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Instrumental Play

Abstracts

Work and play are traditionally viewed as opposites: Work is instrumental since it is valuable as a way of using certain means to some external end, while play is autotelic because it is intrinsically valuable and an end in itself. Call this the *work-ethic view* of play. I will argue against this widespread view, and will present an account of the instrumental play attitude – a mixed attitude that is both autotelic and instrumental. In the first section of this essay, I will introduce the work-ethic view of play, and Bernard Suits's definition of ›play‹ as a statement of it. Section two contains three arguments against the work-ethic view. Sections three and four attack Suits's definition of ›play‹ and its presuppositions. Finally, section five justifies the introduction of a notion of instrumental play, and the concept itself is defined in section six.

Arbeit und Spiel gelten klassischerweise als Gegensätze: Arbeit ist instrumentell, da sie im Einsatz von Mitteln für äußere Zweck einen Nutzen verfolgt, während Spiel autotelisch ist, da es Sinn und Zweck in sich selber hat. Nennen wir dies die *arbeitsethische Auffassung* von Spiel. Ich werde gegen diese weitverbreitete Betrachtungsweise argumentieren und einen Ansatz eines instrumentellen Spielverhaltens vorstellen – ein hybrides Verhalten, das sowohl selbstzweckhaft als auch instrumentell ist. Im ersten Abschnitt des Beitrags werde ich die arbeitsethische Auffassung von Spiel und Bernard Suits' Spiel-Definition als eine Äußerung dieser Auffassung vorstellen. Der zweite Abschnitt enthält drei Argumente gegen diese arbeitsethische Betrachtungsweise. Abschnitt drei und vier kritisieren Suits' Definition und deren Vorannahmen. Abschnitt fünf wird die Einführung des Begriffs des instrumentellen Spiels rechtfertigen; und Abschnitt sechs eine Definition des Begriffs geben.

The work-ethic view of play

The common view among philosophers and laymen alike is that play and work are antithetical. Work is an instrumental activity that is located within ordinary life while play is an autotelic activity that stands outside the pedestrian sphere of everyday affairs. Call this the *work-ethic view of play* because, historically, it stems from the Protestant work ethic as well as the urban industrial view of time, which viewed play as a waste of time. This view was predominant in Western culture for the last four hundred years. It rests on a fundamental and absolute distinction between work and play: work is obligatory, sober, serious, and not fun, while play is the opposite of all these things.[1]

1 See Brian Sutton-Smith: *The Ambiguity of Play*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP 2001, pp. 201–202.

Examples of the work-ethic view can be found in multiple disciplines that study play and games. A classical and clear example comes from Bernard Suits, a prominent philosopher of sport and author of the book *The Grasshopper*, whose definition of ›play‹ is influential and codifies the central assumptions of the work-ethic view precisely. Besides its connection with the work-ethic view, another reason for focusing on Suits's definition is that it acts as a foil against which to elaborate my account of instrumental play.

Suits insists that play is an *autotelic activity* – an intrinsically valuable activity that is an end in itself – while work is an *instrumental activity* aimed at something extrinsic to itself.[2] He defines *play* as follows: »*x* is playing if and only if *x* has made a temporary reallocation to autotelic activities of resources primarily committed to instrumental activities«.[3] This is a loosely stated definition by genus and difference because Suits seeks to find an appropriate *differentia specifica* that would set play apart from other autotelic activities (›play‹ and ›autotelic activity‹ are not synonyms), such as the contemplation of God or a cat chasing its own tail, constituting the *genus* of his definition. Suits's definition of ›play‹ can be formulated explicitly as a definition by genus and difference as follows: *playing* is an autotelic activity where resources primarily committed to instrumental activities have been temporarily reallocated to autotelic activities.

Traditionally, the technique of defining by genus and difference, first studied by Aristotle,[4] is understood as giving a *real* or *essence definition* that provides *facts of essence* about the entity referred to by the defined term.[5] Discovering the real definition of some term *X* has commonly been taken to require investigating the thing that it denotes. If philosophically important terms have real definitions, then words like ›play‹ and ›game‹ have objective meanings uncoverable by conceptual analysis.[6] That Suits likely had such goals in mind is suggested by his claim that we ought to seek a definition of ›game‹ by looking not at the commonalities between the things *called* games, but the things that *are* games.[7] This was motivated by his reading of Wittgenstein and his disagreement with the latter's claim that words

2 See Bernard H. Suits: *The Grasshopper. Games, Life and Utopia*, Toronto: Toronto UP 1978, pp. 161.

3 Bernard H. Suits: »Words on Play«, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 4 (1977), pp. 117–131, here p. 124.

4 See Aristotle: *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP 1984, 101b30–103a5.

5 See Edward Schiappa: *Defining Reality. Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP 2003, 6; Fabrizio Macagno and Douglas Walton: »Reasoning from Classifications and Definitions«, *Argumentation: An International Journal on Reasoning* 23 (2009), pp. 81–107.

6 See Douglas Walton: »Persuasive Definitions and Public Policy Arguments«, *Argumentation Advocacy. The Journal of the American Forensic Association* 37 (2001), pp. 117–132, here p. 124–125.

7 See Suits: *The Grasshopper*, p. ix–x.

like ›game‹ express family-resemblance concepts that cannot be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient criteria (e.g. by genus and difference).

There are three noteworthy things about Suits's definition. First, it purports to give the objective meaning of ›play‹ by stating certain facts of essence about the activities denoted by the term. Second, whether an activity can be classified as play according to this definition depends on the participants' attitudes toward it: if a participant engages in the activity for its own sake, and it involves the reallocation of resources primarily intended for activities engaged in for external reasons, then it can be classified as an instance of playing. Note that using attitudes as a *differentia specifica* in an essence definition of ›play‹ is no more out of place here than they would be in a purported essence definition of ›propositional attitude‹: both expressions refer to situations that are distinguished from other kinds of situations by the attitudes of those involved. Defining ›play‹ in this way also attempts to do justice to the fact that almost any activity can become an instance of play, if the participants adopt a certain kind of stance toward it; and stances rest on attitudes. Third, Suits's definition rests on a dichotomy between autotelic and instrumental activities since the *differentia specifica* of reallocated resources requires a sharp distinction between the two. This dichotomy presupposes the work-ethic view of play since it sees work as a paradigm of instrumental activities. Those are clearly separated from autotelic activities. It follows from Suits's definition that activities like house-building or theorem-proving can be instances of play only if the attitude of the agent engaged in these activities is such that he treats them as ends in themselves.[8]

Suits goes on to argue for the *logical independence thesis*: from the fact that x is an instance of playing it does not follow that x is an instance of playing a game (i.e. game-playing), and from the fact that y is an instance of game-playing it does not follow that y is an instance of playing. According to Suits, this only seems incredible, because our ordinary locutions, such as »playing a game«, are confused – they involve at least three senses of ›play‹: ›play‹ as a synonym for performing (e.g. ›playing a trombone‹), ›play‹ as a synonym for operating some device (e.g. ›playing a pinball machine‹), and ›play‹ as a synonym for participating in some activity. Suits claims that such meanings may qualify as metaphorical meanings of ›play‹, but, whatever their place in our colloquial vocabularies, the mere existence of expressions like ›playing a game‹ does not establish a logical connection between playing and playing games.[9] It follows that one can participate in a game without playing. For instance, when professional athletes perform in games for money, they are playing in the sense of performing, but are not playing in the sense of engaging in an autotelic activity. An earlier statement of this view can be found, for instance,

8 Indeed, Suits bases his account of utopia on this idea. See Suits: *The Grasshopper*.
9 See Suits: »Words on Play«, p. 120.

in Roger Caillois's *Man, Play and Games*. He argues that professional players who make a living by playing – boxers, actors, etc. – are workers and not players.[10]

Suits's supporting argument for the logical independence thesis is worth examining since it also supports the work/play opposition. He argues that games and play are two different types of categories: ›play‹ is a relative term that is always shadowed by its tacit opposite, ›work‹, while non-relative terms, like ›game‹, have no tacit opposite. To establish his point, he compares the relationships between two relative terms, ›play‹ and ›light‹, and two non-relative terms, ›game‹ and ›blue‹, to show that just as ›light‹ is logically independent from ›blue‹, so ›play‹ is logically independent from ›game‹. This is an argument from analogy. Such arguments have the following form:

1. A situation is described in case *s*.
2. *P* is plausibly drawn as an acceptable conclusion in case *s*.
3. Generally, case *s* is similar to case *t*.
4. Therefore, *P* is plausibly drawn as an acceptable conclusion in case *t*.[11]

Here, *s* is the *source case* that is used to set up the analogy, and *t* is the *target case* to which the source case is compared.[12] An argument from analogy draws a conclusion about the target case on the basis of its similarity in some relevant respects with the source case.[13] Suits's argument, then, goes as follows:

1. The word ›play‹ is like the word ›light‹ (when referring to a color) in that both are relative terms which tacitly denote their tacit opposites – viz. ›instead of serious‹ and ›not dark‹, respectively – whereas the word ›game‹ is like the word ›blue‹ in that both are non-relative terms which have no tacit opposites.
2. Plausibly, the relative term ›light‹ is logically independent from the non-relative term ›blue‹ since one cannot infer the lightness of a color from its blueness nor the blueness of a color from its lightness.

10 See Roger Caillois: *Man, Play and Games*, tr. Meyer Barash, Chicago: Illinois UP 2001, pp. 5–6.

11 I am aware that there are numerous alternative formulations of analogical arguments in the literature. Likewise, logicians disagree over whether arguments from analogy are deductive, inductive, or plausible arguments. I have opted for the plausibility interpretation, as can be seen from the argument form, because this is not a deductive argument and interpreting it as an inductive argument would make it weaker than would be warranted by the textual evidence. For additional arguments in support of interpreting analogical arguments in ordinary language argumentation as plausible arguments, see Marcello Guarini: »A Defense of Non-Deductive Reconstructions of Analogical Arguments«, *Informal Logic. Reasoning and Argumentation in Theory and Practice* 24 (2004), pp. 153–168.

12 See Douglas Walton: »Argumentation Schemes for Argument from Analogy«, in: Henrique Jales Ribeiro, ed., *Systematic Approaches to Argument from Analogy*, Cham: Springer, pp. 23–40, here p. 24.

13 See Trudy Govier: *A Practical Study of Argument*, Enhanced 7th Edition, Wadsworth: Cengage Learning 2014, p. 318.

3. Generally, the relationship between the relative term ›light‹ and the non-relative term ›blue‹ is similar to the relationship between the relative term ›play‹ and the non-relative term ›game‹.
4. Therefore, plausibly the relative term ›play‹ is logically independent from the non-relative term ›game‹ since one cannot infer that one is playing from the fact that one is engaged in a game nor the fact that one is engaged in a game from the fact that one is playing.[14]

If this argument is cogent, then playing is independent from being engaged in a game, and there is an inherent opposition between work and play, since the argument's cogency demands that (1) must be acceptable. Note that (1) draws a distinction between two categories, *play* and *game*, based on a similarity between the terms used for expressing them, and the terms ›light‹ and ›blue‹. On the one hand, just as the term ›light‹ makes sense only relative to something else, so too can ›play‹ be understood only in relation to things that are not play (e.g. work). On the other hand, ›game‹ is like ›blue‹ in that both can be understood by themselves and independently of other things. Thus, Suits claims that when we classify something as an instance of playing, then we are tacitly saying that those involved in the activity are not treating that which they are playing with as it is normally treated, that is, seriously and instrumentally. Premise (1) is supported by Suits's definition of ›play‹ that presupposes the autotelic/instrumental dichotomy. Thus, an attempt to challenge the work/play opposition or to blur the boundaries between the two should address Suits's definition and argument. I will do so in the next three sections by giving three general arguments against the work-ethic view of play, presenting three objections against Suits's argument for the logical incompatibility thesis, and by adopting the Wittgensteinian Thesis on Defining,[15] which claims that definitions in general do not give us facts of essence about the things denoted by the defined term. This should open the way for an account of instrumental play.

Criticisms of the work-ethic view

There are a number of problems with the work-ethic view of play. I will highlight some of these problems by considering three arguments against this view (in no particular or chronological order).

14 See Suits: »Words on Play«, p. 121. William J. Morgan: »Some Further Words on Suits on Play«, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 35 (2008), pp. 120–141, here p. 123.
15 See Oliver Laas: »On Game Definitions«, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 44 (2017), pp. 81–94.

First, play can be very serious for the players – they earnestly strive for important personal and social results that cannot easily be attained in any other way.[16] Unless the players are deluded about their attitudes and motivations, play is not always a frivolous endeavor. Call this *the seriousness of play objection*.

Second, Huizinga has argued that play has a fundamental function in human life and society.[17] Play contributes to the emergence of numerous characteristic features of culture by creating a symbolic and poetic world alongside the natural one. For example, he argues that philosophy arose out of riddle-solving contests. Even though he sometimes overstates the role of play in culture and society, Huizinga's study indicates that play can be productive and serious. Call this *the functionality of play objection*.

Third, the work/play opposition is not as universal as it might initially seem. There are societies where play is an integral part of religious and work ceremonies. Thus, the work/play opposition appears to be specific to Western culture.[18] Call this *the ethnographic objection* since it rests on empirical ethnographic evidence.

Criticism on Suits

But what about Suits's argument for the logical independence of play from games? If his argument is cogent, then one could argue against the seriousness objection that player's attitudes about their activity have no bearing on the logical nature of the relational term ›play‹ that partly derives its meaning from an inherent opposition to serious activities.

Likewise, one could argue against the functional objection that Huizinga's understanding of play is muddled, since he treats certain serious activities as instances of play, or that the fundamental play-activities he is talking about cease to be instances of play when they turn into cultural institutions like philosophy, jurisprudence or art, that is, into serious endeavors. Suggesting that such things are instances of play, because they might have originated from playful activities, would come close to committing the genetic fallacy: just because something originated from play does not mean that it still is play.

Finally, Suits's argument could allow one to claim against the ethnographic objection that if being opposed to serious activities is an essential feature of the meaning of ›play‹, then the ethnographers and their informants are simply using the term loosely when describing certain parts of ceremonies and rituals as play. Thus, obser-

16 See Sutton-Smith: *The Ambiguity of Play*, p. 202.
17 See Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, Boston: Beacon 1955.
18 See David F. Lancy and B. Allan Tindall, eds., *The Anthropological Study of Play: Problems and Prospects*, West Point, N.Y.: Leisure 1976.

vations of play-like activities in ceremonies and rituals do not undermine the work-ethic view since such activities are not genuine instances of playing. These considerations show that in addition to the arguments given against the work-ethic view, Suits's argument for the logical incompatibility thesis must be addressed as well.

A challenge to Suits's argument for the logical independence thesis is the *problem of mixed motives*, as it is called in the literature:[19] even if autotelicity is necessary for play, it is unclear why an activity that has some external end could not also be desired for its own sake. Suppose I invent a new game, Wall Ball, which involves throwing a rubber ball against a wall, and catching it with my hands. It has rules, techniques, a scoring system – all the features of a game. Suppose the game catches on, and eventually others are paying to watch me and my friends start playing – we have become professional wall ballers. According to Suits, whether an activity qualifies as an instance of play depends on the participant's attitudes toward it. But if my attitude toward the game has not changed – I retained my love for Wall Ball, was happy to be paid for playing it, hopeful that I will continue to be paid for playing it, etc. – then when exactly was the game transformed into work? The first time I was paid for playing it? Would it become an instance of playing the moment I stopped getting paid? My attitudes toward the game could be mixed: I could be happy for being paid to play, but would still play without remuneration. More generally, intrinsic and extrinsic values, as well as autotelic and instrumental aims, may coexist in the same activity, for instance, when one's vocation is also one's hobby. In such cases, one engages in one's work both for its own sake as well as for the sake of some instrumental good, such as money. It seems that professional philosophers (Socrates's objections against the sophists notwithstanding), artists, and athletes are relevant examples of people who engage in their chosen activities with mixed motives. Finally, another example of an activity with mixed motives is engaging in politics, at least according to Aristotle,[20] since its ultimate aim is autotelic – the good of man, but the means for attaining it are often instrumental – e.g. the solution of some particular practical problem with the ultimate aim of moving toward the good of man.

Suits's definition of ›play‹ also suffers from the divided resources problem. The definition requires the reallocation of instrumental resources – resources that are normally the objects of instrumental attitudes – to autotelic activities. Suppose Johnny likes to play alone outside without any implements whatsoever; his favorite pastime was simply »gamboling about on the greensward«.[21] Since Johnny is not playing *with* anything – he is not reallocating any resources for his amusement – it seems

19 See Randolph Feezell: »A Pluralist Conception of Play«, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 37 (2010), pp. 147–165, here p. 154.

20 See Aristotle: *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP 1984, 1094a18–1094b11.

21 See Suits: »Words on Play«, p. 125.

that he is not playing according to Suits's definition. But if we recognize that *time*, like balls and bats, is a resource, then Johnny *is* playing after all, since he is committing his time to something that he wants to do rather than what he has to do. But this raises the *divided resources problem*: whether or not the reallocation of a single resource like time is sufficient for Suits's definition when applied to things like games. For example, baseball involves resources like balls, bats, and so on, in addition to time. Which of these resources must be diverted for baseball to count as an instance of playing according to Suits's definition? Johnny's case is simple since it involves a single resource, but things are not as clear-cut in more complex cases involving multiple resources.[22]

The Wittgensteinian Thesis on Defining

Suppose the mixed motives problem shows that Suits's argument is not cogent (at least not without additional arguments), and objections against the work-ethic view cannot be challenged by appealing to it. Also, suppose that the divided resources problem raises a relevant objection against his definition of ›play‹. One could still argue that if his real definition of ›play‹ captures facts of essence about playing, that show the logical opposition of autotelic activities to instrumental activities, then the work-ethic view of play is correct, regardless of empirical evidence or the logical (in)dependence of playing from game-playing. Thus, I must address the idea that Suits's definition of play, or any definition for that matter, can provide facts of essence about the entities denoted by the defined term.

Elsewhere I have defended the so-called *Wittgensteinian Thesis on Defining* (WTD). It states that:

1. definitions are of different kinds;
2. definitions are relative to the definer's purpose;
3. definitions do not capture the essences of things;
4. the meanings of definitions, like the meanings of concepts and linguistic entities in general, are language-game and theory-dependent.[23]

Claims 2–4 are compatible with the *argumentative view of definitions* asserting that definitions outside of formal languages are »either prescriptions or empirical hypotheses concerning the synonymy of the *definiens* with the *definiendum*«.[24] From this perspective, definitions have argumentative character in ordinary language dis-

22 See Morgan: »Some Further Words on Suits on Play«, p. 126–127.
23 See Laas: »On Game Definitions«.
24 Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca: *The New Rhetoric. A Treatise on Argumentation*, Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP 1969, p. 211.

course and argumentation: they can be supported by arguments or they can be arguments. For example, the autotelic/instrumental dichotomy implicit in Suits's definition of ›play‹ provides the grounds for premise (1) in his argument in support of the logical incompatibility thesis.

Claim 3 of the WTD is the most relevant one for arguing against the idea that Suits's definition of ›play‹, or anyone else's for that matter, captures facts of essence about playing. On the one hand, *real definitions* purportedly describe the true essence of the entity being defined. In philosophy, such definitions are commonly elicited by Socratic questions of the form »What is *x*?« (i.e. what is *x* in reality?), and they purport to report facts of essence about *x*. A *persuasive definition*, on the other hand, gives a word – in *mala fide* or *bona fide* – a new descriptive meaning while keeping its emotive meaning fixed to alter the audience's attitudes by praising or denigrating what the defined term designates.[25] In other words, a persuasive definition is a non-neutral characterization that conveys a positive or negative attitude in the course of naming a thing, and the name is an implicit argument that the entity referred to by the name should be viewed in a particular way. Such an argument is actually never advanced, and the definition is put forward as if it were uncontroversial, while the supporting argument is smuggled in during the act of defining.[26] The presence of persuasive definitions is signaled by two indicators:

1. The presence or prominence of emotive meaning.
2. The metaphoric use of words like ›real‹ or ›true‹ where such words have the persuasive force of »to be accepted«.

For instance, »real courage« is »the strength to stand against adverse public opinion«. These indicators are useful when persuasive definitions are presented as resulting from logical analysis.

According to the argumentative view of definitions and the WTD, *real* or *essence definitions* should be treated as special kinds of persuasive definitions that make a claim about the essence or nature of some *x* that it is *F* (e.g. »the essence of religion is love«). Such definitions are commonly expressed in the following ways: »the

25 The *descriptive meaning* or *sense* of a word picks out its referent in all possible worlds and states the ways in which the world must be for the word to be applicable. See Charles L. Stevenson: »Persuasive Definitions«, *Mind* 47 (1938), pp. 331–350. The *emotive meaning* or *tone* of a word is its historically accrued conventional power to express emotions and alter attitudes by presenting things in a laudatory or derogatory way through the evocation of emotions. See Ibid. Regarding to persuasive definitions see also Junichi Aomi: »Persuasive Definitions in Social Sciences and Social Thought«, in: Eugenio Bulygin, Jean-Louis Gardies, and Ilkka Niiniluoto, eds., *Man, Law and Modern Forms of Life*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, pp. 187–190, here p. 187.

26 See David Zarefsky: »Strategic Maneuvering through Persuasive Definitions. Implications for Dialectic and Rhetoric«, *Argumentation: An International Journal of Reasoning* 20 (2006), pp. 399–416, here p. 404.

essence of *x* is *F*«, »*x* is by nature *F*«, »real *x* is *F*«, and so on. The two-stage strategy for proposing such definitions usually proceeds as follows:

1. The author begins with a dictionary or common definition of a term, and proceeds to argue that it must be redefined to gain a »true« or »real« understanding of the concept.
2. On the grounds given in (1), the author then proclaims the term's ›real‹ definition.

Essence definitions should be seen as hypotheses or tentative proposals intended to persuade others to further inquire into the object denoted by the defined term from a particular point of view. In the face of strong counterarguments, an essence definition should either be defended with arguments or abandoned as a failed hypothesis.[27] Although this entails giving up answers to Socratic questions about play, games, and other phenomena, the cost is not as great as it may initially seem. Questions in the form »What is *x*?« are the vaguest of all because they admit a potential infinity of answers. They are also pernicious since they can lead to insoluble metaphysical disagreements, and ›save‹ us from the trouble of spelling out what it is that we want to know about *x*.[28] According to this view, Suits's definition of ›play‹ is at best a proposal for viewing play from a particular point of view. It does not capture facts of essence about playing.

Claim 2 of the WTD states that definitions are relative to the definer's purpose. Definitions are closely related to classification, since classifying some *x* as a so-and-so rests on a definition of so-and-so's. Classification is a matter of choosing words in support of a point of view and against other contending points of view. Defining in argumentation is often tantamount to advancing an opinion and an argument about a situation, both of which are often left implicit.[29] Those who argue in favor of some definition wish to influence the way in which the defined concept is normally used.[30] This is the case because defining is guided by our beliefs, needs, and interests. Definitions are normative and prescriptive because they affirm or deny specific interests while encouraging particular linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors.[31] The

27 See Douglas Walton: *Fundamentals of Critical Argumentation*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2006, p. 251; Douglas Walton and Fabrizio Macagno: »Classification and Ambiguity. The Role of Definition in a Conceptual System«, Studies in Logic, *Grammar and Rhetoric* 16 (2009), pp. 245–264, here p. 246 and Rubert Crawshay-Williams: *Methods and Criteria of Reasoning. An Inquiry into the Structure of Controversy*, New York: Humanities 1957.

28 See Richard Robinson: *Definition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1950, p. 190. Schippa: *Defining Reality*, p. 10. Walton et al.: »Classification and Ambiguity«, p. 246.

29 See Douglas Walton, Chris Reed, and Fabrizio Macagno: *Argumentation Schemes*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2008, p. 67.

30 See Perelman et al.: *The New Rhetoric*, p. 213.

31 See Schiappa: *Defining Reality*, pp. 66–70.

purpose of Suits's definition, for instance, is to establish play as a separate kind of autotelic activity that is opposed to instrumental activities.

Finally, claim 4 of the WTD states that the meanings of defined terms in philosophy, like ›play‹, are similar to defined terms in science in that both are theory-dependent. ›Phlogiston‹ has the meaning it does relative to a particular theory, and the evidence supporting it are factual within that theory.[32] Likewise, Suits's definition of ›play‹ presupposes the work-ethic view of play, and the claims it makes about play are supported by data that is factual relative to that view. Supporting data are not factual outside of all frameworks since one does not empirically observe or intellectually intuit the essence of an entity in an unbiased, value-neutral manner before codifying the results of one's inquiry in a real definition.

Real definitions are, like all other definitions, first and foremost linguistic entities, and as such they are historically contingent on the definer's circumstances, goals, and commitments. According to the WTD, Suits's definition is relative to the work-ethic view of play and his purposes, and does not capture facts of essence. Hence, it should be evaluated according to pragmatic criteria in light of how well it solves certain philosophical puzzles, not by claiming that it captures certain essential features about playing. To be clear, the WTD supports a plurality of definitions of ›play‹ and theoretical frameworks in which they are advanced. However, the WTD rejects the idea that any one of these definitions is privileged because it captures the essence of the entity referred to by the defined term. It follows that the autotelic/instrumental dichotomy at the heart of the work-ethic view cannot be defended by appealing to Suits's real definition of play, since real or essence definitions are hypotheses open to criticism, and the arguments against Suits's definition given above put forward good reasons for rejecting it as a hypothesis about all play-activities.

The Wittgensteinian approach to definitions of ›play‹ is supported by the *ambiguity of play*. This is due to the diversity of play forms (children's play, tourism, daydreaming), the diversity of players (children, adults, gamblers), the variety of play equipment (balls, bats, boards), play scenarios (playpens, playhouses, sports fields), play duration (from a few seconds to entire seasons) and scholarly perspectives on play (as adaptation, metacommunication, or the manifestation of power relations).[33] We should come to terms with the idea that there is no essence of play. Instead, there are multiple approaches for studying play. Each approach picks out certain properties relevant to its theoretical and explanatory perspective whilst ignoring others. However, none of them provide a complete account of play. We should be content with a non-reductive, *pluralist account of play* where different approaches are seen

32 Ibid., pp. 64–65, 105.
33 See Sutton-Smith: *The Ambiguity of Play*, pp. 3–7.

as making significant contributions to our overall understanding of the complex and ubiquitous phenomenon that is play.[34]

An argument from technology for the instrumental play attitude

I agree with Suits that whether an activity is an instance of playing or not depends on the participant's attitudes. Attitudes involve evaluations of and emotional responses to some object. Although attitudes are commonly taken as differing from beliefs in that the latter are cognitive while the former are not, both exhibit *intentionality* or aboutness, meaning that attitudes and beliefs are about certain objects which they represent in a particular way.

According to Suits's definition, activities like house-building or theorem-proving are instances of play only if they are treated as purely autotelic activities. I wish to argue that such activities can be both autotelic and instrumental, viz. that they can be instances of instrumental play.

Even if the work/play opposition cannot be upheld, what justification is there for blurring the boundaries between the two? It can be argued that introducing the notion of instrumental play is motivated by certain technologies that involve activities and objects that have traditionally been excluded from the sphere of work, and the use of which involves a mixed attitude that is both autotelic and instrumental.

Before presenting my *argument from technology* in support of introducing the notion of instrumental play, a word on ›technology‹. The term ›technology‹ was defined in numerous ways,[35] but probably one of the broadest definitions was proposed by John Dewey who, in his later years equated ›technology‹ with the method of inquiry itself. For him, technology consisted of tools for attaining certain ends-in-view. *Ends-in-view* are »projections of possible consequences […] conditioned by antecedent natural conditions as is perception of contemporary objects«[36]; they are

> »aims, things viewed after deliberation as worthy of attainment and as evocative of effort [that] are formed from objects taken in their immediate and terminal qualities; objects once having occurred as endings, but which are not now in existence and which are not likely to come into existence save by an action which modifies surroundings«.[37]

34 See Feezell: »A Pluralist Conception of Play«, pp. 162–163.

35 For an overview of definitions of ›technology‹ see Carl Mitcham and Eric Schatzberg: »Defining Technology and the Engineering Sciences«, in: Anthonie Meijers, ed., *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 9. Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Sciences*, Amsterdam: Elsevier/North-Holland 2009, pp. 27–63.

36 John Dewey: *Experience and Nature*, 2nd Edition, La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co. 1965, p. 86.

37 Ibid, p. 88.

In short, an end-in-view is a plan or hypothesis that guides present activity, is evaluated by its consequences and is revised throughout the activity guided by it. Ends and means reciprocally shape each other until the problematic situation that prompted the whole endeavor has been resolved.

For Dewey, both engines and mathematical theories were instances of technology. One instance of a technology in Dewey's pragmatic sense is the game paradigm. Games and game models are one of the oldest paradigms for studying cognition, reasoning and aspects of the world.[38] Game-like thinking can already be found in the Socratic *elenchus* as well as in Aristotle's *Topics*, where he discusses dialectical situations in terms of an answerer who must defend his thesis, and a questioner who tries to get the answerer to change his thesis by granting its opposite. These ideas were developed further in the medieval *ars obligatoria*, and resurfaced in the form of dialogical logic in the 20th century.

Strategic games within game theory provide another example of a specific technology within the game paradigm. The purpose of John von Neumann's and Oskar Morenstern's economic game theory was to model situations of strategic interdependence as games;[39] that is, situations where individual's decisions are interrelated because they depend on expectations about what others are doing. The paradigms that inspired strategic games were wargames, such as the Prussian Kriegspiel, and parlor games like Poker. These game models of conflict, and their various extensions, have proven versatile for studying the strategic aspects of interactions between humans, firms, animals, and so on.

A final example of a technology within the game paradigm is Ludwig Wittgenstein's language-games. They were originally introduced for the purpose of solving philosophical problems. The notion of language-games rests on an analogy between language and chess, which was a suitable paradigm of a game for Wittgenstein's purposes, since he saw both chess and language as rule-governed activities.[40] The language-game analogy is powerful because it offers a familiar, normative, and rule-governed activity to compare with language and its use. It encourages us to focus on the activities of language users, as well as to note the logical diversity and multiplicity of our speech activities.[41] With the influence of game theory, language-games have been developed into *semantic games* for studying truth, reference, and language-world relationships, as well as into *pragmatic games* for studying communi-

38 For a survey see Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen: *Signs of Logic. Peircean Themes on the Philosophy of Language, Games, and Communication*, Dordrecht: Springer 2006, pp. 317–344.

39 See John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern: *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, 3rd Edition, Princeton: Princeton UP 1953.

40 See Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Grammar*, tr. Anthony Kenny, London: Basil Blackwell 1974, § 10.

41 See Gordon P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker: *Wittgenstein. Understanding and Meaning, Volume 1 of an Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations, Part I: Essays*, 2nd Extensively Revised Edition, Oxford: Blackwell 2005, p. 64.

cation, implicature, and other pragmatic phenomena. Various other kinds of game models can be found in different disciplines: *dialogue games* in mathematics, logic, and computer science (for determining logical truth, the validity of proofs, and for modeling computational tasks), *information-seeking games* in epistemology and philosophy of science (for modeling inquiry as an interrogative process where scientists put questions to nature), and so on. The common denominator between these various kinds of games is typically a minimal set of concepts that include notions like ›players‹, ›universes‹, ›positions‹, ›rules‹, ›actions‹ and ›strategies‹.[42]

In each of these examples, game-like objects are played with for various instrumental purposes, such as decision-making, theorem-proving, or inquiring into the natural world. While each of these activities might be intrinsically valuable to some extent, they are also extrinsically valuable for the attainment of certain ends. The game paradigm is an example of a technology that mixes autotelic and instrumental activities. Therefore, the introduction of a notion of instrumental play is justified.

But why can games be rationalized and turned into models? The WTD precludes essentializing answers. Games provide versatile tools for studying diverse intellectual realms because family-resemblance concepts like ›game‹ and ›play‹ refer to a vague cluster of phenomena. Different definitions of ›game‹ and ›play‹ – relative to the definer's ends-in-view – are proposals for treating different features in those clusters as central for a particular purpose. For instance, game-theoretic definitions emphasize the strategic aspects of games while language-games emphasize the importance of rules and rule-following. The choice of paradigms for defining different kinds of game models is guided by cognitive values that reflect intellectual predilections and predispositions about the significance of the data at our disposal. There are orderly, rule-governed games, such as chess, and there are disorderly games, such as games of symbolic inversion. It seems that many Western philosophers have sought to rationalize play and games to show them as contributing to society.[43] Another possible reason for the rationalizability of games, at least in game theory, is that unlike participants in plays, participants in games have to be able to reason about the roles and attitudes of other participants.[44] If this is right, then games seem to have features that make them suitable for modeling strategic interactions. The cognitive

42 One could argue that all of these things are games in a metaphoric sense – none are games in the sense that football and basketball are games, and nobody plays them like they play those games. According to the WTD, concepts are defined pragmatically, relative to the definer's purpose and ends-in-view. Thus, while some of these logical objects might have initially been based on analogies with other kinds of games (like poker in the case of strategic games or chess in the case of language-games), once they have been clearly defined for some specific purpose (e.g. studying the strategic interactions between economic agents), they are no less games than are those usually played for sport.

43 See Mihai Spariosu: *Dionysus Reborn. Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP 1989.

44 See George H. Mead: Mind, *Self, and Society. From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Chicago and London: Chicago UP 1934, pp. 151–152.

values underlying the desire to see games as contributing to society make philosophers choose certain kinds of paradigmatic games over others when constructing their theories and analogies. Thus, what makes games rationalizable is not something inherent to them, but the cognitive values and ends-in-view of theorists who privilege certain exemplary games over others when rationalizing games.

A definition of instrumental play

Since attitudes have objects, it is pertinent to distinguish the two. Following Chad Carlson, I will differentiate between playing and gaming as kinds of attitudes or distinct intentionalities toward things, and plays and games as distinct kinds of things that can be the objects of such attitudes. On the one hand, *playing* and *gaming qua* attitudes are ways in which we do things and engage with the world. *Plays* and *games*, on the other hand, are objects that can be experienced in and engaged with in certain ways depending on the kinds of attitudes one takes toward them.[45]

In the pluralist approach to play taken here, the most we can say about play, prior to adopting some specific theoretical framework, is that play is an attitude or frame that can be adopted toward anything.[46] Playing *qua* attitude can, in principle, have both plays and games as its objects, and the same holds for gaming *qua* attitude. Generally, different kinds of attitudes can be distinguished by the kinds of objects they have. For instance, propositional attitudes have propositions as objects. Thus, in order to explicate the notion of instrumental play *qua* attitude more clearly, we should look for paradigmatic examples of the kinds of objects it has.

How does one delimit the range of possible objects within a pluralist approach stating that playing *qua* attitude can be adopted toward anything? The WTD claims that concepts are defined pragmatically, relative to some ends-in-view. This suggests that we can narrow our search for the objects that the instrumental play attitude is directed toward by looking for those objects that are covered by concepts that were delimited for some instrumental purpose. Examples of game models from the game paradigm given in the previous section are good candidates for such objects, since they are defined with instrumental ends in mind, however, their use is also partly autotelic.

Technology involves, among other things, tools as means for attaining certain desired ends. For Dewey, the notion of a tool was intended to supplant more metaphysical notions, like ›concrete‹ and ›abstract‹.

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45 See Chad Carlson: »The ›Playing‹ Field. Attitudes, Activities, and the Conflation of Play and Games«, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 38 (2011), pp. 74–87, here pp. 78–80.

46 See Helen B. Schwartzman: *Transformations. The Anthropology of Children's Play*, Boston, Mass.: Springer 1979, p. 169.

»Consider the bare possibility that tools and works of art […] are precisely the sought-for alternative to physical, psychical and metaphysical entities. On this possibility, the ignoring of the characteristic features of this kind of thing is responsible for the unsettled and persistent controversy. Manufactured articles do not exist without human intervention; they do not come into being without an end in view. But when they exist and operate, they are just as realistic, just as free from dependence upon psychical states (to say nothing of their not being psychical states) as any other physical things. […] They are simply prior natural things reshaped for the sake of entering effectively into some type of behavior.«[47]

Models in general, and game models in particular, are *epistemic tools*. They are unfolding entities constructed from concrete representational means for attaining certain epistemic purposes. As unfolding entities, models include: the modeler's epistemic purposes; the phenomenon into which the original problem was translated; the representational means for representing the (hypothetical or idealized) target system (this holds for so-called abstract mathematical models, too, since we typically interact with them through external representational means, such as diagrams and equations); relevant experiential and theoretical knowledge; new concepts and principles that result from modeling; and relevant observable or measurable parameters that link the model to the target system. The cognitive value of models derives from *modeling*, viz. the modeler's interactions with models and the target system during model-building. From this perspective, modelers do not just represent some aspect of the target system, they proceed by building hypothetical model systems. If such systems give us expected results or replicate some features of the phenomenon, they provide information for further inquiry.[48]

In light of the foregoing, I propose to define ›instrumental play‹ *qua* attitude (and not *qua* object) as follows:

Instrumental play: is a partly autotelic and partly instrumental mixed playing attitude.

A few comments are in order. First, a paradigmatic example of instrumental playing is playing with epistemic tools, such as game models from the game paradigm. Second, if we treat scientific theories as models, then they, too, can be objects of the instrumental play attitude since they are epistemic tools as well.

47 John Dewey: »Logical Objects«, in: Jo Ann Boydston, ed., *The Middle Works, 1899–1924, Vol. 10. Journal Articles, Essays, and Miscellany Published in the 1916–1917 Period*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, pp. 89–97, here p. 92.

48 See Mieke Boon and Tarja Knuuttila: »Models as Epistemic Tools in Engineering Sciences«, in: Anthonie Meijers, ed., *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 9. Philosophy of Technology and Engineering Sciences*, Amsterdam: Elsevier/North-Holland 2009, pp. 693–726, here pp. 700–701, 703–704 and 724.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued against the work-ethic view of play in order to define a notion of instrumental play. I took Suits's definition of ›play‹ as a clear statement of the work-ethic view of play asserting that work and play are opposed to each other. First, I gave three arguments against the work-ethic view in general, viz. the seriousness of play objection, the functionality of play objection, and the ethnographic objection. Second, I criticized Suits's definition by showing that it suffers from the problem of mixed motives and the divided resources problem. The first set of objections was directed at the general view of play of which Suits's definition is an instance, and the second set of criticisms was directed at the definition itself as an instance of the work-ethic view. I also adopted the Wittgensteinian Thesis on Defining (WTD) to show that no definition captures facts of essence about anything, including play and game as attitudes or as objects. Next, I argued that the introduction of a notion of instrumental play is warranted by the existence and use of certain technologies in Dewey's pragmatic sense. This can be seen as a functionality argument – the notion of instrumental play *qua* mixed attitude should be accepted since playing has such a mixed function in the use of certain technologies. Finally, I defined instrumental play as a partly autotelic and partly instrumental mixed playing attitude. A paradigmatic example of instrumental playing is playing with epistemic tools.

To play instrumentally with game models is to use epistemic tools for studying and changing the world, or some part of it. Thus, as the diversity of our epistemic tools increases, certain forms of broadly technological activities, such as inquiry, increasingly require that we play instrumentally in order to work.[49]

49 I would like to thank the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions which have greatly improved the quality of this essay.