

Notes on Huizinga's "Nature and Significance of Play"
Part I

97. Play is significant; all play means something. Play transcends the action of play and points at something else, thereby giving meaning to the act.
-- also, a survey of psychological theories of play

98. any understanding of play must make play itself meaningful, and not only by reference to something else.

Play has psychological, aesthetic, and physical/biological dimensions. But play must be understood as meaningful for the player.

Play has tension, mirth, and fun. But fun is un-analyzable. Play must be understood, then, as a totality.

99. Play is not merely human; it is not rational; it is un-determined.

His focus: Play as a significant, meaningful, and social function. Play as culture.

100. All human activity is permeated with play.

101. Play can be serious, but is irreducible.

102. (a) Play is voluntary.

103. (b) Play is disinterested

104. (c) Play has duration and location

Part II

103. because play is voluntary, it is superfluous. It is outside, beyond ordinary life. It is freedom itself. It is stepping outside of life into a sphere that is distinctly different.

104. because play is disinterested, play is a conscious interlude—a not-life within our lives.

Play occurs within a space defined by a limit—within a now, a here, an artificiality that is conscious.

105. play occurs within a magic circle, a defined special arena where rules are able to construct the space of play.

Play has a logic. Play has rules.

Play has an aesthetics. Play is beautiful.

Play has tension.

106. Play has rules. Breaking the rules destroys the illusion of play.

Play has a social function: playing together constitutes a community, which persists beyond the game itself.

107 to 108: two definitions of play:

Play is “a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious,” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise and other means.

And

Play exists “as a contest *for* something or a representation *of* something”

112. Play is necessarily self-conscious of itself *as* play.