race with the timetable will then be necessary. But such a move is precisely to create a game where there was no game before, by virtue of the constitutive rule requiring you to leave your home or office late. Some kinds of games—such as racing games—have this rather obvious affinity with actions performed aside from games. But most games do not have such a clear counterpart in ordinary life. Ball games which are at all elaborate have affinities with ordinary life only piecemeal; in life, too, one throws and runs and strikes objects, but there is nothing in life which much

resembles baseball or football or golf *in toto*. Board games provide similar examples of the hiatus between games taken as wholes and the kinds of structured activities which characterize the rest of life. Thus, with the invention of games far removed from the pursuits of ordinary life, quite new capacities emerge, and hitherto unknown skills are developed. A good golf swing is simply useless in any other human pursuit. And despite the literary mythology which frequently represents superior military and political strategists as being (it is almost presumed to go without saying) master chess players as well, there is as much similarity between those two skills as there is between the skills of golf and wood chopping. Purely topological problems are just vastly different from political and military problems. So people play games not only because ordinary life does not provide enough opportunities for doing such and such, but also (and more interestingly) because ordinary life does not provide any opportunities at all for doing such and such.

Games are *new* things to do, and they are new things to do because they require the overcoming of (by ordinary standards) *unnecessary* obstacles, and in ordinary life an unnecessary obstacle is simply a contradiction in terms.

Although I believe, as I have said, that people play games in order to realize capacities not otherwise realizable (or not readily realizable), and although in most games these capacities are, or intimately involve, specific skills, there are certain activities called games which almost conform to my definition but which do not involve skill. I mean games of chance; that is, games of *pure* chance. Draw poker is not such a game, nor, perhaps, is standard roulette (perhaps a debatable point), but show-down is, and so is Russian roulette. These games do not involve the capacity to exercise a specific skill because no skill is required to play them. Instead of skills, what is put into operation by such games is, I suggest, hope and fear. Bored people are deficient in these feelings, it seems safe to say, since if they were not they would not be bored. But hope and fear can be artificially induced by games of pure chance. (They also appear in games of skill, to be sure, but people to whom games of chance especially appeal are too bored to learn new skills.) What games of chance provide for their players may be described in almost the same words that Jan Narveson has used to describe paranoia: a false sense of insecurity. However, for games of chance the word *false* should be replaced by the word *invented,* for there is nothing false about the capacities which games bring forth, just something new.

All sports appear to be games of skill rather than games of chance. I suggest that the reason for this is that a major requirement in sports, for participants and spectators alike, is that what the participants do must be admirable in some respect. The exercise of virtually any skill—even the skills involved in goldfish swallowing or flagpole sitting—will elicit some degree of admiration. But the spectacle of a person sweating in hope and fear as the chamber slowly turns in the revolver evokes not admiration but morbid fascination or clinical interest.

Physical Skill

It is not difficult to draw a line between games which require physical skill and games which do not. It is not necessary first to decide very grave metaphysical issues, such as the relation between mind and body. It is a plain fact that how chess pieces are moved has nothing whatever to do with manual dexterity or any other bodily skill. One can play chess, bridge, and any number of other games solely by issuing verbal commands, as is the case when chess is played by mail. "Physical games" designates a quite definite class of objects, and the term "sport" is confined to this class (though

it is not necessarily coterminous with it). The issue is thus wholly terminological; that is, the question "Why do sports have to involve physical skills?" is not a well formulated question. The question should be, "What kind of skill do we find in the class of activities we call sport?" And the answer is "Physical skill." Thus, chess and bridge appear to have all the features requisite for something to qualify as a sport, except that they are not games of physical skill. They do involve skill, and of a high order; they have a wide following and their popularity is of sufficiently long standing so that each of them may be characterized as an institution rather than a mere craze. Each can boast international tournaments, a body of experts, teachers, coaches—all the attendant roles and institutions characteristic of the most well-established sports. It is just that physical skill is not involved.

A Wide Following

I have perfected the following game originally created by Kierkegaard. A high ranking official of my university has the constitutional peculiarity that when angry his anger is manifested solely by the appearance of a bead of perspiration at the centre of his forehead which then rolls slowly down his nose, clings for an instant to its tip, and finally falls. If the official's ire continues or recurs, the same steps are repeated. Whenever I have a conference with him I adopt as a pre-lusory goal that state of affairs wherein three separate beads of perspiration shall have progressed through their appointed stages inside of fifteen minutes. And I adopt the constitutive rule that I will refrain from employing as a means to this goal either threats of violence against the person of the official or aspersions on his personal and professional reputation. Although this is, I flatter myself, a pretty good game, I readily admit that it is not a sport. It is too private and too personal to qualify for that status. Imagine my being asked by a colleague in the Faculty of Physical Education what sports I participate in, and my responding that I am very keen on Sweat-Bead.

Still, though Sweat-Bead is not now a sport, it could conceivably become one. If there were a great many people who shared the constitutional peculiarity of my official, and if there were a great many people equipped with the kind of sadism to which this game appeals, and if the rules were clearly laid out and published, and if there were to grow up a body of experts whose concern it was to improve the game and its players, then Sweat-Bead would become a sport. But short of these much to be hoped for developments I must accept the reality that it is simply a highly idiosyncratic game.

Stability

That a game is one of physical skill and that it is very popular is not quite enough to qualify it as a sport. Hula-Hoop, in its hey-day, met these requirements but it would be proper to call Hula-Hoop a craze rather than a sport. The popular following which attends sports must have a stability which is more than mere persistence through time. Even if Hula-Hoop had lasted for fifty years it would still be a craze, only a very tiresome craze.

What is required in addition to longevity is the birth and flowering of a number of attendant roles and institutions which serve a number of functions ancillary to a sufficiently popular game of physical skill. The most important of these functions appear to be the following: teaching and training, coaching, research and development (Can the sport be improved by making such and such changes?), criticism (sports pundits), and archivism (the compilation and preservation of individual performances

and their statistical treatment). Not all sports, of course, require all of these ancillary functions in order to be accepted as sports, but at least some of them will be associated to some degree with every game worthy to be called a sport.

Sport and Seriousness

The conventional wisdom about fun and games which, with brief and infrequent countertendencies, has prevailed from classical antiquity to the very recent past is well expressed by the following observation of Aristotle: ". . . to exert oneself and work for the sake of playing seems silly and utterly childish. But to play in order that one may exert oneself seems right." Play, games, and sport are seen, on this view, as subordinate to other ends, so that they may be taken seriously only if the ends to which they are subordinate are taken seriously. Thus, sports are regarded as serious insofar as they promote, for example, health, which is accepted as a serious matter; but sport unjustified by some such serious purpose is just frivolity. In a "work" ethic, work is the serious pursuit which gives play (and indeed health) what derivative seriousness it possesses. But in a leisure ethic, of the kind which much of the world appears now to be assuming, these old priorities are rapidly changing. For a person in whom the Protestant ethic is quite firmly established it is difficult, if not impossible, to ask the question, "To what further interests is work itself subordinate?" and in times and societies where human and material resources are exceedingly scarce it is perhaps as well for the survival of the human race that such questions are not asked. For under conditions where unremitting labor is necessary for the bare preservation of life, the answer to the question "What are we working for?" is "Just to live." And since the life whose preservation requires continuous toil is just that toil itself, the toiler might well wonder whether the game is worth the candle.

But in a leisure ethic we have not only the leisure to ask why we are working, but the fact of leisure itself provides us with an answer which is not too bleak to bear. The industrial unionist of today who makes a contract demand for shorter working hours is not prompted to do this by Aristotelian considerations. He does not want more time for fishing, bowling, the ballpark, or television so that, renewed and refreshed, he can increase his output on the assembly line on Monday. (In any case, that output will also be fixed by the new contract and cannot be increased.) The attitude of the contemporary worker about work may be expressed as the exact inversion of Aristotle's dictum: "To play so that one may work seems silly and utterly childish; but to work in order that one may play seems right."

I do not think it is too great an overstatement to say that whereas for the Puritan it was work which gave play (as, e.g., exercise) what derivative seriousness it was accorded, it is now play—or at least leisure activities—which gives work a derivative seriousness. Another way to put this is to acknowledge that work is good because it provides us with leisure as well as the means to enjoy leisure. Work is good chiefly because it is *good for* something much better. The things for which it is finally good are good in themselves. They are intrinsic goods. This is not, as a general view, at all novel. It, too, goes back to Aristotle. The only difference in Aristotle's view (and in the view of many others who are in this respect like him) is that for him just a very few things count as intrinsically good, things like virtue and metaphysics. Partisans of this kind have typically managed to get a kind of monopoly on the notion of intrinsic good and have tried, with some success, to persuade the rest of us that only such and such pursuits were worthy of the name. Sometimes it has been

holiness, sometimes art, sometimes science, sometimes love. But it seems perfectly clear that any number of things can be intrinsic goods to someone, depending upon his interests, abilities, and other resources, from philately to philosophy (including work itself, if you happen to be Paul Goodman). This view has quite wide, even if tacit, acceptance, I believe, outside of churches and universities.

The new ethic, then, is not only one of greatly increased leisure, it is also one of pluralism with respect to the goods we are permitted to seek in the new time available. It has been some time since our sabbaths were confined to theological self-improvement with the aid of the family bible, of course, but recent changes in our views of leisure activity are just as striking as was our emergence from puritanism. Thus, the view no longer prevails (as it did in the quite recent past) that although leisure was a good thing it was wasted if one did not devote most of it to the pursuit of Culture with a capital C. Today people with the most impeccable cultural credentials may without impropriety savour jazz (even rock) and motor racing.

Although we recognize a class of things which are serious just because they are intrinsically worthwhile, there seems some reason to believe that sports (and games in general) cannot be among these things. It is as though there were something built into the very structure of games which rendered them non-serious. This view is conveyed by the expression, "Of course, such and such is just a game," as though there were something inherently trifling about games. And by the same token, if we find that someone takes a sport or some other game with extraordinary seriousness, we are inclined to say that the pursuit in question has ceased to be a game for him.

This view, though incorrect, may be made quite plausible, I believe, by the following example. Consider The Case of the Dedicated Driver. Mario Stewart (the dedicated driver in question) is a favoured entrant in the motor car race of the century at Malaise. And in the Malaise race there is a rule which forbids a vehicle to leave the track on pain of disqualification. At a dramatic point in the race a child crawls out upon the track directly in the path of Mario's car. The only way to avoid running over the child is to leave the track and suffer disqualification. Mario runs over the child and completes the race.

One is inclined to say that for Mario motor racing is not a sport at all (and certainly not a game!), but a kind of madness. Games (and sports) require a limitation on the means their players may employ, but Mario is obviously the kind of driver who would do anything to win the race. By his insane refusal to stay within proper limits he is no longer playing a game at all. He has destroyed the game.

I submit, however, that we now know what it takes to destroy a game, and that the behaviour of Mario is not what it takes. If Mario had cut across the infield in his efforts to get ahead of the other drivers, or if he had earlier violated a rule governing engine capacity in the construction of his vehicle, then his behaviour would cease to be game-playing, for he would have broken a constitutive rule. It is thus true to say that there is a limitation imposed in games which is not imposed in other activities, and it is also true that the limitation has to do with the means one can legitimately employ. Hence the plausibility of concluding that Mario was not playing a game, since there appeared to be absolutely no means he would not adopt. But it will be recalled that we earlier discovered that more than one kind of goal is associated with games, and more than one kind of means. The plausibility of the claim that racing for Mario had ceased to be a game rests on a confusion between two of these goals. It is perfectly correct to say that not any means whatever may be used to achieve a *pre-lusory* goal, but this limitation in no way entails a quite different kind of limi-

tation, namely, a limitation on the means for *playing* the game (i.e., attempting to achieve what I earlier called the lusory goal of life).

The point of the story, of course, is not that Mario did a terrible thing, but that it is possible to make a game or a sport the over-riding concern of one's life without falling into some kind of paradox. That extreme dedication to a pursuit should somehow destroy the pursuit would be the real paradox. But that a person will do anything to continue playing a game does not destroy the game, even though it may destroy the person. So saying to Mario that motor racing is just a game is very much like saying to the Pope that Catholicism is just religion, to Beethoven that the quartets are just music, or to Muhammad Ali that boxing is just a sport.

I therefore conclude that sports are precisely like the other interests which occur prominently as leisure activities. They are a type of intrinsic good which, along with many others, make up the class of goals to which we ascribe that primary seriousness which provides such things as factories, armies, and governments with the derivative seriousness to which they are entitled.

Acknowledgments

The section of the paper titled *The Elements of Game* is a restatement of the substance of the thesis advanced in "What Is a Game?"[3] However, the language used here is different from the language of that version, and the definition of game-playing that I propose has been somewhat altered. The strategies of the two versions also differ. In "What Is a Game?" I attempted to produce an adequate definition by successively modifying a series of proposed definitions. Here, assuming the adequacy of that definition, I explain and illustrate the elements of game-playing which the definition designates. I should also note that some of the examples used in the present paper were originally used in "What Is a Game?"

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