

A New Human Impulse
for Social Relations
and Cultural
Development

A New Human Impulse for Social Relations and Cultural Development

Edited by

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and Silvia Viñao Manzanera

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
Preface	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Sport and Virtual Reality: Humanizing a Playful Utopia Antonio Sanchez Pato and Sonia Maria Martinez Castro	
Chapter Two	35
Inquiry into Emotion and Communication by Means of Computers Monica Rubio Vega and Beatriz Pena Acuna	
Chapter Three	47
The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: A Religious, Political, Economic, and Military Leader (373–613) Miguel Pablo Sancho Gomez	
Chapter Four.....	59
Narrative Explorations: The Communicative Power of Narration. TV Drama and Films, Sources and Sociological Resources Edoardo Tabasso	
Chapter Five	69
The Experiential Learning of Educators Working with Diverse High- ability Students in Secondary Education Antonio Carlos Gonzalez Lopez	
Chapter Six	89
The Study Area as a Premise for a Meaningful Learning Francisco Manuel Moreno Lucas	

Chapter Seven.....	99
Collaborative Learning: Towards an Improvement of Oral Expression in the ELE/EL2 Classroom. The Use of Dramatisation Ana María Aguilar López	
Epilogue.....	113
Beatriz Pena Acuna	

FOREWORD

Dear Readers

This extensive and comprehensive multidisciplinary work on social relations and human groups encompasses painstaking research by the Personal Development group, whose members are taken from universities in Spain, Italy, and Latin America. It offers a varied and thorough approach thanks to a joint effort and has its goals in development and culture. Particular attention has been paid to the evolution of the person and it is presented in an informative and entertaining way, but is at the same time rigorous and academic.

Our group of researchers work together to look for a unique direction. They reflect the ideals and common standards of behaviour, which are professionalism, dedication, effort, and determination, combined with an acute eye for detail and a commitment not undeterred by difficulties. They are always able to offer the most admirable fruits of their extensive and sacrificial scientific activity.

Leadership, family, values, experiential and artistic learning, motivation, emotional intelligence, personal development, sports, music, and the media are the research topics presented in this edition. They offer new perspectives and brilliant analyses with great vision.

By having the honour of acting as editors of this book, aimed at the academic world but also the general public, our wish is that the readers enjoy each and every one of the different chapters. We sincerely hope it will be of great benefit.

Miguel Pablo Sancho Gomez and Silvia Vinao Manzanera
(Coordinators)

PREFACE

I have been given the opportunity to compose a preface for this volume that attempts to make a positive contribution to science and cultural diffusion so that the university works and provides ideas to build tangible social progress that is well oriented for the common good.

The various chapters have been written by an interdisciplinary team of international professors and specialists in each subject framed within the broad paradigm of Personal Development. This research team, also called Personal Development, is directed by Professor Beatriz Pena Acuna from the San Antonio Catholic University, which is located in the Spanish city of Murcia. The topics covered in this edition are from humanities and social sciences, namely communication, sociology, history, and education.

Within the chapters of this book, many diverse and different topics can be found. Starting in the field of communication, journalists Monica Rubio Vega and Beatriz Pena Acuna contribute a paper relating to the study of emotional experiences by users in the world of new technologies entitled “Emotion and Computer-Mediated Communication.”

In the field of ICT, Professor Antonio Sanchez Pato and Sonia Maria Martinez Castro (San Antonio Catholic University, Murcia) talk about sport and virtual reality opening up a picture of a playful utopia with a humanising intention.

In the field of sociology, thanks to the translations to Spanish of the philologist Isabel Rojas Marin, the Italian professor Edoardo Tabasso makes an expository essay about narrative exploration which emphasises the communicative power of narration.

In the area of history, one professor reflects on the question of leadership and its components. Miguel P. Sancho Gomez analyses the role of the bishop in Late Antiquity (373–613) as a religious, political, economic, and military leader.

There are three chapters which relate to the area of education. Francisco Manuel Moreno Lucas, professor and experienced tutor, deals with planning and the place to study as the premises for meaningful learning. Ana Aguilar, professor at the University of Burgos, is interested in cooperative and collaborative learning to improve oral expression in the

foreign-language classroom through the use of dramatisation. Antonio Carlos Gonzalez Lopez deals with special education.

I hope that these chapters help the reader to reflect on the wonder of humans who, in the middle of their questions and thoughts, try to know themselves. This daily concern puts one in a position of being found by the truth, in the words of St. Augustine, “a beauty ever ancient, ever new.”

Hon. Mr. Antonio Alcaraz Lopez,
Vice Chancellor for University Extension
(Catholic University San Antonio, Murcia)

CHAPTER ONE

SPORT AND VIRTUAL REALITY: HUMANISING A PLAYFUL UTOPIA

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Introduction

Games, among both people and animals, respond to a vital impulse carried out by nature as a preparation for life (Diem 1966). However, due to the spiritual nature of people, when they are physically developed games become sport, and this way acquire an, “intermediate position between games and the seriousness of life” (Ibid., 7), fostering their spiritual development (Diem 1966; Eppensteiner 1973). Thus, sport is a concretely human cultural activity (Sanchez Pato 2006) and is full of abstraction and symbolism.

This already classic genealogy of games as the origin of sport forgets that games represent something more than an “unconscious self-hygiene which aims to preserve the humankind” (Diem 1966, 7). In fact, the distinction made between games and sport goes farther than a vital instinct or impulse: games among humans have a playful aspect and belong to the “playful” field, from which animals are excluded.

Perhaps humans and animals behave according to a conservation impulse, but the interpretation of this impulse made by humans makes games full of deep religious and cultural meanings. Animals gamble, if anything, but do not play; humans are able to romp or play depending on their convenience. Sport, as the development of games, is just a cultural product of integration and competence.

Precisely what establishes the difference between humans and animals are the two roots of human subjectivity: linguistic self-reference and freedom. The first is a theoretical root and is reached by humans by

reflexive self-consciousness (Barcia 2003, 97), which allows access to the possibility of referring to oneself as “I”; however, in animals, although there is also self-consciousness, it is pre-reflexive. Unlike them, we are not only aware of our body and our internal condition, but we can also reflect on our environment and ourselves, being capable of acting in an objective way in relation to things and people thanks to reflection. The second root, freedom, is practical and related to action. In humans, psychological freedom (when we do not feel obliged to act due to a stronger motivation) and moral freedom (acting according to reason, not being dominated by spontaneous impulses of sensibility) come together, giving way to the freedom of will (the capacity to be self-determining or choosing the reason why we act in one way or another, or not acting at all), that is the *liberum arbitrium*. To these should be added sociological freedom, as the individual autonomy in society.

For this reason, we do not agree with assertions like: “Game is something inherent in the human essence” (Garcia Blanco 1995, 125). Games have been conquered by humans in their evolutionary process, linked to the development of the imagination in primitive humans. Therefore, they cannot be consubstantial, even though they were inherent in humans (regarding *homo sapiens*) when they became *homo ludens* (Huizinga 1972).

Playing is an action which objectifies the impulse that lead us to it, but games, as sports, are mere constructions; that is, previously existent actions that have turned virtual and in which a transfer of meanings takes place. At this point playful games precede sport, which is an abstraction of them and also makes them virtual. Playing is not only based on games (we can also play with many other things), but doing sport is focused only on sport (and its semantic field). That is why sport follows the way established by games (playing a game), but makes its meaning abstract when looking for efficiency and limits, which it always aims to improve.

In this chapter, we will try to explain how this process, which has led people to transform an instinct into a game and sport, is carried out by making several things virtual. We will explain how this process is circular and does not stop at this point, but turns sport into a game in order to transform it once more into sport, and in this way successively. In all of this we discover a humanising process which allows some people to experiment with sensations unreachable until that moment, being capable of accessing unknown regions.

From Myth to Virtual Logos

Sometimes, sport comes up as a consequence of a process of abstraction of reality (of simplification, the reduction to its essence). When a human activity, which has the goal of survival, has its immediate utility suppressed, turning it into sport (i.e. hunting), we are adding a playful as much as competitive dimension. We can even twist this activity, replacing the “prey” with a dish, as occurs with clay pigeon or Olympic shooting, where the activity becomes purer, more formal, as it is stripped of taking down living prey. That transformation makes the hunting of birds a regulated and codified sport. In addition, if we look at this previously mentioned activity from a virtual point of view it will become a virtual sport, more abstract and far from an original empirical reality. Despite this transformation, it remains a sport if it maintains its playful and competitive features. The basis changes and we are avoiding the disaster caused by shooting sports, but formally we are still practicing shooting sports as a different kind of sport: they acquire a virtual *logos*.

Something similar occurs when we transform the displacement of cycling, with whatever practical aim it had, into a cycling sport, in which its utility becomes something playful or sporting. When we carry out cycling training on rollers we are simplifying this activity, but we are keeping its structure in a way that we can carry on training. However, if what we do is employ a simulator while standing fixed in a concrete place, where we pedal focusing our attention on a monitor that leads us into virtual scenery, the activity becomes virtual, even though the physical effort of the pedal power remains, although some part of the “reality” of the inspirational sport gets lost.

Maybe the transformation process could be even greater. Some myths have served as inspiration for the practice of some activities that evolved until they became virtual. This is what happens with the anthropological flying myth (Icarus), which could come into reality when technology promotes wings to our imagination in order to leave the floor and fly through the air. This is a step from myth to reality that has lately become sporting in aerial sports (from hang-gliding to acrobatic aviation), where the playfulness makes us forget the reality, even transforming it into a drill. We can go a step further with these aerial simulators, when raising that simulator to the virtual world. It is still a sport activity, despite the fact that it can be preparatory when the goal is learning how to fly a plane; but, in any case, it is a simulation which imitates another situation pursued by us as the learning aim. When we don't go for this aim but just want to enjoy the flying simulation, we are betting on the playful component

which can become a sport if it gets a dimension of efficiency and personal growth.

In this sense, we deduce that the drill dimension which characterises these activities gives them a completely human category, in opposition to what Bale (1994, 172) thinks about the unachievable distance between drills and reality, when the mere fact of simulating does not make an activity worthless.

There's room for asking ourselves what is gained or lost in the transition from myths to virtuality. The tour is spectral, with reality as the turning point: from myths to reality, and from reality to virtuality. The path maintains equal distances, as myths are also real for those who experienced them as virtuality. It deals with different languages for expressing the same feeling. For our imagination, we are flying as much as when we are dreaming about it, as when we are in a plane or playing a computer game. However, when we imagine it or think that we are doing it, the imagination does not stop us from enjoying ourselves; on the contrary, it asks us for it, and when we are actually flying we can barely imagine it because the current activity prevents us from stopping and being aware of it: it prevents us from enjoying what we are doing. At this point, sport comes very close to philosophy, as both are entirely theoretical. In games, in sports, is when humans are their most rigorous, as Ortega and Gasset (1991, 101) explain.

- (1) It is interesting that, due to the strategic skills developed by some games, according to Spiker, "retired players are taken by financial institutions in order to instruct them as brokers. In the United States, some players get a different professional direction: the US army transforms them into soldiers" (Hannah and De Guerre 2007).
- (2) *Virtual reality*. 1. f. *Inform*. Representation of some scenes or images about objects carried out by a computer system, which gives us the sensation of its real existence (VV.AA. 2001).

"This jolly intellectual rigor is the theory," and, as philosophy states, "It is just theory." And inside of it, in the theory, "we make an exchange between reality and its spectre, that is, concepts. Instead of living it, we think about it." That's why the philosopher says something that magnifies philosophy as much as games: "who knows if thinking about life does not consist of adding to the naïve way of living it, a magnificent desire of surviving on it!" (Ibid., 101).

This is the point at which sport maintains us in a sphere of dilated reality, where there is room for the glimmer of what we do by the time we have

enjoyed it. This is the reason why sport is a halfway point between myths and reality, and between this previously mentioned one and virtuality.

Virtual(ity), Real(ity), and Actual(ity)

Ordinarily, the term “virtual” is opposed to “real.” However, virtual is opposed to actual, not to real, as Pierre Levy highlights in *What Is Virtual?*: “Virtual is not opposed to real but to actual: virtuality and actuality are just two different manners” (1999, 17). “Because virtual is not in any way the opposite to real, but a productive and powerful manner that benefits creation processes, it paves the way, it digs wells full of sense under the superficiality of the immediate physical presence” (ibid., 14). The virtual is a “problematic combination” (ibid., 18), a series of trends and forces which searches for its actualisation. In this sense, it seems like sport, where the evidence of the act reigns—the action (that is, the actual) can become a virtual activity (not actual) in which its playful components remain but it looks like hyperbole, to the point that it removes its reality component.¹ In this hyperspace some sport-themed virtual games are placed, becoming virtual sports.

From a complementary point of view, a real or virtual possibility is taken into account that deals with virtuality as a means for transforming games into sports. That is, the process should operate in both directions: transforming sport into a (virtual) game, or transforming a game into a (real and actual, even virtual) sport. This last operation looks contradictory as we have defined “virtual” as the opposite to “actual.” However, the virtualisation of some virtual games, or rather some virtual sports, makes them become real sports (due to their reality and capacity of interacting with the avatars² they produce a cyberspace that operates immediately), at least for those who share a given space (the network) and time (telematic). Let’s analyse both proposals in detail.

We are interested in going further than the dichotomy that can be established between games and sports. It is true that games are something free, that appear spontaneously, while sport is something ruled and programmed. But the important thing is that children, when they are playing, imagine an action which is used to make another action a virtual one, an action which is placed very far from the previous one (for instance,

¹ Following the distinction made by K. L. Pike, from the actor’s emic point of view that activity is completely real, despite the fact that from an etic view it could be perceived as unreal.

² “An avatar is the player extension, his alter ego in the virtual world” (Hannah and De Guerre 2007, 2nd part).

they use an object in order to play the cars game, because children see an object like a car and play with it as such; it is their imagination which transforms this object into a car by the time it makes it capable of moving as they themselves define). When children practice sport, that original game has suffered a new socially agreed virtualisation which leads them to driving, for example, a car through a track set up for competing under rules which indicate the sense and significance of their actions. But this is not where the process comes to an end, and neither does the technical progress, the authentic materialisation of human inventive tools, end. The plane allows for flying, but humans already flew with their imagination, or maybe simulated it with cardboard wings. Technical advances (scientific ones, all in all) make humans capable of reinventing their tools, capacities, functions, and possibilities, promoting new virtualisations of actions as old as the history of their evolution: “The invention of techniques paves the way in a radical new way, in which the development makes the world grow in an autonomous way, a dense creation in which no utility static criteria can be advised” (Levy 1999, 78).

For Levy, techniques carry out several duties such as replacement and abstraction, but moreover they carry out an abstract task that includes an “indefinite quantity of situations or concrete displacement devices,” as occurs with the bicycle. Further, they have a rhetoric purpose, as the “technical invention paves the way for radically new possibilities ... But the device production reaches a rhetoric stage when it takes part in the creation of new purposes” (Levy 1999, 78). These new technological sport purposes, with virtual reality’s support, promote access to a playful stage where the conception of the machine itself is modified, specifically videogames which have reached very high speeds. According to Levy, this is about an irreversible cultural creation process.

We assume that new generations take for granted those conquests that previous generations considered as strange things. For young people, videogames are real contemporary playful operators, as are cars as the main contemporary urban operator for Levy, even though it seemed strange or ridiculous for those generations that did not coexist with that technology.

In that sense, virtual reality, up to now, becomes a milestone in this technological race.³ Even more, some sport-themed virtual games (which

³ Currently, the competition for implementing the “increased reality” (IR) has already started, such as glasses implants, helmets, printed texts (by means of QR codes), or mobile devices which allow for the acquirement of additional information about those things without the need for asking or looking for it, which gives us the possibility of experiencing an increased and more complete reality.

we have called “virtual sports” or “active videogames”) are the product of a computing schedule which established some rules and possibilities previously established by the programmer. It is true that they do not substitute the sports which serve as an inspiration for them, nor are they their substitutes: they are new sports, a virtualisation of preceding sports, but in a new sphere of virtualisation.

The avatar moves in a cyberspace delimited by the same eagerness that encouraged the people who previously regulated sports such as football, establishing the following limits (Mandell 1986): (a) space, regulating: the playing field, dimensions, areas, internal spaces, where the game takes place; qualifying some spaces in towns for the sporting practices; (b) time, in order not to make it last more than that established, in time zones and weeks which do not interfere with the work day; (c) mentality, understanding that practitioners accept the prohibitions, training their minds, civilising them; (d) games, by means of some regulations (with roles, modalities, distances, weights, etc.), which facilitate regional, national, and international competitions; and, (e) materials, making sure of equal opportunities and the possibility of mobility of competitions and adversaries (meaning an agreement about the type, dimensions, weights, measures, clothing, etc.)

But the cyberspace broadens the real possibilities that modern sports preserved.⁴ Technique has allowed broadening of: (a) the playing fields (delimited by virtual space) to almost abstract limits, (b) time (even overtaking some barriers, delimited until then by time zones which break the boundaries between day and night) beyond chronology, (c) the mentality of the player/athlete (who believes themselves capable of unthinkable, even oneiric actions) transformed into rule-breaking, (d) the game itself (where identity is created as an extension of oneself and the possibilities of adopting different roles, at the same time placing us closer to the omnipresence gift), and even (e) materials (which are multifunctional and completely versatile) to the point that they become self-implemented.

Let's analyse what this virtualisation process consists of. First of all, virtualisation is the opposite process of actualisation, and is the change

This is the main difference with virtual reality, as it does not replace physical reality but overprints the computing data about the real world; that is, it combines real and virtual elements. For Ronald Azuma, from the Nokia Research Center Hollywood, IR, moreover, must be interactive, and in real-time and 3D.

⁴ “Suddenly, there is no gravity, physics laws disappear, there is nothing. We are in a ‘matrix’ where universal laws are cancelled and we can be whatever we want to be” (Hannah and De Guerre 2007, 2nd part).

from actual to virtual (Levy 1999). In this sense, Levy says that even though actualisation goes from a problem to a solution, virtualisation goes from a solution to a problem, as “one of the main vectors of the creation of reality” (ibid., 20).

Virtualisation accelerates those already-known processes with new velocities, changing time and space (ibid.). In virtual sports, we start to play on some other playing fields on the screen in our living room, opened by means of an *écran* which moves us to a reality which operates with overlapping time, dilating it, slowing it down or accelerating depending on the situation. Thanks to the previously mentioned screen, we can move to other areas, other territories, sharing them with people very far away and interacting in just one emotional field. Sport is not a current affair anymore, nor a “here and now” sport, as becoming the place of “where” and “when” in fact has no concrete answer.

From (Current) Sports to (Virtual) Games

We consider two different possibilities when we (a) virtualise sports and (b) virtualise games. Games and sports are not the same thing, which is why we can contemplate the existence of both virtual games and virtual sports whenever both suffer the virtualisation process and their essences remain. But the matter is more complex. We will try to analyse what happens with sports and games when they get virtualised. Let’s start with the hypothesis that sports become games during the course of this previously mentioned process, or that the same thing happens when games become sports. In both cases, virtualisation will be the semiotic operator. At least initially, it seems to be less problematic to accept that games get virtualised (not many people doubt the existence of virtual games). Sport virtualisation is seldom accepted; that is, that virtual sport exists. As we will try to demonstrate, these virtual sports arise through a process that requires a new virtualisation of a virtual game which had somehow managed to virtualise a preexisting sport, but first reached the condition of virtual game and only later virtual sport.

Games can be the virtualisation of a previously existing action (i.e. playing with a little car as the recreation of driving a real car), although in the case of virtual games it could be that of a sport, as happens with football for computer games; so, virtual games are just new virtualisations of games, but are still games. But how far can they keep their positions as games? Is it possible that when games virtualise they can mutate into sports? In that case, virtual sports would be virtualisations from another

virtualisation (that of sports, which is of games) previously virtualised: three virtualisations into only one—or perhaps there will be more?

Along these lines, we will try to demonstrate that the nature of sports suffers a transformation when it gets virtualised in a similar way to that which it suffered at the beginning, when a playful, labour, or war activity was virtualised in order to become a game first, and latterly a sport. In a lucky way, as if it were a hermeneutic circle, in the third virtualisation process—the interpretation one—it transformed one more time into a (virtual) game,⁵ but with such characteristics that happened to transform it once again into a (current) sport, in an infinite interpretative process that hinders the differentiation of both games from sports.⁶

This theoretical difficulty of differentiating both concepts would break the division between the sports seriousness and the lack of it in games, placing both realities closer together and offering or making more concrete the playful utopia of everybody playing in the same accessible way, regardless of age, and free of social productive critics. Virtual games and sports civilise us, precisely because they are free of certain age-related limitations, as they make us capable of having some experiences that in advance could seem to be out of reach. That's why we do not agree with Heim (1993, 101) when he states that, through the computer, our soul migrates from our body to a representation world which can make you lose your humanity due to the risk of losing contact with reality.

Nevertheless, we do not go from games to virtual games in the same way as from sport to virtual sport. Maybe by raising the existential possibility of the individual when playing football on the computer or tennis on the Nintendo Wii, a greater difference is being made between games and sport, something that in the real world seems to be smaller. Games and sports belong to the same family, but virtual games and virtual sports seem to be placed farther apart. Why? Because virtuality adds something to games that keeps sport, when it is virtual, “out of commission.”

Beyond the cultural component enrolled in sports, cultural manifestations, “playful impulses” shared with animals (Diem 1966), are transformed into regulated games (first virtualisation) by some kind of infusion-revelation in the soul and reason of practitioners who have understood the messages that the gods, through Hermes or Zeus himself in Olympia, have revealed

⁵ This is what happens at the moment, but when the e-sport is definitely established this process will have been no more than an evolutionary period of virtual games.

⁶ From this perspective, the concern about deconstructing the feasible transformation of play into games and games into sport, and the difference between games and sport based on physical ability and skills (Hemphill 2005, 198–9), stops making sense.

to them to carry out the transformation of games into sport (second virtualisation). This is the point through which the distinction between animals and their “games” is made.

Hermes was the Greek god who mediated among gods and men, Zeus’ Messenger, some kind of translator of divine plans which humans should obey so they had a sublimely normative nature. Perhaps that’s why sport make us remember, in Ratzinger’s words, heaven, an area shared by players and spectators where rules are accepted without the necessity of their being imposed. This theological interpretation confers some heavenly memories of and a desire for sport.

If we accept this process, clearly stated due to cultural or religious reasons, we will also have to accept that sport is something playful turned virtual. By playful we mean all those game-related issues. But it is just the virtualisation of an instinct at the same time, the expression of an ability or impulse.

With some games of virtual sports a third virtualisation takes place. This new virtualisation gives the game back to the sport *eidos*. This is where we get to the second assumption, which at the same time makes us come back to the first.

From (Virtual) Games to (Current) Sport

It can occur, and in fact it happens, that one game inspired in one sport gets virtualised to the point that we consider it a sport. But sport-related games remain games. In this sense, Ahmad Kholwadia⁷ considers that videogames should be considered sports. Obviously, semantics is not a worthless issue. A videogame inspired by a sport or any other activity is not a sport but a game. According to Kholwadia, the important thing about these videogames does not lie in the “physical” side but in the mental challenge they represent. At this point, sport suffers an abstraction that reduces it to its basic conditions; that is, to the dimension where there are challenges to overcome, not the physical effort to reach the objective (winning or leading the adversary, either the computer or any other adversary/playmate).

⁷ The British winner of the *Pro Evolution Soccer* videogame, competing in the Electronic Sports Worldwide Cup (ESWC). Other important games are: *Wii Fit*, *Wii Sports* (tennis, bowling, baseball, boxing), *Wii Sports Resort*, *Active Personal Trainer*, *Eye Toy Total Fitness*, *Eye Toy Kinetic Combat*, *Mi Experto en Fitness*, *Don King*, *Grand Slam Tennis*, *Sports Island*, *Wii Sports Resort*, *Let's Yoga*, and *Wii Fit Plus*.

Nevertheless, videogames make sport come back to the playing field. They place an activity that had been reached by the player during their cultural and competitive development closer to them, with skill-related and popularity levels that most practitioners, or candidates, cannot reach (as occurs in extreme sports, which are only suitable for outstanding athletes).

Traditionally, sports have been valued due to their physical components instead of their necessary emotional and intellectual implications. If we accept that certain videogames, whether they are sport-themed or not, have come to join the main elements which characterise sports activities, we will have reached sports intellectualisation, despite losing certain motor elements during this process (or, in this case, transforming them). We could even suggest that the abstraction of the essential elements that characterise sports when transforming into videogames implies a virtualisation process. Not for nothing, for some people these videogames are authentic virtual sports.

An example of this abstraction or the virtualisation capacity is chess, which intellectualises the armed confrontation typical of a battle, but transforms the physical death into a defeat. The effort executed in the battle is reduced to strategy through a mechanisation process which gets rid of real actors (soldiers), their freedom, and the uncertainty hovering over their lives during the course of the battle. This is the responsibility of the tactician who assumes that freedom of movement. This way, the battle becomes a game (or sport) and its meaning operates in a different reality sphere (a virtual sphere) which is highly symbolic and metonymic, concerning the victory or the defeat. It is about a harmless essay which protects us from the real and dramatic consequences of war, but keeps on fulfilling the confrontation of human necessity and the demonstration of an identity, a leadership, facing another one. To a large extent, isn't the real battle itself a chess game for its generals? It is a dehumanisation process that leads the general to consider those individuals who fight under their command as salaried soldiers with no identity. That abstraction about their condition of people with their own identities allows the general to objectify soldiers in order to manipulate them more efficiently as a soldiery.

The crux of the matter resides in analysing to what extent this virtualisation process "distorts" the game itself. When we distort something, we get its virtue, its essence, modifying its nature (RAE, 22nd edition, voice: distort). Some games, when becoming videogames, probably lose the virtue that precisely made them different from sports and, in this process, they finally become real sports. In this sense, some games have reached such a level of realism due to the high degree of

interaction they allow by means of the avatar they generate, overcoming their own nature⁸ and becoming virtual sports, but not always evolving from a game (i.e. computer football, which was an abstraction of a previous sport: football). After that process it becomes a sport. It's about a process similar to that which some other games suffered; they were simple hobbies which turned into sports. This way, chess is nowadays considered a sport; its international federation dates from 1924, and it celebrated its first international award in London in 1851, although its history goes back to the sixth century.

The reason why this occurs is that games and sports are interpreted and reinterpreted, that is updated, time after time when they are played or practiced by particular individuals. That unfinished process, as unresolved as people themselves, continuously goes back to the sports' origins as games and games as sports. From this point of view, both games and sports are consciousness states in which the subject is placed.

Finally, the hermeneutic circle is not closed, as the interpretations succession is infinite and the updating never ends. The last projection (to date) of this process culminates in the creation of an avatar, an alter ego, another "me," which gives free rein to my desires, impulses, and instincts already present and limited in the purest sports: running, jumping, throwing, and flying. This defies the limits of nature and laws, transcending them through an existential sport. Barthes (2008, 35) considered car races and the necessary preparations for the race, which gives the sense that the race is "a victory over the gravity and inertia of things," because when machines are stopped they are very heavy, but it is their "virtual power that makes them heavy, like a bird upset by its own wings." This is the fourth virtualisation: levitation, a virtual reincarnation, dematerialisation, and transformation that makes us go back to the former playful instinct: the return to the beginning. The virtual evolution of sports makes it become something intellectual.

In this sense, the virtualisation of the body, as defined by Levy (1999, 32), is a change of identity where the body gets out of itself, gaining new velocities and areas: "it is a reinvention, a reincarnation, a proliferation, a human heterogeneity" (ibid., 32). The body gets out of itself, "intensified by sports or drugs ..." (32), in order to become public and return to the private sphere.

⁸ For the anthropologist and sport philosopher Rui Garcia, sport is precisely "what we add to nature. If running, throwing and fighting are 'natural' activities (evidently, we should have some reserve in the formulation of this idea), sport is what we add to those gestures and/or behavior" (2005, 98).

Reductionism in the Process of Virtualisation

The two-times Formula 1 world champion Fernando Alonso insured his thumbs for ten million euros, as he states that they allow him to change gear in his car and celebrate his victories (with the gesture of pointing both thumbs upwards). This is about the metonymy of luck that places the car racing sport closer to car racing videogames. Increasingly, physical effort seems to be far away from these activities, and has replaced some abilities typical of virtual games.

The ability to push the thumbs against the rest of the fingers, a feature of the *homo habilis*, recovers its power in the most-developed sport in terms of technology. An eternal return seems to give back its former sense to the specifically human capacity of using tools and providing them some sense in everlastingly mechanised machines. It seems like the less contact there is between humans and machines, the more relation there is between them, both simpler and stronger. As Barthes stated, according to the Argentinian

Motorist Juan Manuel Fangio, speed is always the reward for an extreme slowness: “first of all, we must ensure that controls work, because very much will be demanded” (2008, 27), because “a great driver does not domesticate his machine, he simply calms it down” (ibid., 37).

This process seems to point to a future union between human and machine, through the humanisation of machines or the mechanisation of the human. But before this process materialises, we shouldn't forget that “tools are essentially ‘something for’ ...” (Heidegger 1991, 81), because, whether it's about a hammer or a racquet, “the better we grab it, and use it, turning to its original purpose, the better we can face it with no masks, as what it is, a tool” (ibid., 82).

For the South African Oscar Pistorius, the first Paralympic athlete to take part in a World Championship outdoor track event (Daegu, South Korea, 2011), the prostheses which sometimes serve as his legs complete his being. That's why he needs them and cannot get rid of them except for reencountering himself. But being more than what he already is, being like all the others, is not a luxury but a social and personal necessity.

The debate around the ethics of the use of mechanical implants does not depend on the individual's nature or humanity, but on the sport itself and the rules and values it embodies. This is why problems reside in a technical matter: how quick should they make those who use them in order for them to not become an advantage and therefore an attack on the ethical aspects of equal opportunities (for both)?

“Implants or prostheses help us to remodel ourselves through an increasingly complex exteriorisation where economic, institutional, and techno scientific routes merge” (Levy 1999, 35). They constitute the virtualisation of a body in a self-creation process, something that perpetuates our species. By means of virtual reality, we access sensory perceptions and experiences only accessible to other people.

What relation is there between a worker using a tool to carry out labour and an athlete using an implement for practicing a sport? The worker’s hammer is the pitcher’s baseball bat, the shovel, the tennis player’s racquet. In this sense, a virtual surgery remains an operation, but a virtual game seems to lose its essence when it is mediated by a tool which replaces the conventional one: the element improves, which is replaced by the “randomise” instruction in the programming. According to Heidegger, “the very way of being of the tool we call ‘at hand being’/ready to fit the hand” (1991, 82), as to the athlete who has no legs, as for the tennis player, the implement or the prostheses are “at hand beings” which demonstrate their particular way of being, necessary for both to carry out their role; rather, we wonder about them when they fail, when they don’t play that role.

Sport helps us to domesticate the environment, as swimming does with the aquatic environment; caving, scuba diving, and mountain climbing are good examples of “the same starting movement of the framework, that of hybridization, ‘transformations’ that almost tend to metamorphosis. Becoming a fish, becoming an antelope, becoming a bird or a bat” (Levy 1999, 31). Some sports such as skydiving, paragliding, Alpine skiing, surfing, and windsurfing search for the stress towards the end, which is why Levy thinks that they are some reactions to virtualisation as they reaffirm the updating that is here and now. This means that they embody a place and a moment, but, lately, something surprising occurs. Under the power of gravity, but playing with balances until it becomes aerial, the body which jumps or slides loses its heaviness. It becomes speed, a journey, an over flight. Up thrust, even when it seems to be falling or flowing towards the horizontal side: here is the splendid body of the jumper or the surfer, their virtual body (ibid., 32). A body emerges, a virtuous body, and so elevated is its domain that it becomes a virtue, moving it beyond itself.

It moves from actual to virtual, from paragliding and bungee jumping, to videogames and the internet, emulating these risky practices as a prolongation of the virtual body. Are there by any chance two kinds of people who look for different destinies? Can we segregate populations, not according to their social class or their status but according to their

virtuality or how actual their leisure activities are? In both cases, for both groups of people, these leisure activities are extended in time and space, invading the working sphere (in life) in order to become lifestyles, more or less actual and virtual. So is there any time or place left between actual and virtual things for another kind of leisure? Probably, between them, there's only room for sport.

E-Sports or Cybersport

In the world of videogames,⁹ some expressions such as “electronic sport,” “E-Sport,” or “active videogames” are used for expressing those sport-themed virtual activities which are practiced according to certain rules stipulated by the participants. On them, the difference between players and professionals (the so-called “electronic-athletes”) is established. It is in online games in which several players take part, and in which some money is at stake thanks to sponsorship. There are also coaches, with their teams and strategies. Around this, some tournaments have been created, such as the WCG (World Cyber Games), CB (Clan Base), ED (Enemy Down), and the ESL (Electronic Sports League).

For Hemphill (2005), the adequate name is cybersport, although it discusses the categorisation of sport computer games. For this reason, beyond these designations these products need to be discussed. Only a qualitative leap could justify the change in the designation between videogame and e-sport. At least initially, those games which are not sport-themed or which do not reproduce the reality in which they are inspired, however real they seem, will remain videogames.¹⁰ However, it is not the content that justifies that something is a game or a sport but the meaning

⁹ It is not negligible that consumers nowadays spend 18.5 million euros per year on videogames and computer games, and 800 million people worldwide play them habitually.

¹⁰ For instance, *Age of Empires*, *Call of Duty*, and *Dead Or Alive*, or even other sport-themed games, such as *FIFA Football*, remain videogames. Firstly, from the moment when, in a football game, the kicking of the ball is made by moving a joystick with the hand instead of simulating kicking with the foot (which does occur with other games consoles such as the Xbox 360 with the Kinect system, which allows us to play with the whole body, with no controls), the activity maintains an insuperable relation with the sport or the reality it tries to simulate, thus invalidating it when considering it as a virtual sport. The virtualisation of the action is not very different to that made with a caps and marbles game for simulating a football match. It would simply be about an abstraction process of those main elements of a sport, placing them in a game by means of a virtual support.

assigned to it and how the practitioners or spectators experience it. In fact, we can play anything and with anything. Any activity in life is open to becoming a sport. Nevertheless, when we talk about sports that adapt to videogames, becoming games (videogames), we mean that the process of virtualisation operates from a sport and ends up as a virtual sport. Videogames, partially, become sports when the moment around them, a show in which a group of people want to enjoy them, is created through watching somebody playing.

In any case, some sport activities inspire games. In this way, a sport becomes a game by diminishing its seriousness and reinforcing its playful element in the face of efficiency, which makes it more accessible to more participants, who would be limited due to their physical conditions, among other factors.

In the same way as motor sports, non-existent until the invention of the internal combustion engine, as time passes virtual reality will give birth to virtual sport as technology allows us to “sportify” its use. In these border territories we can discover what sport is. The fact that we do not already talk openly and agree about virtual sports is clear evidence that this activity has not reached the necessary requirements for being considered, *sensu stricto*, a sport.

What are those requirements? Let us see what happened to motorsports. In 1885 the first automobile fed by a petroleum derivative appeared with a Karl Benz engine, with the first race from Paris to Versailles taking place two years later. In 1900 in Lyon, the first International Car Racing Championship took place. From that moment, many competitions proliferated. From its beginning, the desire for competing and determining who was the fastest was inevitable. Immediately, machines were at the service of people, moving the desire for determining the winner, the champion, to the road; “the one who has not reached his victory against his rivals but with them, over the importance of things ...” (Barthes 2008, 39). In this way, the sport of car racing emerged.

In other fields, we consider computer-generated painting or music as virtual art, and few people doubt this. In the same way, we can talk about virtual architecture, “that universe of built, visualized, accessed, manipulated and three-dimensionally used objects, with architectural purpose and with their own right term in a computer digital field which gives them their virtual nature” (Velez 2000). And, as has happened in cinema or 3D technology, “this does not have to be the death or the end of the means, but its evolution” (Diaz 2011, 437).

By our understanding, the so-called e-sport becomes a sport when there is a competition with another person apart from certain virtual limits,

which we want to delay, postpone, or dissipate; always hoping for an extension of the virtual support—of the programme—which lets us practice, waiting hopefully for technology to allow us to go farther, supposing an imaginative, unachievable horizon in that virtual world. That tenacity in the search to overcome new borders in the virtual world justifies the exponential evolution that technology experiences in relation to the unthinkable developments and progress until recently (as the magnified reality). Limits were never so vague due to the progress that computers and the virtual and telematics world have promoted. The challenge consists of finding a technology that allows us to “go through the mirror to come into the representation and interacting with three-dimensional objects, with sceneries and beings from the virtual world” (Machado 2009, in Diaz 2011, 436). We need to know if, when we play chess against a machine, it is also considered a sport. Probably, if we think that a machine is a rival which we have to beat, like the mountaineer “beats” the mountain (or themselves) in the climb, it is as if we are competing with another person (the programmer) through their creation: the machine. Digital platforms have allowed us to virtualise almost any activity, from cooking to bowling, and creating or governing a city. But most of these activities remain games, mere entertainment; only some of them gain the distinctive feature of virtual sport.

In our opinion, electronic sport does not need to be sport-themed to be considered as such. It is about the way of dealing with the activity, something that “sportifies” it, filling it with the characteristic sports values. This way, chess is a war-like strategy game, but is measured as a sport. That’s why e-sport can be elaborated with almost any activity.

In fact, not every sport emerges from a sport activity—rather, pre sport activity—or from a preindustrial pastime (Elias and Dunning 1992); and neither is every activity liable to become a sport. When we “sportify” an activity, we should take into account that, in this process, we cannot lose the essence of that which is understood as a sport and lies on its regulations, in its inner logic (Parlebas 1988), and that must be judged and valued by the effect it has on practitioners by virtue of their humanity. A sport that dehumanises is not a sport: it shouldn’t. There exist real, current limits which deal with the basic meaning of sport in the search for *areté* and *humanitas* conservation. If these ends are guaranteed, “what” and “how” become less important, and “what for” remains.

The matter is based on games taking the leap in becoming sports instead of games (however, both things can co-occur depending on the practitioner’s attitude). In this sense, football is a sport not because it is played with a ball, but due to how its activity is structured. It seems logical

that e-sports come from a previous sport activity, but this is not essential. A sport-themed videogame, just because of the fact that it is based on a sport, does not stop it being a game. Games are games: videogames are videogames. And virtual sport is a sport—a virtual one.

Virtualisation as a Dehumanising Process: Exceeding the Limits

According to Ortega and Gasset (1996), sport¹¹ comes from utilitarian activities, not the other way round: sport emerged from usefulness. We can equally deduce that the loss of the utility of an activity does not automatically transform it into leisure time or sport (depriving it of its purpose). So, sport is placed before function. Because playful activities are creative, they work by mistake-practice. Actually, that role belongs to games as they precede usefulness, and their sport-spirit remains in sport. Those transformations continuously revealed by playful activities, creating and recreating, affirm a humanising process, the natural measures adjustment (translation) on a human scale. This is a process about the understanding of reality which consists of virtualisation, a heterogeneous virtualisation, becoming a different one, however, and not succumbing to alienation (Levy 1999, 25).

According to Levy (1999), there are three types of virtualisation that create human things: language, technique, and contracts. Through language, “human beings can be partially separated from ordinary experience and remembering, recalling, imagining, playing and simulating. This way, they move to other places, other situations, other worlds” (68). In this pilgrimage, we have come to the virtual reality world. Language leads the way to a virtual world; for this reason, sport, as a way of expression and a semiotic operator, launches us doubly into a mirror game which becomes more complex by means of virtual sport. In this sense, we cannot forget the contribution to videogames made by technology in three dimensions (3D), which is “one more step in the project to make the players live virtual environments in the first person, as a personal experience and placing the videogames industry closer to the effective and full virtual reality dream” (Diaz 2011, 436).

¹¹ By Ortega and Gasset’s (1991, 100) understanding, sport is “an effort, but an effort that, unlike working, is not imposed to us, nor is utilitarian or paid, but an spontaneous, luxurious effort that we do because we want to do it, which takes pleasure by itself.”

On the other hand, virtual sport plays an important role in the humanisation process. Sport, at a high level, is an activity typical of demigods, of heroes, and virtual sport humanises it: it makes some activities reserved until that moment for the chosen ones, affordable for all of us, according to our talents and outstanding qualities. With no doubt, with e-sports we are attending the real democratisation, humanisation, and universalisation of the sport experience.

We said that it is easier to understand the transformation from current games to virtual games than from current sport to virtual sport. In fact, the only way that sport finds for virtualising is through games, becoming a game, and “playing.” Playing football or tennis, by means of a videogames console, is another way of playing that maybe condemns football or tennis to the games universe, separating them from the sports that inspire them. The activity becomes virtual, and the player, no longer an athlete, does not need to execute the technique as it is designed in the “real” world. Rather than playing football (as both players, the virtual and the current, do), the virtual player stops practicing, becoming attached to the immanent reality, leading to physical and mental transcendence, maybe more linked to *praxis* than to *poiesis* (production, fabrication). In fact, *praxis* was understood by Greek people as an action that “has its purpose in itself, and that does not create or produce an object alien to the agent or its activity” (Sanchez Vazquez 2003, 28).

When we talk about virtual games, their virtuality does not exclude anchoring with empirical reality, inasmuch as they maintain a connection of *praxis* with the action itself (*ibid.*, 27). In the double Marxist meaning, consciousness—in the search of a certain purpose—and unconsciousness—of worldwide results because of their interaction with other *praxis*—exceed the utilitarian meaning of the pure practice (*ibid.*, 16). It seems evident that they increase our coordinating, driving, space, and time abilities, but do not produce anything out of themselves. In this sense, it is understood that the virtual condition of those games is very far from the Greek *poiesis*, the production or fabrication of something. Virtual games such as PC or Wii football, with the help of practice and training, improve our benefits (physical abilities?), but don’t produce anything out of themselves. What is more, games are “*praxis*” as “objective conscious activities” (*ibid.*, 28).

Nevertheless, the limit of these activities, in their realism, is about emulating perfectly the reality they represent, as a copy; that is what they imitate: sport itself. The more virtual a sport is the more real it seems to us; the closer it is to the real experience of the activity it represents, and the closer it is to its always virtual limits. Then, the return of the (virtual)

game that takes the place of the (also virtual) sport does not operate in the present-day field, but in the virtual one. That is why it does not become actual with the transformation, but is “reinterpreted” as a sport within the spiral hermeneutic circle it describes. This circle of interpretations, increasingly more sophisticated, takes places thanks to the transformations that technical advances promote, which follow the necessity of a new interpretation of the action.

Once more, we are dealing with the search for the limits (Sanchez Pato and Teruel 2013) which appear in extreme sports. Among them, the virtuous one wants to surpass the sport’s limits—its rules—in order to get closer to the real—physical—limits of its capacities, establishing a real (metaphysical) knowledge horizon, a copy of the concept of the infinite. This is where myths pave the way, when the limits of possibility have been surpassed within the rules of sport itself.

But the limits of a virtual sport, as the recreation of a real activity which it represents, simply exist as a horizon, as a concept. There is a huge difference between playing tennis on a virtual platform and doing so on a tennis court. It is not about a matter of reality representation, but about reality as such. There are two different realities that offer different experiences; it is not just a matter of “topicality.”

What leads a young person to play tennis on the Wii is different from that which leads them to take a racquet and play a tennis match on the tennis court with a friend. The search is different, and it has to do with the possibility of being aware of our limitations.¹²

Sport places us closer to our limits. In extreme sports, it takes us beyond the statutory limits, placing them at the available limits to be reached. Reality represents limits, materialised in their current consequences, not deferred over time; virtuality defers these limits to a later time, in which consequences will materialise and become current.

That search for the limits is a human category, intrinsic to our genetic code, perpetuated by means of the aggressiveness that makes us give our best. Sport paves the way in this search, gives us expression and experience possibilities that are difficult to preserve, as is evident in risk sports: in mountain climbing, extreme skiing, bungee jumping, sky surfing, etc. For this reason, the human condition is evident in sport and its practice, socialising and humanising us. Sports meet this search and the limit transgression, real or virtual, but always according to the human category of previously imagining what we want: “in the search of security

¹² Concerning human limitations, which can emerge in virtual reality, we shouldn’t forget that in virtual games some limitations also exist, which Poole (quoted in Hemphill 2005, 200) calls “incoherence of causality, function, and space.”