

Session 2 – PLAY & GAMES

Reading

Caillois – Man, Play, Games Ch. 1 & 2

Concepts/Keywords

- Play v. Games (Paidia vs. Ludus → Rules vs. Make-believe)
- Agon
- Alea
- Mimicry
- Ilinx

Goals

- Understand multiplicity of definitions
- Terms are useful, but also bendable
- Create a foundation to understand game studies

1st period – Critique of Huizinga

<u>HUIZINGA</u>		<u>CAILLOIS</u>
FREE (voluntary)	————→	FREE
NOT ORDINARY	————→	SEPARATE
SECLUDED, LIMITED	————→	" "
SOCIAL GROUPING		UNCERTAIN
NO MATERIAL INTEREST	————→	UNPRODUCTIVE
REGULATED	————→	GOVERNED BY RULES (MAKE-BELIEVE)*

*Fiction replaces Rules – Rules create Fiction

Caillois' Critique (of the whole book)

- Huizinga didn't describe or define GAMES
- Huizinga only deals with specific types of games (competitive)
- Huizinga leaves out games of chance (gambling, lottery)
- Play exposes secrets, rather than keep them

Period 2: Caillois' terms:

AGON → Competition (play principle):

- Apparent equality at outset, one player must prove better than another (or others)
- (some standing situations are better, e.g. opening in chess, inside the curve in a race)
- Requires sustained attention, training
- Animal play is *agonistic*

Examples: football, billiards, chess.

ALEA → Chance (play principle)

- Player has no control

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- Surrender to destiny; negates work, patience, experience, training
- All players have equal footing
- Children don't gravitate to games of chance because they don't have property to gamble
- Discuss: games of chance level the ground and allow kids to play with adults (e.g. Game of Life, Candyland)

Examples: Roulette, Lottery

MIMICRY → Make-believe (play principle)

- Entering an illusion and becoming fictional characters in it
- Pleasure of passing for another, rather than deceiving
- Masks, travesty (also done by animals)
- Can have spectators → Agon with spectators is mimicry
- Spectators ID with sportsman
- Dramatic
- Not submitted to rules, continuously inventing

Examples: pirates, theatre

ILINX – Vertigo (play principle)

- Pursuit of vertigo, breaking stability

Examples: Dervishes, Mexican voladores, leapfrog, merry-go-round.

PAIDIA vs. LUDUS. (modes, apply to all play roles – see above)

PAIDA -

- Spontaneous manifestation of play instinct
- Exuberant, spontaneous, even destructive, exhilarating
- Expressive, calling attention to oneself
- No relation to Alea (which is passive, paidia is all self)

LUDUS – (my interpretation: Goal-oriented)

- Organized: discipline, purity, excellence
- Solving a problem for its own sake → kite-flying, diablo, yo-yo
- Relationship with play principles
- Manifest relationship between AGON and LUDUS
- proving oneself, beating constraints
- LUDUS & ALEA: games of patience
- LUDUS & MIMICRY: meccano, scale plane, THEATRE
- No relation to ILINX, because it's about losing control

Apply terms to following games or playfulness:

- Takeshi's Castle/Wipeout – Agon/Alea/Ilinx
- Quiddich in Real Life – Agon/Make believe
- Drinking Games (prompt the class for examples)
- Improv theatre
- Pidgin Latin

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