Playful Practices in Ancient Greek Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the philosophical practices of ancient Greece for symptoms of play, namely Socratic dialogues, sophism, Aristotle's idea of the perfect life, and thought experiments to find connections between rationality and play. And indeed, these practices can be identified as playful in ways that challenge Huizinga's and Caillois' definitions of play and games and point to an understanding of play as a mental activity.

Keywords

Philosophy, Rationality, Play, Ancient Greece

INTRODUCTION

In *Homo Ludens* Huizinga (2008) brings forth a fundamental definition of play that clearly illustrates many apparent symptoms of playful behaviour, but also makes many assumptions about these qualities that go mostly unquestioned throughout the book. One of these unquestioned assumptions is Huizinga's assertion that play was not rational. (Huizinga, 2008, p. 4) This statement is problematic since there are many different definitions of rationality that play would all have to avoid to still count as irrational. Furthermore, Huizinga is not explicit about why he believes play to be irrational. He asserts that play served no material purpose and specifies that the goal of playing was purely the fun gained from the activity itself. (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 8-9) Whatever his explanation for thinking of play as irrational may be, be it the lack of economic benefits gained from play or another reasoning, he himself identifies the activities of the sophists in ancient Greece, as well as the philosophy of Plato and Socrates as playful. (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 146-157) And he is not alone with this notion, since Ardley (1967) has also recognized the play element in the same practices. This seems contradictory. Is philosophy not a highly rational practice? If play is truly irrational, is it at all possible that philosophy, or the art of the argument as displayed by the sophists, could unite these two supposed opposites? What further complicates this matter is that the relation between play and rationality can be seen in two ways. First, it can be phrased as rationality in play, i.e. looking for rationality to motivate play or how players use rationality while playing. Second, it can be understood as looking for playfulness in rational practices, as seen in ancient Greece. This paper aims to reconcile play and rationality by focusing on the second perspective to identify further how rationality in different definitions, as well as the resulting practices in ancient Greek philosophy, relate to play.

Method

This paper first reviews definitions of both rationality and play, and how the two have been connected so far. After that, this paper looks at four practices from ancient Greek philosophy, namely Aristotle's definition of the best life, sophistry, Socratic dialogues, and thought experiments, and analyses them in the context of the presented definitions of rationality and play, and then discusses which conclusions about the nature of the relation between rationality and play can be drawn from that. At the end, this paper offers a brief discussion of the relevance of this topic for digital games and contemporary game studies.

BACKGROUND

This section looks at established definitions of both rationality and play and examines how these two have either been brought in connection or seen as irreconcilable by previous thinkers.

Rationality

Connections between play and rationality cannot be identified without first establishing which definition of rationality is to be used for that. There are many different definitions of rationality that have emerged over centuries of philosophical practice and in different schools of thought. This paper cannot hope to exhaustively account for all of them. Instead, a selection of the definitions that are deemed to be the most relevant for the research at hand will be presented here.

An agent shows instrumental rationality when they adopt means that lead them to their desired ends. Using Hume's definition, in this kind of rationality it is not specified what the ends of an agent are or can be, i.e. it makes no inherent distinction between supposedly rational or irrational ends. It also does not require these ends to be manifested in the physical world or the means to be physical actions. In the broadest general sense, it refers to the ability to reason towards a solution to a problem or the steps to a goal. (Kolodny & Brunero, 2018)

The idea of the *homo economicus* portrays an image of rational agents that try to maximize the utility they gain from their decisions.

> *"The perfect rationality of homo economicus imagines a hypothetical agent who has complete information about the options available for choice, perfect foresight of the consequences from choosing those options, and the wherewithal to solve an optimization problem (typically of considerable complexity) that identifies an option which maximizes the agent's personal utility."* (Wheeler, 2018)

This is similar to instrumental rationality in that it focuses on the decision-making process as finding the means to an end as the core of its definition of rationality. Unlike instrumental rationality, this has a predefined end that all agents strive for in the form of utility, and it narrows the decision making process down to an omniscient agent choosing means from a known set of options, rather than including finding the means as a core part of rationality.

Procedural rationality is an extension of homo economicus that includes the cost of the decision making itself in the calculation of the expected utility. This carries the implication that extensive thought about which action to take may actually be irrational

according to this definition if the cost - the time and energy - invested into the thought process in comparison to a simpler solution outweighs the benefit gained from that additional thinking. (Wheeler, 2018)

Economic rationality further expands this definition by taking the factors provided by the environment into account. This places the rational agent into the context of the world in which they make their decisions. It also implicitly frames the decision making as interaction with the world, rather than as an omniscient agent acting on the world. (Wheeler, 2018)

An agent employs epistemic rationality insofar as their beliefs are compatible with the evidence provided by the physical world and they reject beliefs that are not supported by evidence. Unlike the definitions of rationality that have been named so far, this one does not revolve around a process of decision making and is disinterested in means and ends. It only uses rationality as a tool to build, maintain, and reject beliefs, which might then in turn lead to means and ends. It shares the quality with economic rationality that it also places the agent in the context of the world and sees the process of reasoning as an ongoing interaction between agent and world in that the agent must reconsider their beliefs when their observation of the physical world changes. (Kelly, 2003, p. 1)

The difference between epistemic rationality and the other definitions also provides an illustration for the difference between practical and theoretical reasoning. Theoretical reasoning is concerned with understanding the world conceptually. An agent that reasons theoretically takes a distanced, impersonal position to the world and tries to understand why past events have happened and how future events are going to play out. Practical reasoning is about what actions the agent should take and which beliefs or states of mind they should adopt from a personal standpoint. (Wallace, 2018)

The model of the tripartite soul is not itself a definition of rationality, but it explains which role reason plays in the decision making in relation to the other motivating factors of emotion and appetite according to Plato. Here the rational part is supposed to keep the spirit and the appetite under control to ensure that excesses of emotion or appetite do not overrule sound reasoning. This also defines reason as separate from, and to a degree opposed to, our emotions and our physical needs, our appetites. (Moline, 1978, p. 2)

Critical thinking, the last aspect of rationality to be brought up in this section, is again not so much a definition of rationality itself but rather a mode of thinking that is fundamental to them. The term itself is complex and difficult to define conclusively but the element that is most relevant for this paper are the general dispositions that a thinker must have to be able to think critically. Among others, these include most notably a general willingness to question assumptions and be open minded to new ideas, as well as the willingness to not prematurely judge an idea before thinking it through because of preconceived notions. (Hitchcock, 2018)

Play

Now that the definitions of rationality that this paper uses have been presented, and the explanation which aspects of these definitions this paper focuses on has been given, it is necessary to also look at the other half of the subject matter and present the definitions of play that are used here.

Huizinga (2008) defines play along five characteristics that an activity must meet. First, the players must participate in the activity voluntarily. Second, the activity must be structured through rules that define what the players can and cannot do. Third, the activity is clearly distinct from the ordinary world both spatially in the form of a clearly

demarcated playing field and temporally by signalling a clear start and end of the activity. Fourth, the activity is not ordinary, the players perform actions that they would not usually do in normal life and external matters should not influence the play. Fifth, the play serves no material purpose, it does not create physical artifacts and is not motivated by material needs. Huizinga also strongly emphasizes the agonistic aspect of play, i.e. play in which multiple parties compete for victory. (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 7-11)

Caillois (2001) developed a classification system for games based on the nature of their play. These categories are agon, the competitive game of skill that is supposed to determine a winner who established his superiority over the loser purely through his better personal qualities, alea, games of chance where the players sacrifice their own agency to instead rely only on fate, regardless of their personal skill, mimicry, games of make-believe and masquerade in which the players assume a role and pretend the world was not what it is, and ilinx, games of vertigo that entice the player into surrendering control of their body in favour of the thrill gained from that disorientation. He further categorizes games along an axis between ludus and paidia. Ludus refers to strictly organized, rule-based play which seems in line with Huizinga's understanding. Paidia on the other end of the spectrum describes play as a free form activity in which players follow their spontaneous whims. (Caillois, 2001, pp. 11-35)

Henricks (2008) describes play as a *"laboratory of the possible"* (Henricks, 2008, p. 168), as a joyous exploration of the world for both adults and children. This process is a way of gaining understanding by interacting with the world, rather than acting on it. He further emphasizes that this act is self-directed, i.e. the action is driven by the desires and imaginations of the player.

The last insight regarding the meaning of play that will be brought up in this section is Goffman's notion of games as a social frame. Goffman (1961) takes a formalized approach to the social structures that surround games as they are being played, as opposed to defining games by the actions that players perform in their play. Here the players actively maintain the social frame that keeps the encounter of the game going and keep up the barriers that keep external matters that are not supposed to find their ways into the world of play from spilling inside, and the internal matters of the game from affecting outside affairs. This is strongly reminiscent of Huizingas's magic circle, and also provides an explanation for it. Whereas in Homo Ludens the power of the magic circle is simply assumed, Goffman provides the insight that the players on the inside, and onlookers on the outside need to actively invest effort to keep that barrier active. Events that disrupt the separation of play and the real world can be mitigated in so far as the people involved are willing and capable of bringing up effort equivalent to the severity of the disruption. This also reveals that the encounter of the game, and the entire magic circle, is at the whim of said people. If they no longer want to see the activity of the game as separate from ordinary life, that distinction falls apart, according to the logic of social frames.

The Relation Between Play and Rationality
Now that both rationality and play have been defined this paper can now proceed to investigate how philosophers and game scholars have previously seen the relationship between the two, and how their different definitions fit together.

As mentioned in the introduction, Huizinga strictly separates play from rationality.

> *"But in acknowledging play you acknowledge mind,*
> *for whatever else play is, it is not matter. Even in the*
> *animal world it bursts the bounds of the physically*
> *existent. From the point of view of a world wholly*

determined by the operation of blind forces, play would be altogether superfluous. Play only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an influx of mind breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos. The very existence of play continually confirms the supra-logical nature of the human situation. Animals play, so they must be more than merely mechanical things. We play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational. " (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 3-4)

This again runs into the problem that Huizinga is not clear about what he means when he uses the term rationality. The distinction he makes between animals being more than machines because they play, and humans being more than merely rational beings because they play, calls the Greek model of the tripartite soul to mind. Aristotle ascribes the rational part of the soul only to humans, whereas animals only have the appetitive and spirited parts. (Aristotle, 2000, Book I.9) The fact that the tripartite soul separates reason from emotions and appetites, i.e. material needs, together with Huizinga's assertion that play served no material purpose, implies that he was using an economic definition of rationality when he labelled play as irrational. An alternative to this reading would be that Huizinga denies ultimate logical coherence in general, as portrayed in the following:

"The human mind can only disengage itself from the magic circle of play by turning towards the ultimate. Logical thinking does not go far enough. Surveying all the treasures of the mind and all the splendours of its achievements we shall still find, at the bottom of every serious judgement, something problematical left. In our heart of hearts we know that none of our pronouncements is absolutely conclusive. At that point, where our judgement begins to waver, the feeling that the world is serious after all wavers with it." (Huizinga, 2008, p. 212)

Using economic rationality leads to the approach of looking for rationality in play in the motivations for, and consequences of, play. Both aspects have been argued sufficiently by other thinkers. For the consequences of play, scholars point out, among other effects, that it prepares children for their lives as adults, that it helps with spending superabundant energy, as well as playing a socializing role. (D'Angour, 2013, pp. 298-301; Huizinga, 2008, p. 2) The argument that play is rational because the players think rationally about which means to use to maximize their success in the game can be seen in game theory. (Ross, 2019) Both of these make it possible to argue that playing is a rational act in the sense of economic rationality. The former reasons for playing as a means to reach an extrinsic end, the latter sees rationality intrinsic in the game when the players, or rational agents, reason which of the means provided by the game they should take to reach the end of the game. These considerations exhibit elements of both theoretical and practical reasoning. Scholars that examine the beneficial effects that games have on the player seek to understand the role of play for the players in the broader theoretical concept, while the strategic decision making in the games and systems used in the process are practical, as they aim to find the answer to how an individual should behave in a given situation.

This is not the only form of rationality found in play. The exploratory spirit in which the player experiences the world in Henricks' description of play shows a relation to

epistemic rationality, according to which the agent must maintain a well-founded model of the world. When the player, through their interaction with the world, gains a new perspective or learns new facts and discovers new evidence, they are advised by good epistemic reasoning to adjust their belief system accordingly. This is also in the spirit of critical thinking, since the willingness to playfully explore the world, and the willingness to think critically about the world, seem both to require a general disposition towards, and enjoyment of, inquiry into the workings of the world in the sense of theoretical reasoning.

> *"Mere force of habit, however, is unlikely to sustain critical thinking dispositions. Critical thinkers must value and enjoy using their knowledge and abilities to think things through for themselves. They must be committed to, and lovers of, inquiry."* (Hitchcock, 2018)

Huizinga and the other scholars that identify the sophist and the philosophers as playing in their dialogues do this usually simply by pointing out that the respective speakers were referring to themselves as playing, but did not determine that through application of play theory or one of the many definitions of play. Ardley summarizes Plato's standpoint regarding play and reasoning as follows:

> *"Play is not an incidental sop with which to beguile the reader; it is the very stuff of good argument. Fecundity, genuine seriousness, real understanding, are to be found only in aerial flights of play; without play, our intellectual exertions lead but to fatuous solemnities."* (Ardley, 1967, p. 226)

Again, the relation to critical thinking and the joy of questioning the world is visible. Plato even goes so far as to not just say play and reason are not contradictory, but outright makes play a requirement for good reasoning. This is territory that Huizinga did not want to enter.

> *"We have no wish to go into the deep question of how far the process of reasoning is itself marked by play-rules, i.e. is only valid within a certain frame of reference where those rules are accepted as binding. May it not be that in all logic, and particularly in the syllogism, there is always a tacit understanding to take the validity of the terms and concepts for granted as one does the pieces on a chess-board? Let others puzzle this out! Our only pretension here is to indicate, very cursorily, the indubitable play-qualities in the art of declamation and disputation which succeeded the Hellenic era. No very elaborate detail will be required, since the phenomenon always recurs in the same forms and its development in the West is largely dependent on the illustrious Greek model."* (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 152-153)

Huizinga did not inquire further into how the nature of reasoning may or may not be playful and instead decided to follow the development of the playful practices of the sophists as they developed over time. This is a subject that has not yet been sufficiently explored by scholars. While, as mentioned, many of them have correctly identified the

play element in the philosophical practices of ancient Greece, a deeper investigation of these practices under considerations of play theory is still largely missing.

PLAY IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICES OF ANCIENT GREECE

This section examines Aristotle's definition of the best life, the sophists, Socratic dialogues, and thought experiments through the lens of the definitions established in the last section.

Aristotle's Best Life

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle presents his reasoning about what the ideal human life would be. The second-best life according to him is one that is in accordance with practical virtue. The best life on the other hand is a life of pure theoretical thinking. In this discussion of the best life Aristotle directly refers to the quality of this life as happiness. (Aristotle, 2000, Book X.7) This means that the life of theoretical thinking that he defines is inherently enjoyable. This is very much in line with what has already been pointed out about the philosophers finding joy in the practice of their dialogues, and consequently also with the dispositions necessary for critical thinking. Aristotle also directly employs the distinction between practical and theoretical reason as seen in the difference between the best and the second-best life. Keyt summarizes the two as follows:

> *"[Aristotle] draws a sharp contrast between the activities that characterize the two lives: theoretical activity is leisured, aims at no end beyond itself, and is loved for its own sake whereas practical activity is unleisured, aims at an end (other than itself), and is not chosen for its own sake"* (Keyt, 1978, p. 1)

The practical life resembles the notion of economic rationality, since it is about an agent using means to achieve an end. This should not be surprising because, as pointed out above, practical reasoning and economic rationality are themselves related. The same relation can be observed for the theoretical life, which resembles epistemic rationality. The theoretical thinker uses their inquisitive mind and enjoyment of reasoning to understand the workings of the world, and detect and reject wrong beliefs to build stronger ones that are more in accordance with reality.

Recalling Huizinga's definition of play it is also evident that the theoretical life meets at least some of its requirements, arguably even all five of them. It is autotelic, i.e. its goals are contained within itself in the form of pure enjoyment, without the prospect of gaining any material result. Participation in this life is voluntary since no person can be forced to adopt a mindset of critical thinking. It is structured at least by the rules of logic, which are required for rational contemplation, and arguably as well by ethics established either by Aristotle or some other philosopher, if virtue is seen as a prerequisite for this kind of life. The two remaining requirements that play must be different from ordinary life and that play is temporally and spatially restricted to the magic circle are somewhat more difficult to argue.

First it needs to be determined what would constitute ordinary life for a person of theoretical thinking. On the one hand the theoretical contemplation could itself be considered the ordinary mode of living for that person, on the other hand they are still physical biological beings with practical needs and the necessity to take practical action in the world they inhabit. In this regard the theoretical thinking should be regarded es extraordinary, as it leaves the appetitive desires outside of the action of thinking. Another argument can be made to address this point that draws a more general relation between the extraordinary character of play and critical thinking in general. Not only

is play extraordinary in that it ignores trivial desires, but also by ignoring other elements of the real world or introducing new ones that only exist in the context of that particular act of play. As mentioned above, one of the dispositions required for critical thinking is a willingness to take an unbiased position. The object of inquiry is to be investigated only under the rules of reason. Here, the thinker leaves all their preconceived notions outside of the context of the thought process, while trying to understand new ideas that they may entertain for the sake of argument. As good theoretical reason suggests, the agent takes a viewpoint that is distanced from their personal beliefs to gain an objective understanding of the world. This paper holds the position that it is this characteristic of critical thinking that makes all genuine theoretical contemplation extraordinary and different from the real world when considering Huizinga's definition of play.

Returning to the matter the magic circle, the clear temporal and spatial separation between play and real world, it seems that the temporal separation at least is given. There are times when a thinker engages in theoretical contemplation and there are times where they do not. They may shift between the two quickly and frequently, but they are ultimately separate. It is debatable if the spatial separation is even applicable to this activity since it is pure thought and thus not physically manifested or otherwise given spatial expression. If this spatial aspect is discounted, then Aristotle's idea of the perfect life fits Huizinga's definition of play. If it is not, then this would seem a difficult point to argue that thinking was restricted to some spaces and impossible in others. An individual thinker might have places they prefer when they want to contemplate, but that seems difficult to universalize and does not look to be as suitable answer to that question.

Moving away from Huizinga and to Henricks it becomes evident that the theoretical life is effortlessly combinable with his understanding of play. The theoretical thinker plays with the world around them in the joyful exploration of critical thinking. The fact that this is not a practical interaction with the environment does not change the fact that the thinking is based on the observations about the material world that the thinker makes in accordance with epistemic rationality. Using Caillois' definition of paidia and ludus this process is located on the paidia side of the spectrum, even though the reasoning of an individual idea seems ludic and governed by logic. The thinker is free to look for observations where they want, and they are free to become interested in and question whatever they want.

Sophists and Dark Play
The sophists use their craft of rhetoric and logic not to reach truth, but purely to win a debate. Their goal of twisting words to confuse their opponent in this contest serves the purpose of proving themselves to be superior to their interlocutors and to display their skills and knowledge. When they perform their craft for an audience that is not trained in rhetoric or reason, they can use their knowledge to amaze the crowd like a magician performing tricks. Some sophists also took payment for their performance or a lecture. (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 146-157; Ardley, 1967, pp. 229-230) This description of the sophist portrays a fundamentally agonistic character, and also shows elements of mimicry if the sophist poses as a wise teacher while hiding behind a mask of confusing but plausible seeming words.

As for Huizinga's definition of play, the sophists seem to engage in the activity voluntarily, the debates are structured by the rules of logic, and an individual debate takes place in a certain place where people meet to talk and lasts for a certain time from the point where they initially get together to the point where they disperse again. The kind of reasoning that the sophists employ also seems to be removed from ordinary life, since they do not try to reason towards a solution, but rather towards arguments or twists of logic that confuse or otherwise help them win the debate against their

opponent. All practical considerations are suspended for the time of the debate and its process serves no immediate practical purpose. While some sophists demanded payment for a performance this is not necessary for the activity itself, i.e. the monetization was incidental to it, but not fundamental. Overall, it is simple to apply Huizinga's definition of play to the activities of the sophist, which should not be surprising considering that, as mentioned above, he himself identified their practices as playful.

Henricks' understanding of play does not seem to apply to the sophist because they do not display any intention or desire to rationally and playfully explore the possibilities of the world. What they do should not be considered critical thinking since they show no interest in finding the truth, nor is it epistemic rationality or any kind of theoretical reasoning. The considerations of the sophists are purely practical. They care not about correctly modelling the world, but only about which means they must take to win the debate, at least as they are described by Huizinga, Plato, and Aristotle.

A different kind of play that can find application when talking about the sophists is dark play. Dark play is an act of play in which some players participate involuntarily and potentially unknowingly. (Schechner, 2017, pp. 118-121) If the sophists use their skills to trick others into viewing them as wise, and makes them believe that they were teaching them actual knowledge, and maybe even convince them to pay for that supposed teaching they use their superior position in a playful manner to gain benefits out of other people who cannot perceive the activity as play.

Socratic Dialogues

Dialogues are a form of exchanging arguments that was used in ancient Greek philosophy and particularly in the writings of Plato, who structured many of his texts as a discussion between multiple characters. (Kraut, 2017) The basic principle is that the dialogue has a subject matter, for which the interlocutors then exchange arguments, refute arguments, and adjust their position if faced with a convincing argument. This may seem superficially similar to the debates held by the sophists, but unlike sophistry the Socratic dialogues are not about winning the debate, but about finding truth together. This removes the fundamental agonism found in sophistry. Interestingly, none of Cailloi's categories really seem to fit this practice. As said, it is not agonistic, the interlocutors are not pretending anything so it is not mimicry, it is not about losing control so it is not ilinx, and it is not about luck or fate so it is not alea.

The application of Huizinga's play shows again that participation in this activity is voluntary, it is structured through the same rules of logic as the other practices so far, as an act of critical thinking it is also separate from the ordinary life, it exists spatially and temporally localized for the same reason as the debates of the sophists do, and it is not aimed at producing any material value. Like sophistry, the Socratic dialogue also meets the requirements for Huizingian play, which was to be expected considering that it is related to the debates of the sophists.

Since the driving force behind the enjoyment of the Socratic dialogue is the same that is behind the enjoyment Aristotle describes in the theoretical life, namely the joy of critical thinking, it fits Henricks' definition of play just as well. Dialogue is a means of rationally exploring the world through theoretical investigation. The key difference between it and the theoretical life as defined by Aristotle is that the dialogue requires at least two interlocutors and that it is an instanced event with a beginning and an end, rather than an attitude in life. This makes these two practices complementary. The Socratic dialogue is a form in which the contemplative reasoning of the theoretical life can express itself when faced with a suitable interlocutor. Goffman's frames can also be found in the dialogue. It is an encounter that is framed by the context of reason.

Arguments are to be evaluated only on their merit and not on the status of the person who made them or other external factors. Just as good critical thinking suggests, the interlocutors ignore these external qualities of the other according to the rules of irrelevance.

Thought Experiments

A thought experiment is a practice in which a thinker posits a hypothetical situation and then applies operators to it or reasons how the situation would play out. It is essentially a simulation of a scenario in the human brain. Thought experiments can be used for different purposes like illustrating a point for better communication to transfer understanding, or to go through a scenario in the imagination to generate new understanding of that situation through thought alone. (Brown & Fehige, 2019) Thought experiments have a similar relation to the definitions of play as the theoretical life and the Socratic dialogue. None of Cailloi's categories apply here either, for the same reasons why they did not apply to the Socratic dialogue. Again, participation in this practice is utterly voluntary, it also follows the rules of logic and good reasoning, and it serves no material purpose. The reasoning for temporal and spatial separation is the same as for Aristotle's theoretical life. The thought process of the experiment starts and ends at some point. The spatial separation is arguably not applicable since the thought experiment has no physical manifestation. As a practice of critical thinking it is also separate from the ordinary world. When seen under Henricks' understanding of play as a laboratory of the possible thought experiments behave like the Socratic dialogue, they are a rational exploration of the world using theoretical reasoning.

The peculiarity of the thought experiment in comparison to the other practices is that it can exist both in the head of an individual thinker to simulate an idea or be used in discussion to make a point or convey an argument. This differentiates it from the Socratic dialogue and sophistry, which are both dialectic, and the theoretical life which is necessarily solitary since it simply describes an attitude that the thinker takes to life and the world. This is why thought experiments at one time show characteristics of the theoretical life, and at another time show characteristics of the Socratic dialogue, depending on how they are used.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the four practices of ancient Greek philosophy has shown that all of them show strong characteristics of playfulness, primarily because they are, with the exception of sophistry, based on critical thinking which itself has been described as having fundamentally playful elements in its nature. The practices examined here can be categorized in two different ways. The first is based on how they manifest in the world. The Socratic dialogue and sophistry are events that happen in the physical world through a meeting and interaction of different people, they are embodied. The theoretical life and the thought experiment are purely mental things without any physical representation, they are not embodied. The other categorization is along the nature of their motivation. Here the sophistry alone stands apart from the others by having an agonistic motivation, a strictly ludic frame, and using practical reasoning, whereas the other ones are theoretical in nature and not competitive. An interesting observation here is that while sophistry was easy to categorize according to Caillois' system, the other three did not fit into it at all. This might be because its clearly defined goal of defeating the opponent gives it a more game like structure, as opposed to the open-ended process of the Socratic dialogue which aims for learning and truth rather than victory. The analysis also revealed a conflict between the unembodied practices and the magic circle. While it was to a degree possible to make an argument for why the magic circle is still applicable, the need to make an argument for that illustrates that this is not a natural fit. This, as well as the lack of representation in Caillois' model, points to a weakness in both Huizinga's and Caillois' writing in dealing with these

unembodied playful phenomena. Both seem to favour play and games that are clearly spatially and temporally localized and clearly marked boundaries, as well as clearly defined goals in what might be considered ritualized play. It also seems that the theoretical practices, and critical thinking in general, tend towards paidia and an unregulated playful exploration of ideas, even though the thought process the thinker must employ in all of them is strictly regulated by logic.

It should also be emphasized that the four practices presented here are not of the same kind, as mentioned earlier. The theoretical life is an attitude of incorporating critical thinking into daily life. The disposition towards critical thinking seems a prerequisite both for conducting thought experiment as a means of inquiry as well as for fruitful participation in a Socratic dialogue. Thought experiments can be used both by a solitary thinker, as well as in a Socratic dialogue and be made subject of the dialogue itself. Socratic dialogues and sophistry have an interesting relationship because they are two sides of the same coin. They are both different expressions of people using logical arguments in a discussion, but at the same time they are fundamentally opposed in their motivation and their goals. The concept of seriousness has not been brought up in this paper, but in this specific matter it is of critical importance. Aristotle believed that the correct amount of seriousness is required for good philosophy. If the thinker is too serious, they will not be open to new ideas and will stubbornly defend their beliefs. If the thinker is not serious enough, they will not be able to give any idea the necessary consideration. This assessment of the matter is also in line with Plato's writings. (Ardley, 1967, pp. 228-230) This paper has not given the aspect of seriousness consideration because it tried to challenge Huizinga's supposed dichotomy between play and rationality. Further research could be directed to investigating how accounting for seriousness would affect the findings of this paper.

This paper used only a small set of definitions for rationality and looked primarily at the play romantics Huizinga and Caillois, with the addition of Henricks. As mentioned near the beginning, many thinkers have tried to define both rationality and play over the centuries, for example Kant or Schiller. Further research could be directed towards investigating the relation between play and rationality with different definitions of rationality or play, or focus on a different philosophical practice, since this paper discussed exclusively ancient Greek philosophical tradition.

Contemporary Game Studies and Mental Play
So far, this paper has not addressed digital games at all, and there were little references to contemporary game studies. Nonetheless, the findings of this paper are relevant to them. The view of rational contemplation as a form of mental play that this paper proposes is not often represented in game studies. While this paper does not claim that seeing play as an embodied activity is wrong, it does claim that having additional perspectives broadens the wealth of discussions in the field. When play is framed as a mental process then that naturally shifts the focus of the study of games to the player, specifically to their inner workings, rather than their external actions. The incorporation of rationality and pure speculative activities provides a new angle to this view. However, this paper has mostly considered structural understandings of both play and rationality, and did not go further into the philosophy of what the human mind is and how it works, and consequently how the practices discussed here manifest and play out in it. Looking further into how these rational processes work in the mind and developing a deeper understanding for how digital games can – or already do – interface with them, would benefit the understanding of digital games themselves.

CONCLUSION
This paper has identified Aristotle's life of theoretical thinking, sophistry, Socratic dialogues, and thought experiments as fundamentally playful practices, and traced this

playfulness back to the dispositions required for critical thinking in general. It also pointed out gaps in the definitions of play as formulated by Huizinga and Caillois, and especially the magic circle, when it comes to unembodied, theoretical play. The small scope of this paper however makes further research into this subject matter advisable.

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