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‘Playing Sport Playfully’: On the Playful Attitude in Sport

There has been extensive debate among various disciplines about the nature and value of play. From these discussions it seems clear that play is a phenomenon with more than just one dimension: as a specific type of activity, as a form or structure, as an ontologically distinctive phenomenon, as a type of experience, or as a stance or an attitude towards a particular activity (Feezell 2010). This article focuses on the importance of the playful attitude in sport. It begins by attempting to describe the underpinning features of a playful attitude, and its relation to Suits’ lusory attitude and the concept of gamification. Finally, it considers and critically evaluates the relationship between play and sport and the importance of the playful attitude in sporting activities. The purpose of this paper is a far deeper analysis of the playful attitude and its relationship to sport than has been previously provided, and a more precise definition as to what the playful attitude is. This will ultimately help to answer questions about the value of sport and how sport ought to be played.

KEYWORDS Philosophy of sport; sport psychology; play; game; playful attitude; being in the game; good sport

1. Introduction

This paper considers the concept of a playful attitude and its relationship to sport. First, it identifies seven elements that underpin a playful attitude before providing a more concise definition. The second part of this paper then considers how a playful attitude relates to sport and can contribute to the construction of good sport, even at elite and professional level. The notion of play as a specific type of attitude or stance¹ has been discussed quite extensively, especially within the philosophy of sport literature (e.g. Feezell 2010; Roochnik 1975; Hyland 1980). Although different authors have focused on different aspects, they can be brought together and summarised in the following way.

To start, a playful attitude is a product of an intentional and voluntary choice; it cannot be coerced (Huizinga 2014; Caillois 2001; Hackett in Ryall, Russell, and MacLean 2013; Schmid 2009; Carlson 2011). As Henricks (2015, 28) notes, ‘play becomes play only when the participants declare it to be so’.

The second feature of a playful attitude is ‘responsive openness’. In holding a playful attitude, we are specifically oriented toward the play world. Hyland characterizes this stance in the following passage (Hyland 1980, 88):

When we play, we seem to have a certain orientation toward those with whom we play, toward our play equipment if there be such, toward time, space, indeed toward the world, which is distinctive. It is a mode of comportment toward things, a mode of being-in-the-world which, although not utterly peculiar, is nevertheless different from our mode of comportment when we consider ourselves not to be playing.

This stance is more primordial than a psychological state or a behavioral response to certain stimuli. It is ‘responsive openness’ in the way in which we present ourselves to the world and in our capacity to respond adequately to that openness.²

From this responsiveness and openness, comes the third characteristic, the experience of immersion; the sense we often have in play of being totally involved in

the activity. Approaching the activity with this degree of attentiveness and readiness allows a player to become absorbed in its depth and richness. The psychologist Duda (in Thomson 2010) highlights the focus required to master a specific action. This concept is in some ways similar to what we call 'being in the game' or 'being in the zone', although it is more of a phenomenological category than a psychological one. This third characteristic of a playful attitude suggests being totally involved with the activity without external distractions.

The fourth characteristic is connected with play's unique temporality and spatiality. Play is an immersion in the world that is here and now, it involves the actualization of the unity of time with the past, present, future experienced together. Roochnik (1975) characterized it as a kind of seclusion, which involves limited, arbitrary, and all-absorbing temporal and spatial dimensions. Play provides for a unity of past, present, and future, and it is out of this unity that the fluidity and harmony of genuine human experience emerges:

...when the player's attention is given somewhere other than the moment (to the scoreboard or to tomorrow's sport page for example) his fluidity is lost and his playing will suffer... A good player is always open to the best possibilities that the future holds...if the experienced basketball player...sees a person cutting to the basket he will pass him the ball, not to where the man is, but to where the man will be...He is in the present toward the future. (Roochnik 1975, 40)

Roochnik also suggests that this player can also be said to be in the past, since the many practice sessions and previous games have brought him to this moment where he can effectively choose and execute the right action. Vannatta (2008, 64) also notes that playing is internally related to anticipation of the future: '...we anticipate and "know" the near future when we play sports'. Moreover, playing athletes have pre-reflective access to passive syntheses, which accounts for the spontaneity, continuity, and anticipation. In play, the possibility for a unity of past, present and future is actualized and harmony restored.

The fifth aspect of the playful attitude refers to an intrinsic motivation to perform the activity. Intrinsic motivation can be defined as:

...the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards. (Ryan and Deci 2000, 56)

Meier (1980) argued that play is an autotelic activity that is carried out for intrinsic reasons. In contrast, if any activity is pursued involuntarily or engaged in for predominantly extrinsic reasons, it is not a play form, but is rather an instrumental activity; as such, it is often contrasted with play as work. However, as some have noted, the concept of autotelicity is problematic (Schmid 2011, Kretchmar in Parry, Nesti, and Watson 2011). For this reason, Schmid (2009) argues for a focus on intrinsic reasons instead of autotelicity. This agent-centred account characterizes the intrinsicity of autotelic activities as an intentional property of the action which is grounded in the agent's motivating reasons. In this, play is a mode of performing actions rather than a type of action (Schneider 2001).

Following Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Schmid (2011) asserts that these intrinsic reasons are found in the activity's satisfaction of the agent's innate psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. He also suggests that reasons may change from intrinsic to extrinsic due to the change in personal and social contexts. Similarly, they may change from extrinsic to intrinsic through a process of internalization. Unlike Meier, Schmid (2011, 161) acknowledges that our motivations may be complex and mixed: 'Cases in which an agent has mixed motivations do not rule out the possibility that the agent is playing'. For Schmid, a person plays when he perceives himself as playing (to a greater degree than not) and when his goal aspirations are those that tend to produce more satisfaction and well-being than not. A similar approach was provided by Feezell (2010), who states that if an activity is enjoyed, attitudinally recognized as not 'real life', and is intrinsically attractive, regardless of other motives, then this activity may be characterized as play.

The sixth characteristic is capriciousness in choosing play actions. It does not involve 'raw' rational calculation, but rather consists of a fluid invention of play solutions at a pre-conscious level. Holding a playful attitude is in opposition to making conscious and active rational judgments. This claim is supported by Vannatta (2008), who asserts that play involves a fluid and continuous activity generated by passive synthesis at a lower level. Following Husserl's phenomenology, Vannatta (2008) characterizes this concept as the prepredicative and prejudicative experience, which takes place ontologically before active judgments. Similarly, Hyland (1990, 96) suggests that an athlete who makes active judgments is a beginner, e.g. in tennis: 'approach the net, keep your racket head up, follow the ball to your racket'. The nature of play actions was well described by Collingwood. While holding a playful attitude, people are somewhat capricious. Collingwood (in Wertz 2003) suggests that a person makes choices in play capriciously, that is without conscious reason, but rather out of habit or spontaneously. A capricious choice is when an agent is conscious of no reason for which he or she chooses. Instead of calculating rationally the outcome, an agent simply and immediately chooses without any reflexive consciousness – it is all pre-reflexive consciousness. As Wertz (2003, 163) notes, 'A voluntary act such as a golf shot is not preceded by a decision to do it; it begins with a decision to do it'. In the playful attitude, thinking is involved in selecting strategy and in analysing the situation, but capriciousness appears in the performance or execution of the play once the decision has been made. The intention is therefore somehow converted into the performance itself.

According to Czech psychologists Slepíčka, Hošek and Hátlová (2009), there are multiple types of thinking in sport, such as operational/action thinking, tactical thinking, personal-perspective thinking, or team thinking. Although there is a certain kind of thinking when immersed in play, it is more autonomous and preconscious rather than a conscious rational calculation. This type of thinking enables the other characteristics such as freedom, flow and spatiality. Too much rational thought, conscious analysis and control of the movement structure often leads to stiffness and awkwardness (Thomen 2010). Vannatta (2008, 64), similarly, argues that play requires thoughtlessness: 'once you are overly conscious of the act, you stumble. In this light, playing can be said to be "unconscious"'.

The final characteristic of a playful attitude can be found in positive personal states and dispositions, such as curiosity, energy, enthusiasm, creativity, spontaneity, and anticipation; and a desire to experience fun and enjoyment. These personal states and dispositions will most likely differ based on the particular sport and the level of performing the sport. For example, in sports like javelin throw or lifting, there is no

state of anticipation (except in the sense of a predicted outcome), but there may be a state of enthusiasm and feeling energetic. On the other hand, in team sports like basketball or football, such states and dispositions will more likely be present. It should also be noted that fun and pleasure/enjoyment are compatible with seriousness and concentration. Even though play activities can be defined as trivial due to their inefficient means, to play them well requires an attitude of seriousness. Feezell (2010) calls this 'serious nonseriousness'. This can be contrasted with extreme seriousness or over-competitiveness, a critique of which can be found, for example, in Huizinga. Others such as Nina Leiberman (1977) emphasise the dispositions of curiosity, energy, enthusiasm, and engaging with otherness in creative, spontaneous ways. This view is shared by Hanne Rasmussen, head of the Lego Foundation, who claims that a playful state of mind is one in which people are open to new ideas, try different things and are in a positive flow.³

A playful attitude is learned and developed rather than fixed. Even though humans are inherently playful creatures, developing a playful attitude throughout life requires cultivation and encouragement. This habituation consists in developing a positive mindset, in practicing concentration and the ability to respond to the situational possibilities, in discovering the inner richness of the activity, and in 'diving/immersing' oneself into the activity.⁴

Closely related to the 'attitudinal' dimension of play is play as a specific type of experience. This is a direct product of the playful attitude and participation in play activities. This special quality of experience has been called 'flow', 'being in the zone', and the 'sublime' (Czikszenmihalyi 1991; Douillard 1994; Ryall 2016). In this, the playful attitude can be understood as an intermediate stage between normal living and euphoric flowing. Several authors have focused on this experiential dimension of play. For instance, Roochnik (1975) argues that play is a deepening of the experience of the world which is at hand at the present moment. Similarly, Meier (1980) notes that play may be heralded as a singularly fulfilled, liberating experience, through which we open doors normally closed, alter our habitual mode of perception, view the naked simplicity of the world and entities within it, and inaugurate processes and actions of creative and novel transformation. Jirásek (2001) sees this form of play to be a dimension of intense experiencing. It is an actualization of one of the possible worlds into the reality of a person that is playing.

2. Summary Definition of the Playful Attitude

Based on the aforementioned descriptions of the attitudinal and experiential dimensions of play we now offer a summary of the characteristic features of what we call the playful attitude.

An intentional, voluntarily chosen way to be open and responsive to the play situation; to be intrinsically motivated, to be in the 'game', that is attentive towards, and immersed in the activity in its own space and time, and to experience it as pleasurable; to be capricious in the choice of play action; and to operate through the mode of positive mental states and dispositions, such as curiosity, energy, enthusiasm, creativity, spontaneity, and anticipation.

3. Playful Attitude vs. Suits' Lusory Attitude

The playful attitude may seem similar to Suits' lusory attitude. However, they are not the same and neither can be explained with simple recourse to the other. Suits considers the lusory attitude to be a necessary part of playing a game. He defines it (1973, 13) as 'the knowing acceptance of constitutive rules just so the activity made possible by such acceptance can occur'. Ryall (2016, 20) characterizes the lusory attitude in a following way: '...conscious awareness that one is involved in playing a game and the tacit acceptance of its rules'. Suits (2014) considers the lusory attitude to be an explanatory element. It explains that curious state of affairs wherein one adopts rules which require the player to employ worse rather than better means for reaching an end. It is a constitutive, necessary category for playing a game and for playing a sport.⁵

The playful attitude, on the other hand, is a phenomenological concept rather than a formal category concerned primarily with rules. It is connected with the activity and player in a more complex way. Unlike Suits' lusory attitude, it is not necessary for sport – it can exist in a sporting situation and may be beneficial, but it does not have to be. Nevertheless, the playful attitude has a potential to enrich the activity itself. According to Morgan (2008), when games (and arguably sports as well) are played, then and only then can their intrinsic goodness be realized. The difference between the lusory attitude and the playful attitude can be illustrated by Morgan's delineation:

...instead of accepting the rules just so the activity made possible by them can occur, which is all that the lusory attitude requires of those intent on pursuing games, one would accept them because of the love of the challenge they pose... (Morgan 2008, 139)

We claim that being part of good sport requires something richer and deeper than Suits' lusory attitude. To play games truly means to play them with a playful attitude.

3.1 Playful Attitude vs. Gamification

A further difference between the lusory attitude and a playful one can be seen via the concept of gamification. Gamification involves transforming an activity into a game by introducing artificial constitutive rules. Kretchmar (2008) states we may turn certain activities into games by introducing challenges, artificial constitutive rules, and by applying the lusory attitude to them. Kretchmar (2008) also proposes that the lusory attitude enriches routine events or potentially tedious work-like activities with additional meaning. It is a necessary part of games and it stimulates the creation of bona fide games. It artificially creates value, uncertainty, or unpredictability by introducing unnecessary hurdles and stimulates difficulty of a certain activity. He speaks about gratuitous valuation (assigning extra worth to a certain activity) and gratuitous variation (introducing factors that increase uncertainty, unpredictability, and interest) as two potential ways how to 'game up' life.

Having a playful attitude and 'being in the game', unlike gamification through the lusory attitude, does not involve creating artificial challenges, difficulties, or values. When having a playful attitude, a player is concerned with the activity itself, she is attentive, open and responsive, and is ideally within the flow of the game. It is possible to game up a certain kind of activity and have a playful attitude in it. What is not possible is to identify a playful attitude with gamification or to reduce one to the other.

4. Play's Relationship to Sport

Before discussing the importance of the playful attitude in sport, it is important to consider the relationship and distinction between play and sport more widely as this will enable further analysis on how a playful attitude enhances or diminishes sport. As scholars have noted, sport is not synonymous with play (Carlson 2011). Some authors (such as Harvey in Svoboda 2019; or Guttmann 2004) suggest that sport is a form of play. Others think that sport (at least in some of its forms) is not a form of play, when it is for extrinsic or instrumental ends. For instance, Suits (1988) argues that events in the Olympics are not play since the focus is on the instrumental end of winning a medal. Arguably this is incorrect since there are many motivations for competing at an Olympic Games, and most athletes are well aware that they are unlikely to come home with a medal. Motivations are multiple and complex. However, we can agree with Suits that a single-minded focus on winning a medal is not consistent with playing. Others such as Kohn (in Ryall, Russell, and MacLean 2013) argue play and sport are incompatible since sport relies upon competition whereas play rejects it. Kohn argues if a player is trying to win, he is not engaged in true play. Again, this is arguably incorrect since if games are a type of play, winning is deeply rooted in the structure of the activity. In the case of play, the focus is on the process rather than on the outcome. Nevertheless, both categories may function together. We can imagine that in a sporting game such as ice hockey, a player is oriented towards the game itself (i.e. is playing) and wants to win at the same time (tries to fulfil the goal of the activity of game). Feezell (in Ryall, Russell, and MacLean 2013) suggests that to say that play cannot be 'goal-oriented' reduces it to frolic. As Kretchmar (2007, 3) notes, play and games (viz. sports) relate to one another in a variety of ways,

A game...can be encountered as autotelic (an end in itself)..., or not.
Consequently, some games are conducted in play spirit, and some are not.
Play...includes games and sport but also far transcends them.

Kretchmar's (in Parry, Nesti, and Watson 2011) solution to the problem of the complexity of intentionalities regarding play and work experiences is that play and work are complementary phenomena that exhibit greater or lesser degrees of intrinsic satisfaction. Although play exhibits more intrinsic satisfaction than work, that does not exclude the intrinsic from work or the extrinsic from play. Carlson (in Klein 2017, 18) summarizes Kretchmar's position in the following way: 'Professional athletes are engaged in a complementary pair of play~work that is an ever-changing mixture of the two phenomena'.

Even when Huizinga was writing in the mid-20th century, he identified the way in which sport was being commodified and professionalised, and as such, was taken increasingly seriously. This is evidenced in the increased codification of rules of sport and in the emphasis on records and measurable achievements, and the corresponding investment in measurement and officiating technology. This increasing systematization and regimentation of sport means a pure play-quality is inevitably lost. Huizinga (2014, 197) particularly points to the attitude of sports professionals: 'The spirit of a professional is no longer a true play-spirit; it is lacking in spontaneity and carelessness'. He also points out that in modern social life sport occupies a place alongside and apart from the cultural process. Huizinga (2014) argued that the great competitions in archaic cultures had always formed part of sacred festivals and were indispensable as health and happiness-bringing activities. In contrast, modern sport has become profane and has lost

the role of culture-creating activity. As such, modern sport (including youth sport), with its emphasis on high level performances, results, and a constant pressure on improvement, is in conflict with natural playfulness and a playful attitude.

In conclusion, although sport has some undisputable elements of play that are inherently present in the activity (such as time and space seclusion or non-seriousness and arbitrariness), sport seems to be an activity that does not necessarily have to be engaged in playfully. Although we often use the language of play to describe the activity of sport (e.g. 'they were playing football') this can be misleading in relation to the sense in which we have defined the playful attitude. Sport is an area where play can very likely surface, but as Roochnik (1975) states, it need not and often does not. Play can be actualized in sport, but this actualization is rather a product of participants' intentions. However, we maintain that actualizing the play possibility in sport is a beneficial and an important part of a good sport.

5. On the Importance of Playful Attitude in Sport

This leads to the question that logically follows in the playful attitude's relationship to sport, and particularly its relationship, if any, to success and failure in sport. Or equally, does a playful attitude make sport better? If we ask why a particular attitude is important to engaging in sport we return to the question about good sport. On the one hand we have external criteria about what sport looks like from the outside, such as tight competition where the victor is unknown, or where we see a demonstration of excellence skill and ability. Whilst this may provide us with some description of good sport from an external perspective, from the point of an athlete, it requires the adoption of a particular attitude that is much deeper and richer than simply holding the lusory attitude defined by Suits. The playful attitude enriches sport from both an internal and an external perspective. For the athlete, it has a deep phenomenological quality. Meier (1980, 30) noted, 'During moments of intense, vivid, and individuating engagement made available in play, the individual is provided with numerous occasions to recover himself and to attain a new and more perceptive sense of his own unique, personal existence'.⁶ We interpret this to mean that the attitude of play itself enables a richness of experience that goes beyond simply being engaged in an activity. Similarly, Eichberg (2016) argued play is a form of questioning: questioning about what exists, what is possible and ultimately who we are. Arguably, sport is an avenue whereby these questions can be asked and answered in a conducive environment in the manner of McFee's (2004) moral laboratory. The rules of sport are both trivial and bounded – but they give us something to work with – or rather, to play with. An attitude of play is one whereby we can test the possibilities and push at the limits but at the same time, the triviality of sport means that it does not matter if we fail.⁷

A playful attitude plays an important role in producing good sport. As Schneider (2001) notes, such an attitude grounds fair play and respect for the rules of sport. This suggests a normative aspect to the playful attitude which is reflected by Reid's (2012) belief that whilst play is not always sport and sport is not always play, when play is a part of sport, it makes it better. Reid highlights the connection between voluntariness and the quality of the sport experience, emphasizing the extraordinariness of play, and appreciating the ideal of autotelicity and fun. She points to the absorbing nature of play that might lead into the 'flow' experience, especially in sport performed at the highest levels. Henricks (2015) also notes this zest for playing that perhaps keeps the player engaged when others have grown tired or have quit. This point suggests that play as disposition or attitude has a significant role in activities that require commitment and

endurance, e.g. professional sport. It could even be argued that in order to play sport professionally with enthusiasm for a long period of time, it is necessary to have a playful attitude in order to overcome the challenges that the activity presents. The benefits of having a playful attitude in relation to games underlines Morgan's (2008) statement that the only way to fully tap the intrinsic good of games is to play them, and this we argue, is to hold the playful attitude when engaged in the activity itself.

This still leaves some questions; does a playful attitude help or hinder success and failure in sport? How does playful attitude relate to success or victory in competitive sports? Or a more practical question – if I am an elite athlete and want to win, or am competitive or even hyper-competitive, does a playful attitude help me to achieve my goal?

Winning is part of good sport if it comes from good competition since winning in itself has little value – i.e. winning against a much weaker opponent (and not giving our best) or without showing respect for the opponent (fair play). Nevertheless, winning and excellence (playing to the best of my abilities) are important parts of good sport but this does not mean that playfulness is omitted. Playfulness and winning/excellence are not in tension with each other, but on the contrary, go very well together. Suits (1969, 320) points to this inclusiveness when he says: '...a good game is one in which, for the winner, the aims of playing and winning are jointly realized, perhaps in terms of some kind of optimal balance'. All competitive sports aspire to some kind of flow experience – trying too hard to win kills everything. As we have noted, a playful attitude allows one to play the game when the temptation would be to tighten up, work at it, overthink, and perhaps choke. Great champions appear energized under pressure – they play better or harder, and they have the confidence that they will succeed, whereas lesser competitors stop playing.⁸ Modern sport psychology and examples of great winners in elite sport (e.g. Bryant, Jordan, or Bolt) suggest that in order to be successful, an athlete has to have several psychological traits that constitute the winning mentality. Among these are self-confidence, commitment and determination, the ability to overcome adversity, and the courage to face challenges at which they may fail. Whilst a playful attitude is not the only constituent of success in elite sport, we suggest that a playful attitude helps us to be more fully a part of the activity and, due to the internal qualities this attitude brings, to engage in it in a proper way, i.e. positively and adequately to the challenges. Therefore, a playful attitude can be an important aspect of sport, not just of youth sport where a playful approach is encouraged, but also of elite, winning-oriented forms of sport.

There is also the question as to whether the playful attitude is more appropriate for some sports than others. Whilst there may be some sports where a playful attitude seems more opportune, all sports seem to enable a space for a playful attitude—even in individual, linear sports such as athletics. Think of the development of the Fosbury flop in high jump for instance. We are not sure what possessed Dick Fosbury to launch himself backwards over the high jump but we would like to think that it was the result of a playful attitude. However, it is clear that this type of attitude is not the only one possible. Players may be positive, winning-oriented, responsible, but also aggressive, negative (pessimistic), or renounced. Athletes may hold a mixture of attitudes within one particular moment. Being a good athlete, both in a moral and performative sense, requires more than a playful attitude, but rather a proper mixture of several attitudes that emerge in the proper order at the right time.

To summarize, having a playful attitude enables us to see and experience the richness of the activity in full. It is not to merely participate in a limited way. It is a positive attitude that recognises the absurdity and triviality of sport (and arguably life)

and helps to maintain a healthy mind.⁹ Through a particular phenomenological experience it focuses on the joy and fun that comes from sport – the intrinsic and inherent value of sport. A playful attitude promotes creativity in that it enables us to see new relationships and new possibilities and allows us to break free from constraints and this creativity helps us to excel in our abilities. A playful attitude helps in striving for excellence of skill as it is both a motivator and provides a change of perspective. Finally, in team sports, it helps us work fully with others since it opens space for friendship, solidarity, shared experiences, and connection on the field.

6. Conclusion

This article attempts to capture the attitudinal dimension of play and show its place and relevance in sport. Further investigation into these attitudinal and experiential dimensions of play would be worthwhile to provide greater evidence of the direct impact on athletes and coaches who arguably would benefit from it in their sporting lives and careers. The definition of the playful attitude that we have outlined offers a holistic perspective that was missing in the previous literature, in particular, bringing together elements of play including openness, responsiveness, capriciousness and creativity. This account also provides a demonstration of the importance of the playful attitude to good sport, and a good life more generally.¹⁰

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¹ Authors use different terms to capture this particular dimension, such as 'stance', 'attitude', 'mindset', 'state of mind', 'mode' or 'quality'. We prefer the term 'attitude' because it describes something more stable than a momentary state of affairs (such as 'mindset' or 'state of mind'). According to Roochnik (1975, 39), an attitude is a way of thinking about things, a mental disposition and an orientation towards the world, whilst a stance is more deeply rooted: 'A

stance goes beyond the intellect to the body and the spirit and becomes a mode of being-toward-the-world.' It permeates all aspects of being human. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to the term 'attitude' to encompass both attitude and Roochnik's term 'stance'.

² The concept of responsive openness described by Hyland can be seen as an opposition to a 'fixed' state of mind described by Carol Dweck (*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, 2016). If we compare her approach with Hyland's conception of responsive openness, it seems clear that there is a link between being open and responsive and between being oriented toward development and new possibilities (e.g. a growth mindset).

³ See https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/15/children-learn-play-age-eight-lego?fbclid=IwAR3S3FxB_x0VNG0QAcceVMgpcczxWI3tWP0dYcoHOZJt2BKZzMRmZod49bfg. Retrieved July 8th 2019.

⁴ Problems arise when we consider activities that are generally viewed as morally bad. For example, is it possible to have this stance (in our case attitude) when killing someone? Or whilst cheating or making fun of the opponent? This is an area of debate amongst scholars and has been explored by Henning Eichberg in his notion of 'dark play'. We agree that a playful attitude generally denotes a moral good but admit it can be used in activities that are considered morally bad. So whilst the playful attitude itself is of moral worth, there is not a contingent link between the attitude and the activity. In other words, playful attitude is a good thing to possess, but it doesn't necessarily lead to good actions, i.e. there is no connective relationship between the moral worth of the attitude and the action that results from it.

⁵ For more details about conditions for playing a game see Schwengerer's article "An Epistemic Condition for Playing a Game" (2019).

⁶ Meier (1988) characterizes play based upon the orientation, demeanor, or stance of the participant. He argues that sport and games may or may not be play but if they are play (i.e. pursued voluntarily and for intrinsic reasons), both activities are somehow enriched.

⁷ When we say 'it does not matter' clearly there are cases when failing does matter, if it results in injury or death. But on the basis that most, if not all sports, aim to reduce the risk of injury and death to those involved, this means that the arbitrary rules of sport means that failure is self-contained. Indeed, Edgar (2013) argues for a definition of sport that entails an opportunity to fail.

⁸ We would like to thank Paul Gaffney for raising these points and also for his further comments on the relation between playfulness and competitiveness.

⁹ Reversal theory, which considers the meta-motivational states of an athlete as found in sport psychology literature may be useful. See for example Kerr (2001).

¹⁰ It could be argued that games and sport are not the only activities that are prime for a playful attitude. For instance, the playing of musical instruments offers similar potential to games and sport in this respect. We would like to thank one of the reviewers for highlighting this point.