

## THE ELEMENT OF TIME IN COMPETITIVE GAMES

### I

Competitive games form a distinct category of games. They are in contrast first of all to the sensory-motoric games of small children, who play with a foot, utter inarticulate sounds or throw things on the floor for the simple pleasure of acting upon the surrounding world, games of make-believe or acting out a fictitious situation, and emotional games, the best known of which are those whose object is to make you dizzy or lose balance, and sexual games.

Philosophers who have studied games to determine their nature have evidently established two hypotheses: on the one hand, that all games can be studied collectively, as though the essence of the game were common to all, and on the other hand, that the answer to the problem lies in the subject, or who plays, and not in the game itself considered as an object. The question then is to determine the psychological, biological or social reasons that induce men or animals to play, the inclinations

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that are involved, but not the external structures to which games must conform in order to please or to be adopted.

In fact the problem is somewhat more complex. Games, just as to some extent all human activities, border on the subjective and the objective. They correspond to an internal need, to tendencies which can, however, be realized only in the external world, governed by its laws. Thus every individual game is necessarily chosen among the possible games. A man cannot play at flying by beating the air with his hands; he weighs too much, his hands are too small to bear him aloft. But he can hop—a game that is certainly not possible for a swallow. More specifically logical structures of games exist—relevant either to the instruments or to the mechanisms of the game—, structures that impose their form on games, just as the structures of general logic, the principles of deduction impose themselves on mathematical thought or physics. It could therefore be said, without abusing language, that to determine the nature of games is in part to specify the framework, particularly the logical framework, within which a particular game can assume a form. This aspect of the problem hardly seems to have interested philosophers of the game, no doubt as too obvious. We believe, on the contrary, that it merits attention, at least insofar as competitive games are concerned. The problem of the nature of games and more particularly of competitive games thus has a double aspect, an objective aspect and a subjective aspect, which consists of determining the psychological motivations for the game, to which the whole problem has been somewhat hastily reduced. Due to a curious turnabout, we think that this second aspect is more easy to grasp, perhaps simply because it has been sufficiently studied, and does not today seem to pose any essential problems.

Games were initially conceived as relaxation. Play provides a rest from work, because it is both a different and a less intense activity. A similar theory concerns certain forms of games, but its field of application is much too narrow. It concerns only adults and school children. Games are however encountered with very young children and animals. As Claparède wrote: "Small children play from the time they wake up at a moment

when they are not tired. And small cats and dogs, who play from morning to night, from what work would they need to rest?"<sup>1</sup> If we consider that for adults games may be understood only as "relaxation from work," do we not admit implicitly and as a matter of course that only work is justified in itself, that other activities can be understood only to the extent to which they indirectly serve work? This is what J.-O. Grandjouan means when he criticizes with caustic humor, "The theoretician-moralists, psychologists or aestheticians, who have built systems or expounded ideas which we call somewhat abusively theories of play are thinkers of contemporary Europe, that is, they are used to a mercantile, increasingly industrial economy, to a society without slaves... and to a repressive and encyclopaedic educational system. It is not surprising that for them play is defined in opposition to work, to study, to the serious, to the real."<sup>2</sup>

Approaching this doctrine and at the same time opposed to it is the theory of play as an excess of energy. Formulated by Schiller in his letters on the "aesthetic education of man," and adopted by Spencer, it is excellently summed up by Groos in his book *Les jeux des animaux*. Its principle is that play should be the fruit of accumulated energy, which has no opportunity of being spent in a normal and useful activity. It would therefore correspond to a release of superfluous energy.

Perhaps the most rigorous criticism of this theory was advanced by Pierre Janet in his lectures at the Collège de France in 1926-27.<sup>3</sup> He demonstrates that expenditures of superfluous energy are very special psychological phenomena, and at the same time very different from those encountered in play. Groos himself, who devoted the entire first chapter of his book *Les jeux des animaux* to the theory of excess energy, had earlier furnished a pertinent refutation of it which may be considered conclusive. The essential argument is that animals continue or resume play when they have manifestly spent all possible excess strength.

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Claparède, *Psychologie de l'enfant*, p. 430.

<sup>2</sup> J.-O. Grandjouan, *Les jeux de l'esprit*.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Janet, *La pensée intérieure et ses troubles*, 6th lesson (10 January 1927), pp. 111-113.

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All that is necessary is that the strength be *sufficient*, not that it be in excess. Moreover, an excess of energy could explain *some kind* of activity, not that this activity be directed in a determined sense, each species having games which strangely resemble the activity of adults. Hence it is in instinct that the main motivation of play should be looked for, and Groos underscores this in his book, which provides the key to his concept: "The physiological conditions which prompt a young animal to play at hunting need not be different from those that compel an adult animal to hunt."<sup>4</sup>

The idea according to which play had as its principle the various instincts of the living being seems today to be definitely accepted. It has been taken up again notably by Claparède<sup>5</sup> and Piaget.<sup>6</sup> There seems little doubt, for example, that the inclination for competitive games is largely connected with the desire to win, to prove oneself superior. But this inclination itself is combined with other tastes, for instance for contemplation or for physical effort, and it is these complex combinations among inclinations, themselves a function of prior experiences, of acquired skill, which determine the particular preference of each person for a particular game among the many that exist.

However, the explanation of games in terms of inclinations that activate them and that they help to satisfy remains as vague as it is general. If one attempts to explain it precisely, two categories of games pose delicate psychological problems: sensory-motoric games and games of make-believe.

The basic difficulty of sensory-motoric games is doubtless largely due to the fact that they appear mainly among animals and small children. In this case we cannot understand the internal motivations for the game: why does a child take pleasure in repeating the same action dozens of times in a row, for instance, or opening and closing a box, repeating a word or a sentence? Unable to determine the cause of the game from the direct experience of consciousness, we are naturally led to devise an interpretative theory for it. Thus the game,

<sup>4</sup> K. Groos, *Les jeux des animaux*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> See in particular Ed. Claparède, *Psychologie de l'enfant*, p. 435.

<sup>6</sup> J. Piaget, *La formation du symbole chez l'enfant*.

according to Groos, is a "pre-exercise" in preparation for future acts of adult life.

With regard to games that, with Caillois, we call games of make-believe<sup>7</sup> and that correspond more or less to those the psychologists call symbolic games, they show at first the same difficulty, since they appear among animals and small children: dogs who fight "to play," a small boy who plays at being a "locomotive." But on the other hand they raise the supplementary problem of ascertaining how the symbol appears in the still rudimentary consciousness of the player.

Such difficulties do not exist in competitive games, since it is a question here of adult games, whose motives are clear to us and can be determined through thoughtful analysis. We like such and such a game because it requires from us a type of effort that we find pleasant: the person who likes to run will enjoy playing the game of a cat, but not one who tires at the least movement; the person who is reflective will enjoy chess, not one who is wearied by sustained attention. This does not mean that competitive games do not pose the problem of their nature, but the latter is situated on a different level. Since the tendencies that lead to play are easy to recognize, the question is to know why they are satisfied in play rather than in a so-called serious activity. Emphasis here must be placed not on the subject, that is the player, but on the object, that is on the game itself.

## II

The primary motivator of competitive games is obviously the desire to win. Without it, it would be enough to fight without rules, or at least without the system of precise rules that permit us to determine a winner and a loser. The pleasure of games however would be largely diminished by this. The case of the Gahaku-Gama of New Guinea is an example, in which a football match is continued until both teams have scored an equal number of goals.<sup>8</sup> The case is unusual. We have already pointed

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Roger Caillois, *Les jeux et les hommes*.

<sup>8</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, p. 44.

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out that an indecisive match must be exceptionally rare, for it satisfies neither of the opponents. It is not uncommon to see a chess player refuse a draw decision, which he could obtain through a "stalemate" or a "permanent check," and to take a serious risk of being defeated in order to keep open a slim chance of victory.

It follows as well that victory or defeat should be incontestable, determined by precise criteria not subject to any arbitration. This is the case with all conventional games, that is, games in which the goal and the means of achieving it are both set down by rule, and by consequence of the discontinuity in space and time that we have indicated as characteristic of the regulations of games. The position of a chess piece is unequivocally fixed; it is in one square or in a neighboring square, and in no case should it straddle two squares or sit more in one than in another. This results from spatial discontinuity. Likewise, the moment at which the move passes from one player to the other is very precisely specified: the mere fact that a piece is touched means that it must be played. Letting go of it, after moving it to another square, according to the rules, signifies that the move is definitively made and that the player's turn passes to his opponent. The rule is so absolute that the player, for example, who wants to move a piece placed on the rim of a square more into the center must first say, "I adjust." Equivalent rules are found in card games, particularly in bridge, which establishes with the maximum precision at what point a card has to be considered as played, and, consequently, when the player's turn passes irrevocably to the next player. We recognize here temporal discontinuity of the discontinuity of moves. This double discontinuity permits us to determine without any possible contest what is good or bad, licit or illicit. The designation of the winner results from the application of the rules, without any human intervention.

Semi-conventional games, in which the only goal is set down by rule but in which success depends on natural laws, are subject on the contrary to the principle of continuity, particularly spatial continuity. When, for instance, we shoot with a rifle, the bullet may hit any point of the target and may

lodge between two rings of different value. Any uncertainty may undoubtedly be resolved in such a case by counting the number of points that correspond to the ring closest to the bulls' eye. There is always a limit at which it may be debated whether the bullet has cut or not the line between the two rings and consequently merits the number of points. Similar problems arise constantly in sports and are considerably multiplied by the speed of the game: has the tennis champion's serve touched the line of the court, has the football crossed or not crossed the line marking the limits of the field? The referee who is constantly called upon to judge what is or is not in conformity with the rules then appears as a necessary element of the game, but his interference is only a last resource. If by mischance he pronounces a debatable decision, the enthusiasm with which the two sides compete for victory risks being affected, and the enjoyment of the players and ultimately of the spectators is seriously dampened. Specialists in televised games have had experience in this. The game acquires its maximum intensity and interest when success or failure depend on indisputable criteria. On the contrary, in a debating contest in which each contestant defends his thesis and the most persuasive is declared the winner, the services of judges must be invoked, and all the uncertainties of the approximate, of relativity, of human appreciation come into play, in place of the anguishing and delicious verdict of Destiny.

The result is that competitive games appear to be naturally just, contrary to what happens in real life, in which we often have the impression that the less good man is more successful than the better man, either due to a certain set of circumstances, or sometimes because he uses morally questionable means. In a game the victory of the other side does not generally provoke a painful feeling of injustice.

A primary reason is that *cheating* is in principle excluded from games, although evidently not from life. Cheating has its roots precisely in the constantly repeated interchange between situations of combat and feelings of community solidarity. A man devotes himself to his country, to a woman he loves, to a member of his family; he accepts sacrifices that he could avoid, because he believes in the reciprocity of feelings and actions,

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and when the occasion arises in which he himself needs help he discovers that he is not being paid in return. Thus he has put himself into an inferior position. This situation does not occur in a game, since feelings of affection and of duty are foreign to it. Play relationships are univocal, whereas human relationships are equivocal.

Moreover even if victory is the reward in a game, as it frequently is in life, of the luckiest and not the most able, it generally does not cause bitterness, first of all because the chance appears as an accident, accepted in advance, from the start of the game. At the beginning the chances are equal and we know that fate may or may not favor us. But by far the most profound reason is that luck or ill luck has an impersonal character: the cards are drawn, from the moment they are dealt, this is the *fatum* of the ancients, outside of any consideration of the character of the players. The very rare games in which a player's chances of winning depend on the good will of the others are proof to the contrary.

Such for instance is the case of *Risk*, in which everyone struggles simultaneously against all the others. The rule forbids alliances between players, but it so happens that several among them may attack one player rather than another, either because the circumstances lend themselves to it, or because the players have more or less clear personal reasons for it. Naturally, the chances of the player attacked to win are considerably reduced. The psychological effect is entirely different from that produced by drawing bad cards or defeat in a dice game. I have observed a young player start to cry in a game because she believed herself to be—wrongly so—a victim of the ill-will of the other players, although she would certainly have not felt so if she simply had had bad luck throwing the dice.

However, competitive games cannot be explained solely by the desire to win. For in this case the requirement that there be at least as many losers as winners would soon discourage the majority of the competitors. It is true that victory increases the zeal of the winners for future competitions and lessens that of the losers. But if the desire to win were the sole motive of the game, the losers would gradually abandon the field of competition and by degrees, each being defeated in his turn



by stronger players who would remain in the lists, there would be no more players, only champions.

In reality, the motivations that nourish competitive games are extremely diverse. First of all playful combat is not only competitive but also communal. For the duration of the struggle the vanquished has obliged his conqueror by giving him his complete attention. The game they have entered into and have decided to continue to the end, in accordance with accepted conduct, has created fraternal bonds between them. Frequently the loser will feel honored to have played with an adversary stronger than himself. It is not defeat that is hurtful, but the disdain of the opponent who feels so sure of himself that he fails to make an effort to defeat you and seems to be bored by playing with you.

The fellowship of games can itself assume different forms, according to the game. A fellowship exists with one's opponents, another with eventual partners of games by sides, with whom we prove more exacting, more severe than with our adversaries. Has not a partner at bridge been described as, "although seated opposite us, he is the only player we scowl at regularly." Here is a fellowship in games with two players, and another, larger one in games with many players. A characteristic break appears between games of two and of three players. Two players form a closed group complete in itself, a couple. Games give clear evidence that society begins with three people. Thus the taste one may have for bridge, or on the contrary for chess, does not manifest only a preference for a certain type of game and intellectual activity, but also for a certain kind of society, specifically for a certain social number. In the film *David and Lisa*, David, who suffers from social maladjustment, is a chess player. It would undoubtedly not have occurred to the author to present him as a bridge player.

Certain games on the other hand have the advantage that superiority is not clearly manifest. These are all games in which chance intervenes and they are by far the most numerous, since they include notably all the card and dice games. When a player wins, he may attribute it to merit. If he loses, he can claim bad luck. In many games such as bridge an important difference of value is necessary, so that it cannot be ignored

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by weaker players, and this even more when the fact of playing by teams allows us to blame our partners for bad moves. Here is probably an important reason for the success of games of chance by comparison with games that are purely reflective.

We must not forget further that a defeat is rarely total. The tennis player who has just been defeated has earned a more or less important number of points, probably of games. The team that loses a bridge tournament nearly always wins at least some deals. Even in a chess game, which forms an inseparable whole, the loser frequently has the satisfaction of having embarrassed his adversary by a series of good moves, which momentarily had made the outcome of the game uncertain. Thus the defeat becomes a partial victory and hence an incentive. This may perhaps be one of the reasons why games of short and definite duration, such as card games, are preferred to those that are prolonged into a continuous game, such as chess and checkers. Moreover complex games require many skills, all of which even the best players cannot possibly possess at their peak. Every player may therefore be better in one skill than the average player, while being less expert in other aspects of the game. His superiority, partial though it may be, is not transitory, or inspired in the course of the game, but a lasting superiority which will manifest itself again in future games.

Finally, many players know they can improve. They become conscious of their mistakes, and they are satisfied because they believe they have played well. Seeing their mistakes, they console themselves with the thought that this knowledge will keep them from making them again. Games of skill, sports such as tennis, are more deceptive in this regard than games of pure intelligence, because here the recognition of mistakes is not enough to avoid their repetition. A physical attribute is necessary, which like a grace is beyond the power of understanding and will. Unfortunately the mind itself suffers, though to a lesser degree, from an inertia comparable to the inertia of the body. Acquired knowledge becomes blurred in the memory and one remembers frequently too late to apply a tactic that one had studied and understood.

One of the difficulties of games is that they quickly run their course. Real life frequently provides more breathing space than

games. It offers special possibilities to slow but solid minds. Games such as bridge presuppose a liveliness of mind. They call less for the necessary qualities required for creative work than those for brilliant conversation. But, despite all the restrictions, progress is doubtless possible, more so than one could logically hope. The skill that a player attains in a particular game is considered a value worth the effort. Thus the player does not judge himself only by the level he has now reached but by the one he aims to reach, and his present defeats promise to be effaced by future triumphs.

We will note that on all these points competition in games is in a way comparable to competition in real life. Also here chance plays an important role and we can hold it responsible or not for our failures. The talents employed are extremely diverse, and moderately gifted people, at least some among them, are superior to the average, a superiority that gives them individual worth and justification. Progress is possible and one may base his self confidence on what he aims to become rather than on what he already is. It should be added that there exist in play as in life the possibility of a modest acceptance of one's limitations, an intrinsic satisfaction of playing with a player known to be stronger than oneself, just as working or living with a superior personality to whom one is content to be the devoted collaborator.

From all of this we can undoubtedly understand that competitive games can have a certain interest comparable in some respects to serious activity, but surely not of equal interest. For serious activity has a dual superiority over games. On the one hand it produces useful objects, it provides man with food, clothing, and lodging, it tends to satisfy the most diverse needs, and this utilitarian aspect adds to its competitive interest. In other cases it produces a work that can be considered lasting, sometimes definitive for humanity. In this respect, an apparent relationship exists between competitive games and scientific or artistic work, a kinship that Huizinga clearly pointed out.<sup>9</sup> For to try to resolve a scientific problem which is posed in a particular period, and which is under investigation by other scientists, is similar to engaging in a competition, but an especially important compe-

<sup>9</sup> Huizinga, *Homo ludens*.

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tition, since once the solution has been found, it will constitute a cornerstone of human knowledge. And the same thing could be said for the creation of a work of art, awaited uncertainly by the society of a given period, that it provides the perfect answer to a felt need.

This superiority of work over play has however led certain authors to misunderstand the proper merits of the latter. Thus Jean Chateau writes: "Play is an attempt to elevate oneself to superior adult activities, a surrogate activity, that is why it is abandoned—or becomes simply diversion—when these superior activities have been achieved."<sup>10</sup>

The interest in games cannot be understood unless we first consider the boredom of serious activities. Chateau's negative judgement of adult games is the estimation of an investigator who is privileged in having a creative profession. If we examine what truly represents the attraction of competition in the majority of professional activities, it becomes clear that most frequently people do things because they have to do them. The times when one must make use of genuinely personal qualities constitute only a small proportion of all work. And likewise when one transfers from the field of utilitarian activities to research, one discovers how extensive the effort is before reaching the desired solution. Charles Nicolle wrote in his little volume *La biologie de l'invention*: "I have pointed out the calm, the indifference, the apathy, the dreary boredom which, for the inventor, follows the revelation of discovery."<sup>11</sup>

If we now compare work and play, we observe that the great merit of play is to eliminate the dead moments, or at least, if this is not entirely possible, to reduce them to a minimum. In a tennis game the interest is intense while the ball is in play. One must watch one's adversary to respond to his moves, to prepare for the stroke that will return the ball, to jump up to intercept the ball in flight at the most advantageous point. The attention of the player is engrossed to the extent that he can think of nothing else, and this concentration is pleasurable. The dead moment occurs when the ball has bounded over the limits of

<sup>10</sup> J. Chateau, *Le jeu de l'enfant*, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Ch. Nicolle, *Biologie de l'invention*, p. 62.

the court and must be retrieved in order to continue the game. If this search lasted five minutes for every ball, tennis would have been abandoned a long time ago. And yet serious activity frequently resembles a tennis game in which one must spend five minutes of boring effort between each move.

This principle is so important that it controls the structure of games. Games played by turns, in which the turn passes from one player to another, go badly if there are too many players. In fact, it happens quite frequently in playing that the others do nothing, their interest in the game lags and it becomes boring. This is what is liable to occur, for example, if croquet is played with eight people. In this event an attempt is made to multiply the incidences of each player's intervention in the game of the others. In *Monopoly* each plays in turn. But when a player moves his piece on the board, he may come to rest anywhere on the terrain of any player, according to the number shown on the dice, and everyone participates in the game, hoping that fate will favor him and that he will receive a "rent." In *Risk* the players have the right to undertake in turn a certain number of operations. These are essentially attacks which can be made against any of the others. Each operation concerns everyone and all follow the game with passion, knowing that their chances to win increase or diminish at every moment. In general, games of combat, in which two players of two teams face each other, hold the interest more than racing games. In fact, every movement of a player or team is made to weaken or at least upset the opposing player or team. Although different players have alternatively the right to play first, the interest of all remains constant in the extent to which the opponents are directly concerned by the deployment of each man. In racing games, on the contrary, in which all aim at the same goal, everyone for himself, the players must guard against losing interest in the game of the others. Hence it is necessary to multiply interferences among players. In *Thousand Miles*, for example, a positive card may be placed at 25, 50 or even 200 miles, which gets one that much closer to the goal, but one can also play a negative card, red light, flat tire or out of gas, which temporarily blocks the opposing team. In *Escape* the players all play on their own, but the general pace of the game is regulated by the player who is ahead. One can, without inconvenience, lay

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down a card placing him one or two miles less than the "leader," thus remaining in the group. Beyond this number the player is "released," and finds himself in a difficult situation in which it is important to rejoin the group as quickly as possible. Interference among players is thus assured.

A well-played game then is a game which avoids dead periods that create boredom among the players. This requires that games are freed from material operations which could retard and encumber them. The greatest criticism that can be made of an otherwise excellent game, *Long Run*, is that a fairly large amount of time is spent in giving out tickets which represent quantities of goods bought by the players, or banknotes which constitute the currency. The interesting moment for the player comes when he plans the operation he is about to undertake. Once the decision has been taken, it is important that it can be executed as fast as possible.

However the periods given to reflection are a considerable inconvenience since they are of no interest to one's adversaries. The longer it is, the more it is likely to dissipate their interest in the game. We know how boring an opponent is who takes too much time, especially in a chess game. In bridge we often prefer a player who makes mistakes to one who hesitates too long before playing a card. Hence it is essential sometimes to establish a certain rhythm to a game. In games using letters, for examples, each player is allowed two minutes to play. Television or radio games, in which questions are put to a contestant, impose a delay frequently of a minute or a half minute for the answer. In chess tournaments a clock registers and totals the time each player takes for reflection during the entire period of the game.

These however are imperfect procedures. The player who thinks a long time aims at perfection. The obligation to decide before resolving the problem frustrates him. While the delay, nonetheless, remains too long for his opponent, who must wait and reflect on his own move before playing. Here too, when possible, other procedures are preferable.

The best thing naturally is to be able to plan moves simultaneously. This is the case, although imperfectly, in chess when an adversary's moves may be imagined, along with the replies to them, as well as in bridge when the card one plays may be

foreseen according to what cards are played by the others. The ideal is reached when the players can think along strictly parallel lines, a reflection that would be equally useful for all players. This is not the case with chess or bridge, in which the one about to play concentrates on an actual situation and his adversaries on a possible situation. We come close to this ideal situation in a few games, such as *Cluedo*, a police game in which the information gathered in the course of the game is more or less equivalent for all the players and requires from each a constant effort at coordination.

Unfortunately, simultaneous thought is only rarely compatible with the principle of play. The reason is that the majority of games are broken down into successive moves. One must wait until one's opponent has played in order to see integrally the nature of the problem to be resolved. Another means of intensifying the interest in games is to make fast reactions a component part of the game. A game once played on Radio Luxembourg, called *Double or Nothing*, could be cited as an example of this method. The game makes use of nine dice, on the face of each of which a letter is stamped. It is played by two players or possibly two teams. The dice are thrown by one of the opponents who must compose as quickly as possible with the nine letters thus obtained a word of at least five letters. While the player is concentrating, he is timed by an hourglass. As soon as an appropriate word is found, the turn passes to his adversary who must throw the dice again as the hourglass is turned back so that the sand runs in reverse. And when this player finds a fitting word, the turn reverts to the first player and so on indefinitely. When a player lets the sand run out entirely before he has found a word, he has lost the game. We can see here that the principle of the game is not to find the best word in a limited time, but to find a word of a determined length in the shortest time possible. The result is an important modification in the affective reactions of the players. In a traditional game using letters the time that one's opponent uses to reflect seems boring, while here it increases the chances of victory and, conversely, the adversary's period of reflection is welcome. We can grasp from this a characteristic relationship between the logical structure of the game and the psychological reactions of the players. In a very general way

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we see from all these aspects that time plays a major role in competitive games. It is essential that the pace of the objective unfolding of the game follow as closely as possible the pace of the psychological evolution of the players. However, it should be pointed out that the acceleration of the objective pace, which is the result of this principle, is not peculiar only to games. We encounter the identical thing in art or more specifically in literature, be it a play or a novel. Giraudoux remarks in *Ondine* that life is "theatre that too often lags. It lacks direction to an incredible degree."<sup>12</sup> And, to illustrate this superiority of theatre over real life the illusionist shows, in the second act of the play, events which in reality should take place only three or six months hence. Human achievement opposes real life, by selecting from life only the most interesting, salient moments. And, according to the setting in which it is placed, this selection is inspired by different motives. In a literary work we willingly forget the moments devoid of affective meaning. A good play or novel could be characterized in the terms that Paul Guillaume used to define emotion as corresponding to "salient episodes of affective life, which appear in subjectively important situations."<sup>13</sup> In a competitive game we try to make an analogous choice on the level of intelligence and action, by concentrating only on the problems to be resolved, difficulties to be surmounted, but to be surmounted in the immediate future. In one case as in the other we eliminate whatever constitutes dead time, whatever is boring, we try to liberate the player as well as the spectator from the inertia of the material world, to transport him into a perfect world of psychological intensity.

It is evident, moreover, that if the kinship is particularly clear between competitive games and literary work, the reason is that both have an extension in time and are, on the other hand, developed from the starting point of real life. Plastic arts, painting, sculpture, architecture are immobile works, even if they suggest motion and if time is necessary to grasp their full meaning. The novel and the tragedy have an imprescriptible duration, a beginning and an end.

<sup>12</sup> J. Giraudoux, *Ondine*, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> P. Guillaume, *Manuel de psychologie*, p. 73.



This affinity between competitive games and theatre in particular is so close that it is manifest in another common characteristic, which we could designate as the need for speed. A theatrical work presupposes a progression from the beginning to the end of the play. A perfect play would require that the dramatic intensity increase with the unfolding of the scenes, up to the denouement. The same could be said for the perfect game: it would be a game in which the importance of the stake would grow in the course of playing. And, just as in a play it is difficult to achieve a continual increase in dramatic intensity, by the same token few games succeed in progressively enhancing the importance of the stake. Quite on the contrary, many become increasingly sterile as the game nears its end. This is the case with the majority of games of combat, in which the number of contested pieces diminishes, which reduces in that same measure the tactical possibilities and limits the interest of the game. For example, in chess the final moves are usually of least interest, because each player only retains a few pieces, to the extent that players who love "the beautiful move," frequently hesitate before "exchanges" which eliminate on both sides equivalent pieces. However, when it is possible, we try to increase the stakes as the game progresses. A particularly obvious example is provided by the majority of radio and television games, of the *Double or Nothing* variety. But the same thing is found in different forms, the same principle in many social games. In bridge, for instance, "vulnerable" players, that is, those who have won a hand, win or lose more points for identical results during the second hand. In *Monopoly* the money in circulation, as well as the rents paid off among the players increase in the course of the game, thanks to the distribution of plots of land and the construction of houses. In *Risk* the number of armies involved in the struggle increases as time goes on, the contrary of what occurs ordinarily in games of combat. In *Long Run* it is the stocks of goods that are subject to transactions among players which increase. In checkers the number of pieces diminishes as players capture each other's men, but their power increases, since the kings acquired at the end of play have considerably greater power compared to that of single pawns. Paradoxically, these characteristics of games translate the same psychological requirement, which, as is customary in French

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*lycées*, double the coefficient of the third composition for the final classification of students, or which led Molière in writing *Tartuffe*, to make his hero appear only in the third act.

It follows from this that competitive games, on the one hand, and art, on the other, maintain largely similar relationships to real life. In both cases one is an unreal situation with all its inferiorities. But this transfer permits at the same time a selection and a reorganization of reality, in conformance with a subjective principle of interest. Art retains what has emotional value and organizes it so that the emotion attains a maximum power. Play poses problems similar to those of real life, but the rules of the game are conceived in such a way that the problems achieve their maximum interest. Games then endeavor to fill a role in the world of action that art fulfills in the affective world.