

Play, metaphor and representation - a love triangle or une liaison dangereuse?

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates in which way classical theories of game and play like the approaches by Huizinga [21], Caillois [9], Fink [15], Bateson [4], Gombrich [18], Walton [55] have been related to metaphor by the authors themselves or by other authors. Observations in the mentioned literature suggest that the notions metaphor, representation and play as well as instances of each are being used to explain each other so that they enter a circular relationship. This paper discusses the relationship of these terms. As a baseline for its argument it assumes that all three phenomena play, metaphors and representation are being conceptualized as figures which can be described as the unity of the difference, a concept stemming from George Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form* [50] which became fundamental among others for Niklas Luhmann's system theory as laid out in *Social Systems* [28]. It points to the idea of the paradox which is also present in theories of play, metaphor and representation as one can see for play in Bateson's influential essay "A Theory of Play and Fantasy" [4], for metaphors in Ricoeur's paradoxical theory of a metaphor [42, 43] and for representation in Magritte's *La trahison des images* [40].

Keywords

Metaphor, play, representation, make-believe, mimesis, unity of the difference

1. INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this paper is to research relations between concepts of play and concepts of metaphor in order to find out under which circumstances one can say that a specific kind of play/game is metaphorical or that play/game generally are metaphorical. In recent publications studying computer games it has become fashionable to call games or elements of games metaphorical. As such Ian Bogost says that so called proceduralist art games "offer[...] metaphoric treatments of ideas" [8]. On another occasion Doris Rusch advocates that games can provide insight to the human condition through the use of metaphor [44]. Jaroslav Švelch analyzes, based on Rusch and Weise [45], metaphorical game design in the game *Deus Ex Machina* [11] featuring metaphors such as "dictatorship" or "keeping [a game] alive" [52].

Problematic with these approaches is firstly, that the use of the notion of metaphor is often not sufficiently motivated as in Bogost's case who leaves it to the reader imagining what is meant

with it. Secondly, the notion of metaphor often clashes with the notion of representation: there seems to be little distinction between the two concepts as I have demonstrated elsewhere [33, 34]. These are only a few problems which suggest a more thorough study of the concept of metaphor in relation to play and representation. It is surprising, though, that also literature about play and games which is unrelated to computer games relates the three notions play, metaphor, and representation to a degree which makes it difficult to keep them apart [see 4, 15, 18, 19, 47, 55, 56].

When trying to relate the notions of metaphor and play/games with the help of literature on play and games one stumbles almost inevitably about the triangle of notions (play/game, metaphor, and representation) which seem to be deeply interrelated. The interrelation of these notions becomes obvious because they are being used to explain one another. Notions of

1. *play/games* are used to explain metaphor (e.g. metaphor is the play of language) and representation (e.g. paradox representations are being called playful),
2. *metaphor* is being used to explain representation (Black's model and metaphors [6]) and aspects of play, and
3. *representation* is being used to explain metaphor and play.

Furthermore, these three notions seem to share a structural similarity in that all three notions exemplify what Luhmann calls the unity of the difference [28]. Consequently, they are being explained with related principles such as Wittgenstein's "seeing-as" as [57] which in turn is exemplified by Joseph Jastrow's duck-rabbit and the Necker cube [35], the figure-ground principle as proposed by gestalt psychology [35], the principle of multistability as suggested by post-phenomenologist Don Ihde [22]. Similar is also the map-territory question originally coined by Alfred Korzybski [24] and also described by Gregory Bateson [4], Jorge Luis Borges and Jean Baudrillard [5].

My hypothesis is: this is possible because all these notions are independently explained as paradoxes or with paradoxical figures like the just mentioned principles.

The intention of this paper is to demonstrate and discuss this relationship. As an entry point I will briefly present a notion of metaphor understood as a paradox which is closely related with the name Paul Ricoeur. In the following I will introduce Gregory Bateson's notion of play as meta-communication based on paradox and finally show a notion of representation as a paradox as can be derived from Magritte's famous *La Trahison des Images*.

1.1 METAPHOR AS PARADOX

The book *Metaphertheorien* by Eckard Rolf [43] guided my attention to Paul Ricoeur's metaphor theory. Rolf describes it as the "Paradoxietheorie der Metapher" (theory of metaphor as a paradox). Similar to the unity of the difference from systems theory and Bateson's play theory metaphor is here literally described by Rolf as "the unity of the difference 'is/is not'" [43]. In metaphor theory this is also known as the difference between a literal falsity and metaphorical truth.

To give an example, have a look at the phrase: "My friend is an elephant."

From the point of view of literal truth this expression is obviously false. However, it is metaphorically true if I would like to express that my friend is very clumsy because she sat ignorantly on my painstakingly self-produced tin soldiers. No matter if I call the one aspect true and the other false or both as two diametrically different kinds of truths, in each case metaphor turns out to be a unity of the difference. In each case there is a paradox at play.

Metaphor researcher Cornelia Müller's [35] dynamic view on metaphor names among others cognitive activity and a triadic meaning structure as central characteristics of metaphor. The cognitive character of metaphors she relates to Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing-as": "In this sense, seeing-as is interpretation, is constructing a meaningful object. This cognitive process is metaphorical when a duality of meaning is a core part of the process. Duality of meaning refers to the simultaneous activation of two aspects" [35]. Müller illustrates her point with duck-rabbit: "the duck-rabbit head would turn into a metaphor in which the duck would be taken for the rabbit but not cease to be the duck" [35].

For Müller the idea of seeing-as is the fundamental mechanism of metaphor as literally mentioned in the definition by Lakoff and Johnson according to which metaphor is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" [26].

Müller points out that metaphor generally consists of a triadic structure as one can see when comparing different metaphor theories [35]. Let me demonstrate the triadic structure with my example: The friend can be called the target domain [26], the focus [6], or the tenor [41] of the metaphor. The elephant, on the other hand, is the source domain [26], the frame [6], or vehicle of the metaphor [41]. Now, the third element is the special metaphoric relation of these two elements in which the target is seen in the light of the source but it is not the source. Consequently, the one becomes the medium through which the other is understood. Max Black's metaphor theory [6, 7] is known for emphasizing the contextual character of metaphor such as that metaphor does not simply consist of the substitution of one word by another but of the specific contextualization of a certain meaning by a different meaning. As such the elephant is put in an unusual context - the office.

1.2 PLAY AS PARADOX

Gregory Bateson's infamous essay "A theory of play and fantasy" from 1954 describes play through a specific model of meta-communication which is defined by an intrinsic paradox.

For Bateson "the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote what would be denoted by the bite" [4]. Consequently, a play activity can be equally interpreted as play and not play. For Bateson every play signal contains the paradox that it is play and simultaneously not play. As such the playful nip is a bite and not a bite at the same time. Bateson, however, does not solve this para-

dox but invents a useful tool to deal with it - the meta-communicative frame.

This frame has multiple functions: 1) It is *inclusive* as it includes a number of messages which all are part of play. 2) It is simultaneously *exclusive* as it excludes all other messages which are not included automatically. 3) The frame relates to premises which define how the frame includes and excludes in 1) and 2). 4) The meta-communicative element of the frame consists of "any message, which either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame" [4]. One such message would be "this is play" [4]. 5) This implies that "every meta-communicative or metalinguistic message defines, either explicitly or implicitly, the set of messages about which it communicates"[4]. 6) Finally, Bateson refers to the figure-ground principle because his frame identifies all included messages as the figure which stands out by contrast from all the excluded messages which altogether form the ground.

In addition to the figure-ground principle Bateson illustrates his findings with an idealtypical schizophrenic's lacking capacity to understand metaphor. Accordingly, the schizophrenic is not able to dissolve the paradox as posed by metaphor since understanding metaphor involves the same problem as understanding play. Like Müller considers metaphor an essentially triadic structure Bateson regards play a triadic structure, too, as became apparent through the figure-ground principle characteristic for the play frame. Furthermore, Bateson classifies three different kinds of signs involved in play which are comparable to the Peircean triadic sign structure (signs of firstness, secondness, and thirdness) [see 49].

1. Mood-signs are pure signs and denote only the sign (representamen) or firsts in Peircean terminology. A bite is a bite.
2. "Messages which simulate mood-signs" [4] or so called seconds in Peircean terminology. Those are signs which relate to other signs or objects. A nip is a bite.
3. "Messages which enable the receiver to discriminate between mood-signs and those other signs which resemble them" [4]. Such signs would be so called thirds in Peircean terminology. They address the relation between the firsts and seconds. A nip is a bite and not a bite.

The schizophrenic is not capable to understand metaphors which are signs of the third kind [see 3]. In order to understand metaphor one needs to be capable to recognize an implied meta-message similar to "this is play" saying "this is metaphor." Only by recognizing the paradox that my friend is obviously not an elephant, although she is an elephant in a metaphorical sense, I can deal with this paradox.

The question which emerges from these observations is: Did Bateson really define play with his essay or did he rather describe a general problem of communication occurring in everyday life and just applied it to play? The problem he describes seems to be the problem of misunderstanding in general. Many misunderstandings in everyday life occur because of mismatching of one and the same situation by two different interactors. This is why meta-communication is necessary in the first place.

However, Bateson's point here is that meta-communication is integral to both therapy and play. As such one does not only communicate in therapy but one also communicates how to communicate in therapy. Consequently one oscillates between first and second order constantly. The same goes for play. We do not only play but we can also negotiate what is and is not part of play

at any time (e.g. special house rules). As such metaphor and play both contain an element of self-reference which is triggered by the paradox involved.

1.3 REPRESENTATION AS PARADOX

In art and art theory the concept of representation has been described as a paradox, too, for which Magritte's painting *La trahison des images* from 1929 is the iconic example. The painting shows a pipe and beneath it the sentence "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe"). As can be read in the online catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art [40] the sentence in the painting states correctly that the painting is not a pipe – it is a painting. Simultaneously we see a pipe on the image which indicates that the text "this is a pipe" [see 40] would equally be correct if we consider the painting as the representation of a pipe. As such this painting exemplifies a "paradox out of the conventional notion that objects correspond to words and images" [see 40]. Obviously this paradox is also used to exemplify the paradox of representation as such, i.e. representation always consists of the problem that something represents something else although it is not what it represents at the same time. In fact, this paradox is constitutive for representation. Similar to play and metaphor, representation can be considered a matter of thirdness if we take Peirce's sign model as the bottom-line of this thought.

2. INTERMEZZO

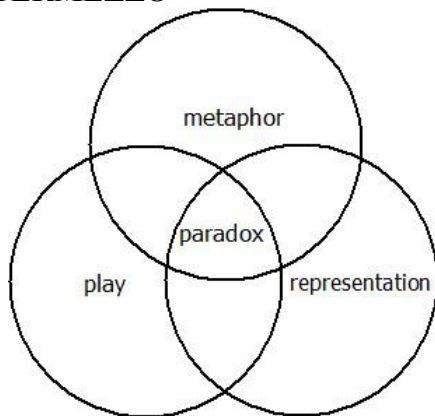


Figure 1. The possible relation between metaphor, play and representation.

For now I have shown, that metaphor, play and representation have all been conceptualized as paradoxes. Bateson's essay on play as a paradox contains in fact the paradox of metaphor as well as the paradox of representation. This is demonstrated by the fact that Bateson uses the understanding or misunderstanding of metaphor to exemplify his point.

To be clear the point to be made here is not to say that metaphor, play and representation are completely congruent. Instead one can see their relation in terms of a Venn diagram (Figure 1) in which play, representation and metaphor all form separate but overlapping circles in whose center is the paradox which they all imply.

In the following I will introduce some approaches in which the three central terms in question have been used to conceptualize and to exemplify each other.

2.1 GOMBRICH'S HOBBY HORSE

Art historian and theorist Ernst Gombrich discusses the status of a hobby horse as a representation of a horse based on the substitu-

tion of function (as opposed to imitation based on the likeness of external form) [18]. In the course of his considerations Gombrich comes to think that a simple stick qualifies "as a horse because one could ride on it" [18] although it clearly lacks sufficient similarity with a horse. Its ridability is the function which makes it count as a horse and thus a suitable substitute rather than its horse-unlike form. In his subsequent article from the same essay collection Gombrich makes explicit what the reader of this paper might already guess - even a hobby horse whose external form might much more remind of a horse than a broom stick is considered "the equivalent of a 'real' horse because it can (metaphorically) be ridden" [19]. The broom stick counts as a horse because it can metaphorically be ridden.

However, not only did Gombrich suggest metaphor as the concept to frame his observation, he also uses the terminology of metaphor theory: the notion of substitution. The substitution of one term by another is characteristic for the so called substitution view on metaphor which is often related to Aristotle as described by Max Black [6]. In addition Gombrich describes the ridability as the "tertium comparationis" between a simple broom stick and a horse accounting for its substitutability [18]. The notion "tertium comparationis" refers of the comparison view on metaphor (sometimes considered a special form of the substitution view) [see e.g. 25]. For Black this view is based on "an underlying analogy or similarity" between the two domains of meaning associated in a metaphor [6].

Furthermore Gombrich observes that the stick "served as a focus for his [the player's, S.M.] fantasies as he gallops along" [18]. According to Max Black's interaction view of metaphor a metaphor is context dependent [6] such that it consists of "the metaphorical statement's *focus* (the word or words used non-literally) and the surrounding literal *frame*" [7]. In the light of Black's metaphor theory Gombrich's broom stick is the focus, as he identifies it himself, which is surrounded by the frame of the horse fantasy making the broom stick a horse. As such the broom stick is used non-literally within the context of the horse fantasy.

Gombrich's considerations show how the three concepts of play, representation and metaphor mesh in the same observed setting. Firstly, the three characteristics substitution, tertium comparationis and a contextual focus each represent one of the major views on metaphor as suggested by Black: substitution theory, comparison theory, and interaction theory of metaphor [6]. It is thus likely that some sort of metaphor is at play here. Secondly, we deal with a play setting which implies the Batesonian paradox of play that we can derive from Scheffler's observation: "in galloping the broom stick, the child's fantasy is of himself as riding a horse, not a stick, even though he knows he is straddling a stick, not a horse" [47]. Obviously, the paradox consists of the child riding a horse and not a horse at the same time. Thirdly, this illustrates the paradox of representation as expressed by Scheffler "if the broom stick is not a horse, how is it that the child in play calls it a horse?" [47].

To sum up: Gombrich's approach consists of the paradox of representation which is caused by the paradox of play and is being solved with the notion of metaphor. I.e. the object of study is here the problem of representation in the arts, as an example serves a situation of play and as a concept to grasp the problem he uses a notion of metaphor.

2.1.1 GAMES AND PLAY AS REPRESENTATION

It becomes obvious that speaking of play so far implies a form of play which can be and has been called representational play, make-believe, or mimicry. Roughly one can distinguish two fundamental kinds of play which might be termed a) rule-oriented play and b) representation oriented play.

Accordingly, classic play theorist Johan Huizinga distinguishes "two basic aspects" of play: it can be seen "as a contest *for* something or a representation *of* something" [21]. In a similar fashion games are according to Caillois either "ruled *or* make-believe" [9]. In this regard Caillois proposes a distinction between rules and fiction long before Jesper Juul chose this as the leading distinction to discuss games in *Half-Real* [23]. As opposed to Caillois who considers the relationship between rules and make-believe as a mutually exclusive relation Juul sees it as inclusive according to which games are "ruled *and* make-believe" [23]. This ontological distinction is assumed to count for most computer games, which also has been made by others but termed differently, e.g. mechanics and semiotics [2] or core and shell [31]. Caillois dedicates an own category dedicated to games of make-believe called mimicry whose "chief attraction [...] lies in the pleasure of playing a role, of acting *as if* one were something or somebody else" [9].

However, the question which comes up here is what are we really talking about when using these models? Are we speaking of representation, of play, of the play of representation, or of the representation of play? One could even see Caillois' "acting *as if*" as an instance *seeing-as* and thus a representation in the Wittgensteinian sense of a metaphor according to Müller [35]. If we understand the actress in terms of the role played by her we could be tempted to see this as a metaphoric relationship. The consequence would be that all kinds of representations are always somehow metaphoric.

At stake is thus the question if play, when seen from the angle of representation, is always already metaphorical. A positive conclusion would bear the consequence that all representational forms of play are metaphorical in one sense or another which then would render it tautological to call specific forms of representational play metaphoric as opposed to non-metaphoric representational forms of play.

2.2 WALTON'S MAKE-BELIEVE

Like Caillois considers make-believe an essential element of games, especially of mimicry games, Kendall Walton describes make-believe as a game itself. In his paper "Metaphor and Prop Oriented Make-Believe" [55] Walton investigates the role of metaphor in so called prop oriented games of make-believe. As props in Walton's understanding count dolls and hobby horses as well as novels and paintings [55]. Prop-oriented make-believe which is focused on the understanding of objects (props) is here distinguished from content oriented make-believe in which certain objects (props) contribute to make believe [55]. Yet, make-believe does not only refer to things which can be called fictional in that they do ontologically not exist and require a certain believe in their existence but also to things which are simply not present at the place and time of make-believe. From the introduction of Walton's book *Mimesis and Make-Believe* one can learn that he uses the notion of make-believe as a substitute of the much broader notion of representation [56].

In content oriented make-believe objects of different kinds are used to understand the "content of the make-believe, in the fic-

tional world" whereas prop-oriented make-believe focuses in a better understanding of the objects in question [55].

As opposed to Scheffler's reading of Gombrich Walton regards hobby horses and "paper airplanes" as props contributing to make-believes like e.g. imaginations of riding on a horse, or "flying through the air, climbing, diving, landing on a runway, crashing" [55]. In line with Bateson and Fink hobby horses and paper planes here are horses and planes in the world (or the semantics) of the make-believe and are not-horses and not-planes in the real world and thus paradox objects.

Obviously, these objects can also be operated for their own sake in order to enjoy their individual qualities. One could e.g. throw a paper plane and simply enjoy its flight quality. But "there is [...] a point in calling the paper constructions airplanes and the plastic disks *flying saucers*" [55]. This is the case when make-believe is applied to better understand the objects in question.

Walton offers two diametrical perspectives on this example of the flying disk/saucer. On the one hand the flying disk can be a prop which contributes to a content-oriented make-believe like an alien invasion story or the like. On the other hand calling the disk a flying saucer makes us see the object in a different light, too. The latter suggests that the expression "flying saucer" is a metaphor pointing at a specific quality of the flying disk. The flying disk then is a tool to imagine how flying saucers could operate.

By making metaphor a focal point of prop-oriented make-believe Walton emphasizes the cognitive function of metaphor. Using metaphor intentionally one can provide a specific perspective on how a thing can be seen and understood. "[...] the make-believe may be of no particular interest in itself; it may serve merely to clarify or illuminate the props" [55].

However, Walton goes even so far to say that metaphor itself - instead of merely playing a role in some game of make-believe - *is* a game of make believe. Explaining Lakoff and Johnson's iconic example of a conceptual metaphor, "argument is war," Walton describes "argument" as the prop part (the center of the cognitive interest) and "war" as the make-believe and "a device for describing or understanding the argument" [55].

Eventually Walton is giving the formula of metaphor different names within his own theory of make-believe. Walton calls the target domain [26] (or the focus [6], or the tenor [41]) the "prop." The source domain [26] (or the frame [6], or the vehicle [41]) is called "make-believe" by Walton.

In Walton's case it is interesting that he calls metaphor a game of make-believe and hence combines the notions of play/game, metaphor, and representation again in a different way as opposed to Fink and Gombrich. However, it rests unclear if he is merely speaking of metaphor in different terms.

2.3 FINK'S ONTIC ILLUSION OF PLAY

The approach of the philosopher Eugen Fink towards an ontology of play has been termed an "existential, metaphorical and ontological view of games, as centered on themselves, with no apparent external purpose, but also serving as a metaphor of the ways in which reality is 'played' within culture" [48].

With his approach Fink attests to games a metaphoric relationship to the world which they are simultaneously always already part of: "Play is a basic existential phenomenon, just as primordial and autonomous as death, love, work and struggle for power, but it is not bound to these phenomena in a common ultimate purpose. Play, so to speak, confronts them all - it absorbs them by repre-

sending them. We play at being serious, we play truth, we play reality, we play work and struggle, we play love and death - and we even play play itself" [15].

Play does not simply represent the world but it simultaneously *is* a part of the world, hence, it should not be "falsely juxtapose[d] [...] with other existential phenomena" [15]. This notion of play is close to the idea of play as a paradox like Bateson describes it. Play is paradox because it always already represents the world by being a part of the world. This in turn means that the rules and regularities of the world are being repeated in play. In Fink's words "each game is [thus] an attempt at existence" [15].

In this line of existential thought Fink demonstrates the basic double structure of play that is exemplified by its components the plaything, the player and the play world. The double structure of the plaything consists of being itself and simultaneously "the totality of objects" [15]. When saying "in the plaything the whole [of the world, S.M.] is concentrated in a single object" [15] Fink suggests that the double structure at play is of the nature of a synecdochic part-for-whole relationship. Synecdoche obviously belongs to a broad notion of metaphor [37].

The double structure of the player for Fink literally consists of "schizophrenia,' a kind of split personality that is not to be mistaken for a manifestation of a mental illness" [15]. This split personality which obviously consists of "the real man who 'plays' and the man created by the role within the play" [15]. Remember, Bateson used the schizophrenic as a model to make his point, too. Finally, there is the playworld which "contains both subjective imaginary elements and objective ontic elements" [15].

Eventually, Fink acknowledges the fact that one side of his double structure is often termed "illusion" or "the imaginary" [15]. Furthermore, he acknowledges that the "concept of 'illusion' is as obscure and unexplored as the concept of Being - and both concepts belong together in a confusing, inexplicable, even labyrinthine way, they overlap and interact" [15].

Interestingly Fink explains the illusion of play as an ontic illusion with the model of the mirror image of a tree reflected by water [15]. The mirror image contains three forms of Being. Firstly, the image as a reflection is considered to be real. Secondly, "the tree is also represented *in* the image," this implies though the representation is real, the reflected tree is in a sense unreal [15]. As a third step he points that the surface of the water is the medium for the reflection and thus real. Fink repeats here the paradox of representation as demonstrated with Magritte's infamous painting such that in the mirror image the tree is a tree (qua representation) and is not a tree since it is only a reflection. In fact, however, Fink himself refers to Plato's cave allegory and "the entire Platonic ontology, which has determined western philosophy to such a high degree, [and which, S.M.] operates continually with the concept of the copy as a shadow and a reflection to interpret the structure of the world" [15].

Summing up Fink's thoughts, play is the object of investigation; it is understood through the concept of metaphor and exemplified by the mirror image or ontic illusion as Fink calls it. The mirror image is, again, a typical model for the idea of representation.

2.4 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In a sense it is striking and confusing that these three notions are so closely related. However, what does this tell us about the relation of these three concepts?

It seems to be no coincidence that models of play, metaphor, and representation are mutually referential. This observation raises the question if the object of investigation meshes with the concept of explanation so much that it in turn leads to the question which of the concepts was the object of investigation in the first place.

For Bateson we can say that he uses a model of representation/communication to explain what play is and exemplifies it with (the misunderstanding of) metaphor. Simultaneously this nourishes the suspicion what he is really speaking about. The model he uses to understand one thing might actually be the real object of his analysis. The same goes for the other authors. For Gombrich we can say that he investigates the notion of representation, uses a play situation as an example and the concept of metaphor to grasp it. For Walton we can say that - at least when referring to metaphor as a game of make-believe - he investigates the notion of metaphor and calls it a game of make-believe, since both notions, game and make-believe are intertwined to him. Finally, Fink explains the notion of play similar to Bateson as a metaphor and uses the paradox of representation to illustrate it.

Table 1. Use of metaphor, representation, and play

	Object of investigation	Concept	Example/model
Bateson	Play	Representation	Metaphor
Gombrich	Representation	Metaphor	Play (hobby horse)
Walton	Metaphor	Representation/game	Game/representation
Fink	Play	Metaphor	Representation (mirror image)

Eventually it is Johan Huizinga whose discussion of metaphor in the language of play and games reveals through the paradox implied that his own ontology of play lacks a distinction between game and play.

3. HUIZINGA'S PARADOX - A FRAMING PROBLEM

In game studies frame theory by Erving Goffman is very prominent [e.g. 14, 27, 51, 54]. Especially when it comes to questions of the delimitation of games and play from things which are non-play and non-games, concepts like the magic circle are being brought up. This is anything but surprising since Goffman's social frame theory is deeply indebted to Bateson's theory of meta-communication [39]. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman used the term magic circle and made it popular and iconic in their book *Rules of Play* [46]. They raised its status from an example as it was originally used by Huizinga to the level of a concept. Seen from a slightly more rational perspective the magic circle was just another model (or metaphor) among many (like figure-ground) to mark the separateness of play from non-play elements in the immediate environment of play. In fact Huizinga's own framing problem becomes obvious in his discussion of "the play-concept as expressed in language" [21] where he assesses the relationship between play and contest as it is represented by play metaphors in the language of war. This small discussion demonstrates the implied paradox in Huizinga's own ontology of play which has been criticized by Jacques Ehrmann [13]. With the help of Bateson's theory this problem seems to be graspable. In the following I will thus demonstrate Huizinga's argument and relate it to the paradox implied in metaphor as well as in Bateson's play concept.

In the aforementioned section of *Homo Ludens* Huizinga makes a significant observation on metaphor and play which turns his consideration of metaphor in relation to play into an ontological question of how play is actually thinkable.

Huizinga remarks "in all Germanic languages and in many others besides, play-terms are regularly applied to armed strife as well" [21]. This can be seen for instance in poetry (another form of play) in which the expressions for "armed strife, or battle" are named "battle-play" or "spear-play" [21].

When analyzing metaphors in the language used by football commentators on radio and television who describe an ongoing match to listeners and viewers I came to the opposite conclusion: mostly notions from the realm of war were being used to describe elements of football (or play) [32]. Interestingly Huizinga sees the relation the other way around. Not terms from the war sphere are applied to notions of play but play terms are applied to phenomena of war.

Huizinga initially identifies these expressions without hesitation as "poetic metaphors, a fully conscious transfer of the play-concept to the battle-concept" [21] only to conclude the opposite a couple of sentences later: "the application of the word 'play' to battle can hardly be called a conscious metaphor. Play is battle and battle is play" [21].

The first paradox which Huizinga comes across here is that play *is* and *is not* a metaphor for the battle concept. This is the paradox of metaphor as described by Ricoeur. But this paradox also points to a second paradox implied in Huizinga's concept of play which can be understood with Bateson. Let me briefly analyze what Huizinga is actually doing:

Huizinga's argument why play and battle cannot have a metaphorical relationship is that play and battle in his view were not distinguished in idealtypical archaic cultures. Following Huizinga play and battle were originally part of the same semantic and practical domain. Apparently this second paradox depends on the ontological question if play and battle belong to the same domain or are to be distinguished.

Huizinga's definition of play which suggests in both its variations that play is separated from everyday life and takes place "within its own proper boundaries of time and space" and is "'different' from everyday life" [21]. On the other hand Huizinga stresses that play is part of everyday culture as well since it appears in the form of competition (agon) in such domains as economy, law and poetry. Jacques Ehrmann criticized Huizinga's and Caillois' dialectic concept of play as something which is distinguished from something else and is simultaneously defined by this distinction such as "play and seriousness [...] gratuitousness and/or utility; play and/or work; play and/or everyday life; the imaginary and/or the real" [13]. However, this clearly shows the paradox which Huizinga did at least not make explicit (if he was aware of it at all). If play in the form of competition is an element of law and economy how can it then not be an element of the everyday culture and seriousness since law and economy are part of this everyday culture? As such Ehrmann criticizes

"Huizinga's interpretation of the potlatch [...] as ennobling play remains partial and erroneous insofar as the author refuses to see that the potlatch is also the ritualization of an economy and even of political exchange" [13].

The potlatch is also an exemplification of Huizinga's distinction between play as the contest *for* something as well as play as the representation *of* something. The potlatch is a representation of

political and economic exchange by being *the* political and economic exchange of the indigenous tribes practicing it. Thus, the potlatch is that what it is distinguished from and which it simultaneously represents. Can then the potlatch metaphorically represent economical exchange?

3.1 THE PARADOX OF GAME AND PLAY

One reason for Huizinga's paradox is the missing distinction between game and play. Let us assume Huizinga actually means two different things when using the word play - namely play (games as processes) and games (as objects).

With reference to Salen and Zimmerman games can either be regarded as an element of play or play can be seen as an element of games [Salen and Zimmerman in 16]. The problem is, so Frasca, that in the first case as described "game is understood as an activity" whereas in the second case game is "understood as an object" [16]. Apart from Frasca a number of other scholars has pointed at the difference between games as an ongoing *process* (games which are being played) and games as *objects* or *fix* structures [see 1, 2, 10, 16, 23, 30, 53].

It seems to be a matter of emphasis: When games are primarily seen as objects, "we frame them [games, S.M.] as a system with different elements (rules, objects such as tokens, a particular space such as the play field and the play time). In such a case, play is considered to be the fuel that keeps the system working" [16]. In this quote the word game stands for the game as an object and the word play for the game as a process. Furthermore, one can think of culturally acknowledged games as de-paradoxified former paradoxes: e.g. Caillois suggests that children's play starts out in the wild fashion of *paidia* and becomes more ludic due to a stabilization of structures over time [9]. Whereas in the first case it is difficult to identify what a player is playing in the latter case it is easier because it is more strictly defined.

When regarded as objects, games are similar to other cultural institutions in that they consist of specific more or less stable structures (or rules) which define the elements that are part of the game and those which are not. Consequently, the rules of games account for the distinction game/not-game, which is again another instantiation of the unity-of-the-difference-principle. Particular games can thus be regarded on the same level as particular instances of warfare, theater, law, economy and other cultural institutions with their own rules and regulations. Obviously these institutions do interfere but they are still distinguishable from each other. Formally they can all be termed systems, including specific objects or tokens, a particular space and time etc. [see 16, 46]. As such a concrete game object such as *ludo*, *Carcassonne* [58], or basketball is formally definable as any other cultural institution for instance a court trial from within the law system. In this regard Ehrmann rightly says that "play [...] [and] culture are synonymous and interchangeable" [13] (in Huizinga's and in Caillois' play theory) assuming again that play is here actually understood in the sense of game as object and culture implies specific cultural institutions.

Thus, if we do not distinguish between play and not-play forms but instead between cultural institutions, both football and war form different domains of action and meaning. This is why we can understand football in terms of war and consider their relation metaphorical since football (or games) and war have become different cultural and conceptual domains. Consequently football is and is not war. If Huizinga had spoken of particular games he might

have considered using notions of the one domain to name elements of the other domain as metaphoric.

If we distinguish emphasize play as the process part, as that which is going on during the execution of a game, we can also support Huizinga's idea that play can be an element of many cultural domains not only games, like theater, law, poetry etc. Making play a sort of metacommunication Bateson implies that it is part of the play which can address elements of the game and even change it if necessary. Consequently, play describes not only the processual part of a game but also allows to address the distinction defining what is and is not part of the game and allows to even change this assignation.

This obviously implies that both warfare and football can and do contain play elements even though these might be secondary or hidden in differentiated cultures or societies according to Huizinga [21]. Getting back to Huizinga's initial discussion of metaphor one can now argue that agon is not only an essential element of play but also of the particular games which are structured in a competitive manner. Agon is part of the structure of both competitive game objects and warfare. Now we can say agon is both – the essential play element and the element of warfare which works as the common ground on which a metaphoric relationship between games and warfare becomes thinkable in the first place.

From the perspective of metaphor the play element and the element of agon form the "common characteristics" or the "ground" [see 41] of a metaphor. Understanding play not only as the processual aspect of games at play but in the Batesonian sense, play and agon are then the mediating third [35] making possible the metaphoric overlap between war and concrete games such as football, chess, etc. Since agon is an element of play and play is contained in games as well as other cultural systems like warfare, law and so on. All other domains which Huizinga analyzes contain an element of agon and therefore an element of play.

With his metaphor/non-metaphor paradox for the case of battle and play Huizinga unintentionally shows that a metaphor requires the distinction of two domains in the first place before it can become the paradox unity of a difference associating two distinct domains with each other. Consequently, we can say play is and is not a metaphor for battle.

4. IT'S ALL ABOUT DISTINCTIONS

If we follow Huizinga further we can say that metaphor, representation, and play have the same origin, namely the moment when men started to make and name differences between things such as between battle and play. We can imagine an idealtypical situation of archaic man before they made any differences (something like a time before man had any consciousness). Everything was the same: battle, play, life, culture etc. At some moment man started making distinctions and naming distinctions. They happened not only to experience an everyday struggle for life (battle) but happened to understand situations which were different (e.g. battle training). (Actually, they could understand the experience of the struggle of everyday life only because of that distinction; otherwise they would have had nothing to compare it to.) These situations were starting to be considered as too different so that they could not bear the same name anymore. It would have been paradox to call battle for life and training battle the same. The paradox urged man to give these situations different names. They called them battle and training battle. However, these distinctions stayed paradox. Training battle obviously is some kind of battle, but also

not the same kind of battle. Only due to that moment when man started to make distinctions the ideas of metaphor, representation and play were possible.

This also means metaphor, play, and representation are equiprimordial conditions of being human in Heidegger's terms [12, 20] since they have the same origin which lies in the capacity of man to make a difference and overcome this difference again. However, since human beings according to Heidegger are always already thrown into a world where these distinctions as well as the capacity to make distinctions always already exist, the preceding paragraph has to be considered a thought model helping to understand the relation between metaphor, representation and play. Making these distinctions is so essential for human existence that even non-human primates can make them as we have seen in Bateson's example who observed meta-communication in the zoo among playing monkeys [4].

This has several consequences. Firstly, this means we have to accept that play is always battle and not battle and the other way around. As such play is also always already serious and not serious and so on. Secondly, the idea of the equiprimordiality of metaphor, representation, and play is supported by those who consider metaphor a ubiquitous mechanism of thought; which allows to say that we live by metaphor [26], by those who consider play to be the origin of culture [21]. Finally, the same obviously goes for representation, without a difference between a representing kind of thing and a represented thing there is no representation.

Furthermore we are not only capable of making distinctions and deciding for one side or the other of this distinction; we can also address the distinction as such, mostly in cases when we cannot decide for one of the sides of a distinction. Bateson calls this capacity meta-communication (communication about communication) which with Luhmann can be considered an observation of second order [28, 29]. Identifying the paradox implied in metaphor (my friend is an elephant and not an elephant) and play (this is a bite and not a bite) as instances of metaphor and play is an observation of second order, too. From this point of view one addresses the specific difference which is made on the first order as such. Only on the level of second order observation the implied paradox can be de-paradoxified. This explains why the duck-rabbit, the Necker-Cube, *La Trahison des Images* and similar examples are often being used when it comes to exemplify the peculiarity of representation, metaphor, or play.

5. CONCLUSION

Let me conclude the discussion on this paradox triangle of play, representation, and metaphor from a Gadamerian perspective who describes play as a "to-and-fro movement" "that takes place 'in-between'" and is independent of "a subject who plays it" since it is "medial" [17]. As we have seen the paradox is a perfect form for this ongoing movement aiming for a decision for one side of distinction which is difficult to make. Obviously, when a decision about the meaning of a paradox is made it is getting de-paradoxified and has no play anymore, unless the solution produces new paradoxes on a higher order. For instance when the question of the paradox between the flying saucer and the flying disk is solved in that it is recognized we get into a higher order paradox as we cannot decide if this is a metaphor, representation, or play. If we trust Gadamer play is making use of the human desire to look for decisions (or de-paradoxifications) since this is what makes us fulfill the ongoing to-and-fro movement of play.

This to-and-fro movement is furthermore characteristic for agonistic activities we call games, such as football, *Carcassonne*, *Tetris* [38] but also for agonistic activities we do not call games but which are cultural institutions such as e.g. arguing, or war, economy, production, love, art etc. or cognitive capacities such as metaphor. These activities share the form of a paradox such that the interests of the parties involved are mostly diametrically opposed to each other or towards the world around them.

Something similar happens when one tries to evaluate seemingly similar but simultaneously conflicting concepts such as play, metaphor, and representation, as I have tried to show. As such metaphor and play are also similar in that they do not only contain an inherent paradox but the paradox goes so far that both cannot be positively defined. Metaphor can only be explained by using other metaphors which is the case when metaphor is described as “‘interaction,’ ‘filtering,’ and ‘screening’” [7]. As such metaphor exposes the inherent self-reference of language and thought. In the same way play is inherently self-referential [see e.g. 36]. Consequently, play can only be referred to through exemplifications [see also 57] of which the concepts of metaphor and representation are two options as well as instances of these concepts. However, like for instance Walton’s flying disk/flying saucer problem shows that it is difficult to classify it: as play, metaphor, or representation, or all three of them? For each of these options one would always refer to the paradox involved in the example.

Finally, play, metaphor, and representation are all meta-categories or forms which cannot be observed as such but only through specific media, such as language (written and spoken), thought, images etc. For instance we can only speak of metaphor in terms of other metaphors. In this sense not only play is medial, but also metaphor and representation are forms which need to be brought into existence through something. As such Black’s metaphors for metaphor – interaction, filtering, and screening – are examples for media and the idea of mediation. Therefore, it is very difficult to decide if certain elements of play situations are metaphoric or representational. Trying to solve this problem seemingly requires to acknowledge: “Whoever ‘tries’ is in fact the one who is tried” [17]. Nonetheless, it also seems to be the case that play is always metaphoric in that metaphor exemplifies the form of play as well as play exemplifies the form of metaphor.

6. REFERENCES

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