Orderly and Disorderly Play
A Comparison

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Play is sometimes said to be paradoxical because it displays one quality and the opposite of that quality at the same time. One of the best examples of this is the copresence of order and disorder. This article explores the differences between orderly and disorderly play. The author emphasizes the ways in which any event can be said to be orderly or disorderly; the identification of cultural, social, and psychological sources of order; and the importance of this theme in the work of some prominent play scholars. Following this, the author suggests a variety of functions for both orderly and disorderly play.

AT A RECENT ANNUAL MEETING of The Association for the Study of Play, presenters offered two strikingly different views of the organization's primary focus. During a panel discussion, psychologists Jerome and Dorothy Singer argued, as they have written, that children should not be set "adrift in cyberspace" (2005, 110–35) but rather exposed to more limited and socially valuable forms of media. In the Singers' view, play is less an opportunity for children to express their private thoughts and feelings without reservation than a chance for them to comprehend their place in the human community. Children would benefit, the Singers suggest, from adult guidance in envisioning the wider world and steering their imaginative exploits toward appropriate ends. If parents and teachers choose not to play this role, they should recognize that powerful adult influences *are* going to come from other sources, including from the makers and sponsors of the video games, television programs, and Internet sites.

In contrast to the Singers' orderly, even civilized, view, folklorist and comparative psychologist Brian Sutton-Smith (2007), who considers play fundamentally an act of "emotional survival," presented a keynote address in which he reaffirmed his contention that whatever its social functions, play is a consultation with deep-seated, evolutionary emotions. When we play, we prod the

world—and ourselves—to discover our limits. We willfully put ourselves in precarious situations so that we can experience the emotions that attend success and failure, danger and security. In so doing, we see more clearly the spectrum of our own possibilities. We pursue experiences that enhance our capabilities and prepare us for the numerous, unforeseen difficulties that lie ahead. In Sutton-Smith's view, then, play is as much a quest for excitement, uncertainty, and disorder as it is a search for order, control, and cognitive harmony. Citing his own research with children's rhymes and stories, he emphasized how children often produce outrageous accounts filled with harrowing adventures, fantastically improbable situations, gigantic bodies (and body parts), and naughty words and behaviors. At such times, players create an uncivilized or even primal world that defies the niceties of adult society.

To be sure, play scholars are familiar with the different aspects of their subject. At times, players seem spontaneous and fanciful; at other times, they behave in rule-bound, goal-oriented ways. Sometimes players compete; sometimes they cooperate. Many play activities exhibit noisy exuberance; others feature quiet calculation. There are times when players comply with the authority figures that try to control them; there are times when they defy those authorities. Players routinely spend hours constructing something in the most patient and fastidious way; moments later, they tear that construction apart. In short, players are equally the creators and the destroyers of orderly form.

Here, I wish to discuss the differences between orderly and disorderly play and, in the process, to offer some observations on the impact of each. In my view, although play commonly seems both orderly and disorderly, play scholars should not emphasize one aspect to the exclusion of the other, nor should they accept blandly the proposition that play is paradoxical because it exhibits both qualities. Instead, scholars should take the coexistence of orderly and disorderly qualities as a challenge to analyze more closely the various elements of play, including the degree to which these elements seem to operate both as unifying forms (forms that guide the behavior of the players) and as oppositional forms (forms that provide objects to be challenged or dismantled). In other words, play scholars should examine the different ways in which order is observed, challenged, or disregarded during any particular play event. The initial section of this article focuses thus on what it means to say that something is orderly or disorderly. Next, I investigate the notion of play as paradox and identify three sources of orderliness in play—culture, society, and the individual psyche. Finally, I discuss the functions of both order and disorder.

Meanings of Order and Disorder

What does it mean to say that something is in order, well ordered, or orderly? When is something out of order, in poor order, or disorderly? A parent entering a child's room might declare that the place is a mess and that the child needs to straighten it up. Suppose the child insists that she knows where everything is and that she is entirely comfortable with things as they are. Can we say the room is in disarray?

I like this everyday example to suggest the extent to which orderliness is often a matter of perspective. What you judge to be chaos, I may deem extremely regular. Moreover, individuals routinely change their opinions about how orderly situations may be. After all, life is a succession of new experiences—the first time you take a job, move to a big city, go to a dance club, or shop at a busy open-air market. Events that seem at first overwhelming swirls of sight and sound, sooner or later become predictable. Ultimately, we make our way across the dance floor or meander through the marketplace with hardly a turn of the head.

In my view, the question of what constitutes order and disorder is a crucial matter for play studies because play commonly includes both, often at the same time, whether one is talking of order subjectively, as we are when we ask a child whether she thinks her room is messy, or of order in some more objective context. Any dictionary suggests the range of possibilities. In *Webster's New College Dictionary* (2005), the first two definitions of order are "a condition of logical or coherent arrangement among the individual elements of a group" and "a condition of standard or prescribed arrangement among component parts, such that proper functioning or appearance is achieved." The entry offers the example of a "machine in working order." Its list of additional meanings include "the established organization or structure of society" and "the rule of law and custom or the observance of prescribed procedure." *Webster's* develops at some length the relationship of order to proper social functioning. Order can refer to a specific social class, group, or organization (such as a religious order). It can mean an "established sequence or procedure" controlled by a group (such as an order of worship). It can refer to an honor or special status granted a person by a group (such as an order of merit). Finally, order can mean "an authoritative indication to be obeyed" (such as a command from a superior military officer or an official in a government or court).

All this suggests that people's notions of orderliness—the perception of a stable relationship among the elements of the world—are conflated with their ideas of what to expect or what is proper. Things are in order when they match our anticipations about them. Even when we order our food at a restaurant—a shift from the noun to the verb—we are not simply making a request. We fully expect our choice to be honored and our food to be prepared with a certain promptness and quality. When it does not meet these criteria, we complain. At least as a social phenomenon then, orderliness implies that people feel assured about how the social situation will unfold and about their own role within it. This role includes an understanding of what they can ask other people to do and of what other people can ask them to do. In other words, order is surrounded by ideas of status, hierarchy, propriety, and control.

As you might imagine, people of higher status—those typically allowed to command and control others—tend to be fascinated by ideas of orderliness. People of lower status do not always share this fascination. As I argued in *Disputed Pleasures* (Henricks 1991), a study of preindustrial sports, high-status groups tend to idealize reality in their play. That is, their choice of games frequently dramatizes the advantages they already hold, and their playground statuses are often similar in character to their statuses in society at large. The play itself frequently has a ritualistic quality, emphasizing sportsmanship or good form. Play in this sense serves as an extension, a reinforcement, and a display of the broader style of life that Thorstein Veblen first defined in 1899 in his classic *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1953).

By contrast, lower-status groups commonly try to realize ideals in their play. That is, they use play activities as an opportunity to seek statuses and find pleasures not readily available in normal social situations. Play of this sort may be licentious and rowdy enough to challenge broader social allegiances. Sometimes, authorities sponsor these moments of adventure and status reversal as official moral holidays for their social inferiors. Sometimes the underprivileged groups grab these liberties for themselves. Whatever the motivation behind the disruptions, upper-status groups routinely worry that the play will overflow its confines, that its disorderly qualities will become too pronounced, and that it will cause damage to persons and property. Clearly, teachers and students, coaches and players, older siblings and younger ones occupy different ends of the status continuum and can have different views on how the play should proceed. Let's take a look at this tension in more general terms.

Order and Disorder as Paradox

Play is sometimes called paradoxical in the sense that it exhibits one pattern of relationships and the opposite pattern at the same time (Gruneau 1980; Loy 1982). For this article, I define the paradox as the distinction between play's status as an orderly enterprise—one commonly marked by shared agreements about rules, goals, environmental boundaries, team identities, and the like—and as a disorderly affair—in which people assert themselves against various physical, social, and cultural forms. Even the classic play theorist Johan Huizinga emphasized both sides of this issue. In the opening chapter of *Homo Ludens*, he declares that play "creates order, *is* order" and adds to this the claim that play "demands order absolute and supreme" (1955, 10). Play, in other words, is an attempt to establish—and then to operate within—a world of "limited perfection" set amidst the confusions and complexities of life. In this sense, play is an exercise in rules and patterns. And, Huizinga warns, spoilsports (those who would declare these realities unimportant or even ridiculous) should take heed.

Elsewhere, Huizinga seems to reverse his position by claiming that play is an exercise in human freedom. As he famously puts it: "Play only becomes possible, thinkable, and understandable when an influx of *mind* breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos" (3). In this light, play scholars may recall that voluntarism is the first—and perhaps best known—of the qualities Huizinga says define play. When people play, they explore the implications of freedom and of will.

Some have criticized Huizinga's cheerful acceptance of this duality. Roger Caillois, for example, argues that Huizinga fails to distinguish play's more ludic or gamelike forms from its more improvisational forms and thus exaggerates the quandary he presents to his readers (1961). Richard Gruneau suggest that, in the case of sports at least, Huizinga's emphasis on the voluntarism or freedom of games is largely misplaced (1980, 1983). Certainly, where university and professional sports are concerned, nonplayers determine the outlines of the activity, and the athletes themselves participate for wide varieties of extrinsic rewards, only some of which Huizinga himself approved. In Gruneau's view, how can this pattern of entanglement be called freedom?

Such criticisms have merit. However, Huizinga saw more clearly than his critics that the charm of play lies in the way in which participants resolve the tension between the public demands to observe "proper" form and their own

demands to alter or violate it. As he explains, the "elements" of play include "tension, poise, balance, contrast, variation, solution, resolution, etc." Play involves "rhythm and harmony." Players willfully build up tension and then resolve the tension through their own actions (1955, 10). Like the sociologist Georg Simmel (1971), who explored the play forms of human association, Huizinga understood that orderly form is the necessary precondition for acts of human transformation. We cannot rebel, manipulate, or even express ourselves without solid forms to resist our movements and without solid standards to judge our accomplishments. As Sutton-Smith and Diana Kelley-Byrne (1984b) emphasize, play is both equilibrating (in that it seeks stable resolutions) and disequilibrating (in that it explores tension and change) at the same time.

As noted above, I think any claims of paradox, though they may be fascinating in their own way, should not substitute for efforts to think about the different orderly and disorderly elements of play. Clearly, play routinely features both order and disorder, and we should ask how these processes affect the character of play. To do so, we need first to think about the different kinds of order that exist in play—or, indeed, in any human activity.

Culture as a Source of Orderliness in Play

Human beings spend their lives inside public meaning systems, shared patterns of ideas that allow them to behave in ways comprehensible to others. These sets of ideas effectively direct people's thoughts, feelings, and actions. They provide us with standards of truth, beauty, justice, and utility—all the enduring concerns of philosophy—that allow us to behave properly before others and to respond effectively to their actions. Sometimes, these directives are explicit norms or rules. In the social sciences, the term *culture* has been applied especially to the symbolic patterns of entire societies, but there is no reason that the concept should be restricted in this way. All societies are marked by numerous subcultures, by little worlds of belief and custom. Such meaning systems are often specialized along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and the like. Similarly, particular communities or families have their own subcultures; so do social institutions (like governments, universities, and religious denominations). Public ideas also circumscribe—and in effect define—social events like rituals, festivities, even work. In short, culture includes a wide variety of relationships, behaviors, and settings.

This may help to explain why Huizinga and other play theorists have tended to depict play events as microcosms, or little worlds. In many forms of play, we choose to engage in an event characterized by an established system of rules and beliefs and by a distinctive material culture—playing grounds and equipment are understood to have special meanings during play events. When we choose to participate in this world, we do so with certain expectations about what we will find there. We anticipate the skills we need to muster. We expect we will have certain kinds of experiences. We know the roles we will assume during the event. And we understand how the activity will unfold and conclude. When contests are configured in this way, especially when they feature clear playing rules, they are typically called games. In a sense, such games, at least games that are widely played, exist before any particular group of players gathers and engages in the event. That is, games are themselves cultural artifacts; they are symbolic forms that people accept and enact.

In this sense, play can be considered orderly, at least to the extent that the participants accept the outlines or directives included in these cultural forms. Thus, even the most combative or rancorous events such as boxing matches or paintball games—when viewed from the appropriate cultural distance—can be deemed orderly affairs. Combative sports and games are typically predictable in terms of their settings, the skills of the participants, the character of their actions, and the incentives for their involvement. We know how they will begin and how they will end. The event itself may be of little importance to the broader society; or it may be the "big game." Big games commonly have extensive economic, social, or even political implications; smaller matches may matter to only a few and have little if any impact beyond the moments of their playing.

In line with Caillois, it seems valuable to distinguish these culturally prescribed ludic forms of play from spontaneous, neighborhood games. When people follow external rules, they subordinate their own creative impulses to the prescribed play. When they participate in a public game, they acknowledge that they want to play with others. They want their activities judged by the same standards used for other players. In this sense, even when we play a game of solitaire or hunt or paint alone, we find ourselves using forms of behavior long established by others. Because such games are culturally defined, other people can understand the significance of what we have accomplished.

Many expressions of play, however, do not adhere to established cultural forms. Solitary activities—daydreaming, doodling, singing in the shower, and dancing around the house—need not conform to public rules, though they often

do. Likewise, the egocentric play of small children—musing, babbling, manipulating objects, or smearing food on a plate—may safely ignore cultural regimes, or at least be carried on without a knowledge of them. This helps explain why Huizinga was so entirely disinterested in solitary play and in the play of children.

Quite different are play activities that openly confront cultural norms. I refer to the work of creative artists, to painters, poets, and composers who recognize and then intentionally defy the public standards set for art. To be sure, all play involves some kind of material or symbolic manipulation. But, art frequently challenges the rules themselves. When we play in this creative way, we engage in small acts of deviance. We know what is expected of us as practitioners of an aesthetic form, but we do something instead that stretches or modifies these expectations.

Such violation of norms is also central to comedy and other forms of linguistic invention. Here the challenge confronting the player consists of breaking the rules of discourse in such a way as to produce moments of pleasant surprise for others. Of course, even these improvisational or creative acts can be subsumed by social and cultural forms. When we go to an art show or a comedy club, we *expect* to be surprised, amused, even astounded by what we encounter.

As much as we appreciate the exploits of the musical composer, the creative artist, the fiction writer, or the stand-up comedian, their creativity is always bound by the very rules and ideas they seek to flout. If creators go too far in their transgressions, others have trouble understanding what they mean and fail to appreciate their work. On the other hand, if they are timid in their transgressions, others often judge their efforts boring and accuse them of, say, falling flat. So, intellectual and artistic creativity tends to be sharply focused (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). Out of the literally thousands of ideas, rules, and techniques that surround a given activity, only a handful become elements addressed by the creative process. When these strategic manipulations please their makers, we tend to call the process play. When they please wider audiences, we celebrate the creativity of those makers.

At any rate, such play can be considered more or less orderly at a cultural level. That is, when players follow the norms of play events—by observing the playing rules, by wearing the appropriate costumes, by maintaining the appropriate attitude toward the event, and so forth—their play can be called orderly. And the play is orderly whether they are playing dominoes, attending a tea party, driving in a demolition derby, or competing in a tug-of-war. For Huizinga, at least, to play means to enter established public forms and to address the challenges that arise there.

Play as Social Order

Although people sometimes play alone, they often gather to support one another and to have others watch their performances. A special and, for a sociologist, crucial issue concerns the character of the personal relationships within such settings. Play provides the context for a very wide range of human relationships. Even games invite a tremendous variety in the orderliness of the relationships found in play. A chess match surely differs from a monster-truck rally. A fancy dress party only remotely resembles a hotdog-eating contest. But in each case, their rules of play set people against or with one another in distinctive ways.

We assess the orderliness of play by dividing play events in relation to their (social) competitiveness. Although Huizinga focused almost exclusively on the agon or social contest, most play scholars take a broader view of their field of study. They view some play events as competitive in spirit, others as more cooperative. Arguably, cooperative events are more orderly than competitive ones. Cooperative events are directed toward experiences of group identity or unity. They seek to place participants into wider social frameworks. By contrast, competitive events showcase the identities of smaller social units and celebrate the tension produced by structured antagonism.

A Competition-Cooperation Continuum
The relative competitiveness of play can be assessed by postulating a gradient of events ranging from directly competitive to indirectly competitive to indirectly cooperative to directly cooperative. Directly competitive events are those in which the participants block the actions of others (as in boxing or tennis). These produce the greatest possibilities for antagonism and disorder. Indirectly competitive events feature parallel activity by partisans (as in golf or bingo). Indirectly cooperative events encourage participants to work individually in a common enterprise (as in a quilting bee or a research consortium). Directly cooperative events ask participants to respond to and support the actions of others (as in a barn raising or a square dance). More orderly events are those that seek integration or unity through their action and goals, since cooperation, by its nature, is more orderly than competition.

Again, I want to emphasize that all games are combinations of these themes and that they may be played-out differently by any set of participants. As I have argued, all play forms feature some level of contest or challenge (Henricks 1999,

2006, 2008, forthcoming). However, even the most fiercely competitive events, such as boxing contests or hockey games, include cooperative elements. Indeed, at such events much may be made of the opening and closing ceremonies, where participants shake hands, embrace, bow, or signify their respect for one another, the rules of the game, and the referee. Indeed, this show of respect bestows authority on the referee to control, punish, and reward the behavior of the players. Such displays indicate that the partisanship itself is subordinate to wider social forms that sponsor, supervise, and vouchsafe the proceedings. Similarly, many games provide the opportunity to experience allegiance. At some competitions, spectators become fans of established teams or sides. In some other games, quite temporary alliances develop in pursuit of a common goal. In fact, some of the pleasure of the play derives from the movement into group membership and in the awareness of opposition to others.

The competition-cooperation continuum describes the character and direction of interaction; that is, from a focus on the fervent negotiation of social hierarchies (for, say, esteemed positions within a given social group), to a concern for the shared commitment of all members to the success of that social group. The former might include free-for-all games such as king-of-the-hill, where each player claims ascendancy against all comers. The latter might characterize the kind of social cooperation you find at a tea party, maypole dance, or rock-concert rave. When the testing, teasing qualities of play are overwhelmed by feelings of social immersion and unity, I believe it is more appropriate to speak of the resulting forms of behavior as *communitas* rather than play (Henricks 1999, 2006). Team play typically occupies an interesting position between these extremes. Teams cooperate and sacrifice themselves for one another so that the group can achieve dominance over another.

Orderliness as the Acceptance of Social Form
There is a different aspect to social orderliness, and it has to do with how willingly participants accept the terms under which they play the game. Many modern sociologists claim that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966), which implies that how people think about the world depends on the agreements they make with one another. The events of social life—a marriage, a sociable gathering, a day at work, a football game—effectively involve the playing out of such agreements. As many marriages document, confusion, even open disagreements, can plague the reality even for those who constructed it. When participants do not agree about the rules, the beliefs, and the social roles

under which they operate, those social situations, I would argue, are less orderly than ones where the socially constructed reality is understood and accepted.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim (1964) called the kind of thing I have in mind *social integration.* Integrated groups and societies, where people understand and accept the nature of the reality under which they live and where they recognize their commitment to one another, are more orderly than those where people stand apart. The acceptance of social norms is, of course, no simple matter, nor is it always clear and straightforward. People frequently go through the motions of supporting group norms even when they privately reject them. Something similar happens, I think, with play. So we should not be surprised when players who ritually congratulate one another at the end of a game sometimes do so in the most lackluster or even insulting ways.

Two Ways of Constructing Social Order

One critical aspect of the processes by which social reality is built and sustained can be expressed with the question: Who controls the definitions under which the participants operate? In some cases, the participants themselves create and sustain them. On such occasions, the play world—like any other socially constructed setting—exhibits what sociologists sometimes call ground-up or crescive social structures (Crozier 1967). Under these structures, the play world arises out of the interests, the needs, and the beliefs of the individuals involved. As Erving Goffman (1961) emphasizes, a play event is like a delicate transparent bubble. Collectively, participants inflate the bubble and guard it from all manner of interferences that might cause it to shrink or burst. To sustain the play, players ignore ringing phones, the shouts of their mothers to come home, inclement weather, even the vicissitudes of their own personalities. Participants must collectively work out procedures to keep bored or dissatisfied people in play, to deal with inevitable interruptions—like an injured foot or an injured psyche—or even to redefine the goals, rules, and sides of the event, if need be, so that it can move forward. The play world is not simply a ready-made environment that people inhabit but an ever-precarious situation that they must build and maintain.

Ideally, social play exhibits many of these creative qualities and derives some of its liveliness and unpredictability from the inspiration and energy of the participants who sustain it. I have claimed that we can distinguish play from certain other forms of behavior by a predominance of what I call ascending meaning (Henricks 1999, 2006, 2007, 2008). As one of the two principal ways

in which people establish relationships and make meaning, ascending meaning refers to the way individuals confront, oppose, and transform the external patterns of the world. These patterns may be social, cultural, environmental, or bodily in character. When people play, they take on these external patterns and attempt to modify them in accord with their own psychological desires and strategies. At an intrapsychic level, ascending meaning describes the assertive role of consciousness in such attempts to modify psychic patterns. As Huizinga said, play exhibits an "influx of mind over the determinism of the universe." In this sense, play is the contestive response of people to the challenges of living. Frequently, these challenges do not simply present themselves to players; instead, they are actively sought by or even manufactured by the players.

In contrast to these attempts by people to make their own meaning, there are those who more or less accept the terms of external patterns or persons. This relatively compliant, conforming participation in events I call descending meaning. In their idealized form, rituals provide the best examples of this behavior. Real-life play events can also produce some examples, however, especially when games become subject to the dictates of a controlling figure such as a caring but overweening parent, teacher, or coach. At such times, the broader reality of the activity—its entrance criteria, processes, end points, and standards of success—is not produced, but only enacted, by the player.

For his part, Huizinga worried about this kind of external attempt to control play and even described it—in a worst-case scenario—as false play. Writing in the shadow of the Nazi ascendancy in Europe, Huizinga criticized sporting spectacles and other public festivities whose contexts and meanings were dictated by political authorities. At one level, of course, participants at these events creatively and even joyfully addressed the challenges set for them. But the authorities not only determined the nature of these challenges, they also regulated how such events were to be understood by the wider society. In Huizinga's view, what appeared to be play in these cases was in reality something else, a giving of oneself to an elaborate political charade. We might also note that Durkheim (1951)—one of the great champions of moral authority in sociology—also feared something similar in the social condition he called fatalism, where personal expression becomes extinguished under the weight of public order.

I would say all such descending events are certainly more orderly than ascending ones because the descending events avoid the ambiguity and confusion that result when everyone wishes to have their say in determining the character of the action. However, when orderliness becomes too prominent, playfulness

retreats, and the event can even become false as Huizinga and Durkheim feared. At its worst perhaps, play that is managed by an overly controlling leader becomes a dog-and-pony show.

Such issues are displayed in the work of social psychologist and learning theorist Lev Vygotsky, who emphasizes the role of sociocultural contexts and mediating adults in children's development (1976). Through relationships with such guiding figures, children are led toward increasingly complicated and abstract understandings. What is the role of play in this process? Does play contribute to a movement through "zones of proximal development" and feature the so-called "scaffolding" sometimes associated with Vygotsky's work? E. Beverley Lambert and Margaret Clyde (2003) argue that Vygotsky tends to emphasize the role of external sources of challenge and that, in the learning process, play is for Vygotsky primarily a matter of imitation and internalization. Although Lambert and Clyde recognize the shifts and ambiguities in Vygotsky's formulations, they question the pertinence of his approach for a more general theory of play.

This reading of Vygotsky's work is almost entirely at odds with that of Brian Edmiston. While Edmiston (2008) also emphasizes the role Vygotsky sees for adults in playing with children, he understands play as a collaborative activity in which the participants coauthor a reality that they create and explore together. Adults may lead the activity, but they do not have to do so. Indeed, the best forms of adult participation are creative responses to the imaginative forays of the child. In other words, for Edmiston, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development should be viewed not as the distance between some preestablished adult vision of success and the child's current capabilities but rather as the creative space between what people are able to do on their own and what they can do collaboratively (Edmiston 2008, 140). To make Edmiston's point using my own terminology, Vygotsky should be seen less as a descending-meaning theorist than as an ascending-meaning theorist who shows how people create reality together out of the particularities of their lives.

Psychological Sources of Order

Although play may or may not have a social element, it is always a profoundly psychological affair. In almost every account of play, it is considered something that individuals do. Setting aside the issue of false play, people at play routinely

invest situations with their own interests, needs, and enthusiasms. They manipulate material and symbolic objects—and respond to those objects—in personal ways. As pundits sometimes say of sport, play may not build character but it frequently reveals it. To play is to explore the ever-present tension between external and internal realities, between the demands of the world and the demands of personhood. But before I talk about play as a relationship between individuals and their environments, let me offer a few comments on orderliness as an intrapsychic issue.

If play is a psychological matter, are some forms of play more orderly—at this psychological level—than others? For me, play is an occasion characterized by ascending meaning, when people attempt to mark the world in their own ways. In play, people try out their personal schemes on reality by manipulating, testing, and teasing. They find pleasure in seeing how reality responds to such schemes, and then they reassert themselves using the same schemes or new ones they have fashioned in their minds. In this sense, play is an attempt to impose one's personality on the world.

Comparing Piaget's and Freud's Views of Play

This more or less orderly view of play is the one offered by Jean Piaget, at least in his later writing (Piaget 1962; Ortega 2003). For Piaget, play is pure assimilation. Players try out behavioral and cognitive schemas and gain pleasure from the successful application of those strategies. So understood, play is largely a manipulative exercise. Its end point is the feeling of cognitive mastery that comes from self-styled repetition. In other words, for Piaget, play focuses primarily on the relationship between the individual and his or her environment.

The view of play as a quest for cognitive control—and as a repetition of successful experiences—also resembles a strain of thought prominent in the work of Sigmund Freud. However, Freud's approach differs from Piaget's in that Freud focuses primarily on intrapsychic matters, especially as these involve nonrational processes. Freud's work is concerned with the nexus between the mind and body as evidenced in such concepts as pleasure seeking, instinctual forces, and the overall physicality of experience. Freud sees play as an attempt to manage such forces and feelings. Moreover, for Freud, play is not an effort to create narrow schemes of thought and behavior, but rather an attempt to develop elaborate imaginary worlds related to the cognitive, moral, and emotional issues facing the player in his everyday life. In Freud's own words, "every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of

his own, or more truly, he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better" (1958, 45). This world, one which the child takes very seriously, is understood to be different from ordinary reality. Unlike daydreaming, however, playing involves an interpenetration of the inner and outer worlds or, as Freud phrases it, the child "likes to borrow the objects and circumstances that he imagines from the tangible and visible things of the real world" (1958, 45).

That preoccupation with ego mastery as the rational control of both internal and external matters finds expression in what is probably Freud's best-known account of play, a description of his eighteen-month-old grandson's manipulation of a wooden reel. Freud recounts how the child repeatedly threw a wooden reel attached to a string over the edge of his curtained cot and then, using the string, pulled it back into view each time (1967, 32–38). For Freud, this was essentially a game of "gone," a casting away of a valued object, which he thought symbolized the child's mother, and then retrieving it. Freud's puzzlement centered on why the child should repeatedly discard this pleasurable object and why this particular segment of the activity should be accompanied by the child's strongest emotional outcries. Freud asked: "How then does [the child's] repetition of this distressing experience as a game fit in with the pleasure principle?" (1967, 34). Freud's conclusion is that there must be other forces at work in the psyche beyond the pleasure principle, that is, beyond the desire to discharge nervous excitation. The casting away of the reel he thus interprets as an act of instinctual renunciation, a pattern in which the ego demonstrates that it can control—and even set aside—the sources of its own pleasure. Whether or not one agrees with Freud's explanation of this particular event, his more general approach seems clear: play is an ego-controlled event where psychically stimulating forms are summoned and then managed. In this sense, play takes on some of the qualities of pleasurable repetition emphasized by Piaget.

Revisiting the Singers' View of Play
The Singers' approach to play, which I described at the outset, follows this tradition of emphasizing cognitive control. Jerome Singer, in particular, has established himself as an experimental psychoanalyst who studies the Freudian perspective scientifically (J. A. Singer and Salovey 1999, viii). Focusing less on early childhood events and their associated memories and more on day-to-day experiences, Singer (1980) has shown private experience, our imaginary processing of internal and external events, to be crucial to how people understand

themselves. Imaginary activity such as daydreaming and make-believe helps people plan behaviors and provides much pleasure in and of itself. When people play, they exercise their powers to construct the complicated mental scenarios within which they operate.

Four Kinds of Psychological Control
For Piaget, Freud, and the Singers, play appears to be a kind of psychic imperialism, an order-seeking endeavor in which people try to control their own experiences and, to some degree, succeed in doing so. And indeed, there are many different points where players may be able to exercise personal control and reap the emotional satisfactions that come from such control. Almost any internal or external event—a thought that crosses one's mind, the pattern of one's own breathing, the movement of an approaching ball—can be objectified mentally and actions can be taken to control it. I'll restrict myself to four different points where a player is able to take a certain measure of control of a situation.

The first of these points concerns the ability of the player to control the type of activity and its general guidelines. Play routinely involves a choice to pursue an activity such as deciding to play dominoes or video games. When one chooses a publicly recognized form like these, one controls the process of cultural selection. Playing by the recognized rules of games simply refines the choice.

A second point of control involves the player's ability to influence the character and direction of the action. Some types of play put people entirely in charge of what they do; others put great emphasis on the processes of adjustment (a theme I address below). The difference is crucial to the social aspects of play. Getting to tell others what to do represents a significant—and quite satisfying—level of psychological control.

A third, more modest point of control features the player's ability to take a turn in controlling the action. Many types of play involve alternations between moments of dominance and moments of submission, between being in control and then relinquishing control to another. Each moment offers a different kind of psychological lesson for the player.

A fourth point of individual control concerns the player's ability to determine when he will enter the play setting and when he will leave it. This type of control may seem fairly inconsequential, particularly when others are already playing and the character of the game is well established. However, choosing to enter a setting—and knowing that one could have chosen otherwise—

constitutes an important element of the experience. Similarly, the knowledge that players can quit whenever they want supports the notion that fun is the main point of the event.

In summary, players can exercise more or less control over their play. Determining the broad character of a game, in which the player and others will participate, constitutes perhaps the most extensive form of control. Being able to determine how others play the game—perhaps by controlling their behavior—constitutes a lower level of control. Taking one's turn—assuming episodic leadership roles or positions of social prominence—constitutes an even more modest form of dominance. Finally, the player choosing her own movements of play—including when to enter and exit the play setting—constitutes the weakest of the four forms of control. Clearly, whether a player feels himself to be in control of a situation involves issues of perception and interpretation as well as behavior. Such points are emphasized in psychology's mood management theory, which argues that players select entertainments that offer a potentially optimal balance between boredom from too much control and stress or anxiety from too little control (Bryant and Vorderer 2006; Csikszentmihalyi 1997).

Play as the Relinquishment of Psychic Control
A quite different viewpoint sees play as a chance for people to act out of control. As I argued elsewhere (Henricks, forthcoming), play—even as ascending meaning—can take several different forms. To be sure, some play seems to offer a time when people can take charge of their own affairs either by manipulating their environments in direct ways as Piaget suggests or by exploring them mentally as the Singers would have it. However, some kinds of play may also provide opportunities for people to take on forces as strong as or more powerful than they are. In other words, players do not only wish to dominate; they also wish to be challenged. In such play, we want to see if we can stand up to what life puts in our way and, during that process, to experience the strong physical sensations and emotions that accompany such confrontations. This more reactionary kind of play—to see if people can take or defy what life gives them—has more affinity to Freud's point of view. However, such play is not usually considered a mere exercise in personal endurance. Nor is it in the spirit of play to simply capitulate to external forces. Quite the opposite, players jump into the fray; they parry the thrusts of the other, and—if the challenges provided by the other are not substantial enough to hold their interest—they seek out newer, more difficult challenges. I suggest that play features a dialogue—a give-and-take of

well-matched participants—and rebellion—the thwarting of more powerful others—as well as attempts at control of and letting go of restraints.

Revisiting Sutton-Smith's View

These two features of play I am talking about have been prominent in the writing of Sutton-Smith. His work is notable for its attempt to counter what he sees as prevalent themes in play studies, the idealization of play (Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Byrne 1984a) and the view of play as progress (Sutton-Smith 1997). Taken together, these views tend to emphasize the extent to which play is an order-seeking enterprise. Such approaches understand play as an exercise in cognitive and emotional control or even as a moral enterprise in which people build ideas about appropriate behavior in human communities. Consistently, they view play as a sort of instrumental behavior that facilitates the development of personal frameworks that are increasingly abstract, wide ranging, and powerful in their stability and scope of application. Players play so that they may achieve personal control.

Sutton-Smith does not reject these views, but he makes us aware that play can serve other purposes and take other forms. For this reason, he champions play as destabilizing as well as stabilizing or, to use his own terms, as disequilibrating as well as equilibrating. To be sure, play activities may resemble Piaget's straight-ahead manipulations or Freud's repetition-compulsions. But play is also—and perhaps more distinctively—a kind of energetic dialogue with the elements of the world. Players do not desire simply to manipulate the world and thereby learn about their own powers. They also want to discover the secrets of that world and, by this process, to learn about *its* powers. Play should be understood as a back-and-forth affair. Importantly, the interaction is never entirely predictable. Players are always a little uncertain of what challenges the world will present to them and how they will be able to respond to the challenges. That is what makes play tense, exciting, and fun.

Many scholars have emphasized the degree to which players seek familiarity, reassurance, and orderliness in their choices of play objects, activities, and roles. Although Nina Lieberman (1977, 7) recognizes this aspect of play, she also emphasizes that playful people are those who do not wait passively for the world to hand them their assignments, that is, their roles and challenges. Quite the opposite, such players routinely make their own fun or even make trouble (to repeat Sutton-Smith's claim) by destabilizing ordinary affairs. Thus, play is sometimes an adventure in extremism, an adventure during which people

allow themselves to get too loud, too silly, too rambunctious, even too tired. At least in some forms of play, participants seem to desire challenges they *cannot* handle. At such times, players do not seek mastery; they seek the excitement that comes from being out of control and the creative responses they can muster. As Sutton-Smith reminds us, playful children sometimes seek the novel and the fantastic. In doing so, they wish to move beyond the safety zone of previous behaviors and imaginings and discover what they can do in new settings. In Sutton-Smith's broader interpretation of play (1997), such activities effectively prepare people for worlds unknown. He argues that playful creatures have better chances of survival in complicated, changing environments.

Sutton-Smith's more recent work (2003) also indicates the extent to which players explore possibilities of being out of control at an intrapsychic level. Certainly, play is not usually considered a compulsive behavior driven by this or that inner feeling. Nevertheless, players frequently court danger by getting themselves into situations that stir up strong, primary emotions such as fear, disgust, surprise, anger, happiness, and sadness. They want to feel the power of these emotions the way they feel the power of external forces. But they do not wish to capitulate to them. Instead, they learn how to summon these powerful feelings and use them appropriately. More generally, play exalts the ability to frame and regulate the conditions of human existence, including the strong emotions that are part of our evolutionary heritage. These acts of framing and controlling connect Sutton-Smith's view to that of the Singers—for all I have painted them as the proponents of socially responsible play—who are also champions of the creative imagination. For both Sutton-Smith and the Singers, imaginative players energetically open up new cognitive territories for themselves. The differences between these prominent play theorists seem to lie in what they believe to be the sources and guidelines for those creative exploits.

Summarizing the Forms of Order

I have discussed orderliness in play at three levels: cultural, social, and psychological. In each of these contexts, players can be said to be more or less in or under control. Of the three contexts, culture—the patterning of publicly circulated ideas, norms, and material artifacts—is, I think, the most external to the individual, because cultural elements operate as preexisting constraints or guidelines for play. The social context—the patterning of human interaction—may also have a collective existence relatively independent of any particular individual, but still

people usually participate in socially determined play and have the opportunity to shape its interaction. Least external are the personal ideas and orientations of the individual players, that is, the psychological patterns that I have described.

Play can be said to be orderly or controlled in all these ways. Consider a listing of these sources of order presented below.

Cultural Order: The Rule of Symbolic and Material Form
- Issue: The extent to which the play activity is of an institutionalized type, that is, a named, publicly recognized category of activity (e.g., sledding, doodling, or video gaming), which is understood to have a general standing in society amidst other types of activity.
- Issue: The extent to which the play activity is a ludic or rule-bound form. Such rules detail implements of play, roles, goals, permissible behaviors, and beginnings and endings, and they vary in their complexity and specificity as in playing by the rules of a game or following the steps of a dance.
- Theme: Play is orderly at a cultural level to the extent that players conform to preestablished, publicly recognized frameworks that narrow and focus behaviors. Play is disorderly to the extent that players ignore, reject, or modify these preestablished frameworks.

Social Order: The Rule of Collectively Maintained Interaction Patterns
- Issue: The extent to which the play event is socially competitive or cooperative. Play varies from directly competitive to indirectly competitive to indirectly cooperative to directly cooperative. Cooperative events seek social unity for all participants; competitive events seek special status for social subgroups defined as partisans.
- Issue: The extent to which players either agree to accept the social definitions for a particular event detailing the roles of those players or fail to accept those definitions and assignments. In this sense, players can be seen as being more or less integrated in the event and its associated groups.
- Issue: The extent to which the social definition of reality is controlled by established authorities who set challenges and determine course of action. Top-down events are contrasted to bottom-up events, which construct reality from the vantage points of individual participants.
- Theme: Play is orderly at a social level to the extent that any par-

ticular event is characterized by cooperation, by broad acceptance of social placements and processes, and by regulation through authority figures. Play is disorderly to the extent that qualities of competition, social independence, and multiple sources and styles of decision making apply.

Psychological Order: The Rule of Cognitive Schemes
- Issue: The extent to which the individual player controls the type of activity (e.g., the decision to play dominoes or video games) and its general guidelines.
- Issue: The extent to which the individual player controls the course and character of action. Play involving manipulation and exploration, where the player has greater control, is more orderly than play involving dialogue and rebellion, where others have greater power.
- Issue: The extent to which the individual player controls the pace or sequence of the activity, including the ability to initiate action, to take one's turn (e.g., the opportunity to deal the cards in poker).
- Issue: The extent to which the player controls his or her own entry and exit from the playground by choosing to play or to quit the game.
- Theme: Play is orderly at the psychological level to the extent that the individual player can determine the nature, pattern, and sequence of the activity. Orderly activities feature player control through the use of ego-dominated or cognitive strategies. Disorderly activities from the psychological viewpoint are those in which rational calculation is subordinated to nonrational forces. Here, the player can be said to be psychologically out of control.

In general, play is orderly when its action conforms to comprehensible lines or sequences that allow players and spectators to anticipate what will happen. When people play together, orderliness is maximized when players conform to preestablished game scripts, when they subordinate their own interests to support the collective identity of all participants, and when they allow a centralized authority to make decisions concerning the play. Even when people play alone, their play may be more or less orderly to the degree that they are in charge of their own impulses and of the challenges that they confront.

Clearly, these sources of control offer different and sometimes directly competing ways of directing behavior. For that reason, play—and indeed most forms

of human behavior—is typically a contested affair. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the child with the messy room finds that others consider the source of the problem to be her disorderly habits. Defiantly, she claims that things are quite in order, understanding the term as her own ability to comprehend the conditions in her room. In this example, as in play more generally, psychological standards compete with social and cultural ones.

In my view, play is always contested to the extent that it involves some challenge or difficulty that the player addresses. However, players routinely submit to certain forms so that they may contest others. They even submit themselves to their own patterns of control—their own plans and schemes—so that they can experience being out of control in other ways. Players consciously plan their surfing, caving, and bungee-jumping adventures precisely for the purpose of discovering the improbable or unknown. As Goffman (1974) argued, people frame their activity in widely various ways so that they can focus more intentionally on the matters that consciously concern them.

Functions of Orderly and Disorderly Play

I have no desire to declare either orderly play or disorderly play to be the more proper or more useful form of an activity. Instead, I want to suggest some functions of each. Functionalism in the social sciences considers specific behavior, the kind involved in a greeting ritual, for example, to be a response to wider systemic requirements, the need, say, to facilitate communication among society's members or even as a way to ensure the very survival of the system in question (Martindale 1981; Collins 1994). In other words, functionalism tends to be a part-whole analysis in which the characteristics of the whole determine the qualities of the part. A critical aspect of functionalism involves the identification of the whole, the systemic maintenance of which is at issue. Any individual act can be functional for individuals, for society, and for groups and organizations in the society. And some behaviors can be functional for some systems and dysfunctional for others.

Whatever the complexities (and potential criticisms) of functionalist analysis, it seems clear that behaviors have consequences for the individuals and groups that sponsor them. Similarly, I am arguing that play—however ephemeral or immaterial—has consequences for its practitioners. To be sure, these effects—or at least the socially beneficent ones—are more often asserted than demonstrated by scholars (Barnett 1998). Thus, the following discussion of

orderly and disorderly play presents the putative functions of each. I suggest that each of the two types of play has its own inherent qualities, qualities which create certain kinds of results and block or limit others.

Functions of Orderly Play

As the Singers suggest, play can follow patterns influenced or even controlled by social and cultural authorities. All of us know what it means to play in a formal game, to play by the rules, to follow a leader's direction, and to take our turn. Surely, such regulation does not spoil play, but it does present certain kinds of challenges for the player. Those symbolically configured challenges are present whether one plays with others or alone. The potential effects of orderly play, then, include the following.

Social functions. When people follow the rules provided by others, the group as a whole may benefit. Specifically, orderly play identifies socially shared values and skills that may be used in other social endeavors. It articulates the status of smaller social units (individuals, teams, or sides) and shows how these can be integrated into wider social units. It displays the strengths and weaknesses of cooperation as a social form. Orderly play explores strategies for attaining group goals. It facilitates the development of collectively valued responses or adjustments to situational demands. It provides structures for the release of tensions, and thus distracts people from more directly challenging group practices and authorities. It provides clear models for success and social status that may be applied in other contexts.

Individual functions. Orderly play also sustains individuals. Participating in established games allows the participants to focus more sharply on specific kinds of challenges and to develop appropriate skills. Adapting to external challenges helps players transcend their own habits and proclivities. Thus, orderly play promotes personal change, development, and learning. It encourages the development of cognitive strategies for achieving established goals. It allows people to experience the emotions that accompany success or failure in the pursuit of socially valued goals and toughens them for experiences in other, similarly organized social settings.

Most generally, orderly play teaches people the virtues of descending meaning. When people play in orderly ways they conform to external demands. Even when they play alone, players effectively match their behavior to their own goals. If the goals cannot be met, players must change their behavior to reach them. In this sense, orderly play encourages innovation. But more commonly, orderly

play teaches people to be systematic, persistent, and responsive to directives. Orderly play honors the ideas and forms of things and shows practitioners how to adjust to them. In essence, to play in orderly ways means to narrow the possibilities. Having established the rules of play, people can get down to the business of working out the kinds of skills and sensitivities they will need to play by them. For such reasons, administered creativity of this type appeals to the managers of children's education.

Functions of Disorderly Play

To return to Sutton-Smith's work, play also can challenge external directives for action. Just as we know what it means to follow the rules and play politely with others, so we feel the pleasures that result from breaking those rules. Disorderly play celebrates—and develops—impish, creative qualities in people. Disorderly players rage against the world. They take liberties; they go to extremes. They challenge the best-laid plans of everyone, including, sometimes, their own. Such rebellions against good form—represented by the class clown, the goof-off, the daydreamer, the doodler, the hacker, and the bathroom poet—also have their functions.

Social functions. Can disruptive, self-centered, excessive behavior be socially valuable? Are there social functions to deviance? Émile Durkheim (1951), one of the founders of social functionalism (sometimes called structural functionalism), answered such questions in the affirmative. Disorderly activity helps people comprehend the meaning of orderly activity. It articulates the parameters of proper behavior, of what people may and may not do. When disorderly people go too far, the group as a whole gets to learn about the consequences of such behavior, including about the possible punishments for it. Disorderly behavior serves the function of reminding a group of its cherished values and establishes the specific social responses to those who violate such standards.

For all that, society frequently allows people greater license to misbehave in play than in other areas of life. Indeed, much disorderly play is highly ordered, set into publicly recognized forms that structure disruption and antagonism. Think of Halloween or boxing contests. There is honor among antagonistic, disruptive players as there is honor among thieves. And players quickly learn what they can and cannot get away with in the play world.

More positively, disorderly play showcases personal creativity. Although groups deem some disruptive behaviors threats or failures and punish them, they may admire and reward others. These behaviors may even be incorporated

into new social practices. Disorder of this limited type is a central theme in Huizinga's *Homo Ludens.* In his view, play offers people protected forms of social antagonism and artistic competition. Such intellectual competition provides a way for new ideas and customs to be produced and explored. In other words, disorderly play seeks out and then develops new social possibilities.

Furthermore, just as orderly play teaches groups about the implications of cooperation, so disorderly play teaches them about the strengths and weaknesses of competition. Although disorderly play prizes the status of subgroups and individuals, it also helps groups understand both the implications of antagonism and the possibilities of alliance in other kinds of social activity. Disorderly play articulates the rights, desires, interests, and needs of the social subunits and demonstrates the degree to which the group as a whole must recognize those demands.

Individual functions. At a purely psychological level, is it functional for individuals to behave in disruptive or disorderly ways? When people oppose the directives of social and cultural authorities, they learn about their own characters and about their powers to assert themselves in the world. People may gain as much by breaking the rules as they do by conforming to them. However, the lessons seem different. Disruptive behaviors acquaint people with the *oppositional* character of the world; they demonstrate the extent to which the external world is real and resists change. Moreover, disruption is in some sense a way to train for independence. It fosters the idea that individuals can sustain their identities, at least in part, by withdrawing from social obligations or by openly confronting them. Individual rule breakers, like the group as a whole, learn which social confrontations work and which do not. More positively, personally instigated creativity constitutes the means by which people realize they can oppose the world and expose its society as an artifice constructed by people like themselves. In short, disorderly play glorifies the self-sustaining individual.

More problematic—and perhaps more interesting—is the way disorderliness functions at the intrapsychic level. As I mentioned, a dominant tradition in the disciplines of psychology and human development has focused on the ways in which people build cognitive structures that allow them to make sense of the world. People become committed to internalized idea systems that ideally are increasingly abstract, self-maintained, and comprehensive. As Piaget argued, play can be seen as a tryout for these personal schemes to see which ones work and which do not. When we find schemes that do work, we repeat them and

take pleasure in the repetition. In this way, we impose our own thoughts and habits on the world.

But how do new ideas arise? Sutton-Smith's critique (1966) of Piaget argues that the mere practice of existing schemas leads to personal assurance but not to development, by which he means personal growth or change. For Sutton-Smith, then, play is less a repetition of what one already knows than a seeking out of what one does not know. To use Piaget's own terms, play features accommodation—adjustment to uncooperative circumstances—as well as assimilation—the manipulation of those circumstances. Players not only challenge the world; they challenge their own patterns of orientation. At least in some forms of play, participants test and tease themselves. They disrupt their routines, put ideas together in new ways, invent language constructions, and more generally test their bodies and minds to see what they can withstand.

As I have argued, such activities celebrate the power of the ego—understood as the principle of conscious decision making—at the expense of pre-existing patterns of thought, feeling, and moral commitment (Henricks 1999, 2006). Disorderly play functions to identify and strengthen these decision-making processes. In so doing, disorderly play accentuates what is commonly termed reflexive consciousness, the ability of the mind to identify (and even oppose) its own patterns and processes. When we play in spontaneous, ungoverned, and improvisational ways, we disrupt and defy our own mythology of ourselves as systematic, integrated, and stable. Personhood, however integrated we wish to make it, is composed of many parts. Disruptive play identifies and isolates those parts and shows how they can be controlled by consciousness itself.

If orderly players explore descending meaning, then disorderly players explore ascending meaning. Disorderly play showcases the ability of individuals to resist and contend with social and cultural forms. At the intrapsychic level, disorderly play demonstrates how players can effectively defy their own schemes and strategies. In such ways, play is a kind of rebellion against the forms and forces of the world. The forces may be more or less internal to the individual (as in the cases of biological needs, psychic urges, bodily limitations, cognitive dispositions, and the like) or external (as in the case of environmental challenges, the demands of other people, and cultural constraints). In every instance, to play is to take on these conditions and to assert oneself into their midst. As Helen Schwartzman (1978) has argued, play has a transformative quality. Players play to experience the joy that comes from transforming their environments. In the process, they end up transforming themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

Despite this apparent paean to disorderly play and ascending meaning, no one should conclude that disorderly play is superior to its orderly relative. Both are valuable agents of human development. Both presume, and indeed depend on, the existence of the other possibility. To play in orderly ways is to recognize that individuals can be selfish and intransigent and that their aspirations can run in a thousand directions at once. Orderly play channels those aspirations, integrates those selfish qualities, and sets people to the task of developing socially appropriate skills. By contrast, disorderly play arises out of the awareness that people are subjected to all manner of environmental demands. Capitulating to those demands in unreflective ways performs no service for the self. Play must also be about willful self-assertion, and players must be strong enough to resist harmful influences.

In their most extreme forms, then, neither orderly nor disorderly play has much appeal. Whatever the dangers of an authoritarian, conformist society, does anyone really wish to idolize the ranting, self-absorbed player? Spoiled, inattentive to others, distracted by his own thoughts and impulses, the disorderly player in extremis is a sociocultural nightmare. And this is especially problematic in a culture that celebrates the uniqueness of every individual, the freedom to do whatever one can pay for, and other forms of megalomania.

But is the timid church mouse that we associate with the orderly player any more appealing? Allowing others to guide one's thoughts and behaviors is no crime unless it leads to a kind of a fill-in-the-blanks mentality among those who are being so guided. Such dreary ritualism is also dangerous in societies proclaiming the virtues of industrialism, mass media, and patriotism but refusing to encourage their citizens to imagine alternative visions for these forms. If play is the place where people explore the meaning of human possibility, these explorations must include both orderly and disorderly practices. Always, the challenge is to become aware of which forms are being contested and which ones are being accepted and to understand what lessons are to be learned from each. As Huizinga concluded, play lives in the space between order and disorder, between responsibility and freedom, and it draws its energy from both.

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