The Semiotic Phenomenology of Play in the Socio-Cultural Becoming of Human Self

The aim of this paper is to establish conceptual and methodological bridges between sign- and meaning-oriented positions of pragmatism and phenomenology with regard to psychological distinctions, on the one hand, between the "ego" versus "non-ego" states of awareness, and on the other between the "I" and "me", in personal- and social dimensions of the self. In view of the principal subject matter announced in the constituents of the title, it discusses the role of play in the personal and subjective development of the human self as a unity of mind and body in psychophysiological terms. Whereas the gradual becoming of the human self both through the playing activity and the participation in plays involves all levels of environmentally conditioned transactions, from the uniquely human to the social and cultural ones, the lived experiences of players as sign-producers, considered from viewpoint of semiotic phenomenology, lead to the realization of indexical, signaling and symbolic functions of entertainment- and happiness-related aesthetics. The author of this paper argues that to play is not only an art in itself but also an end in itself, since the mere act of play fulfills at the outset the same role in the growth of animal and human organisms, while preparing them for their future life, but the development of an individual self to a collective self occurs through playing with others as an entertainer/"muser" and creator of, contributor to or partaker in the "musement".

Keywords: Phenomenology, Play, Playworld Semiotics, Self

Preliminary Remarks

This paper focuses on the ludic nature of the human being understood in terms of the self as a physical person and mental subject who engages in playful activities, the aim of which is not the satisfaction of its basic survival needs, but rather the realization of entertainment function contributing to the establishment of interpersonal or interspecies linkages. As such, it puts forward some arguments that the ecology-related becoming of (non)human selves involves all levels of sign-production, from the inclusively natural-animal to exclusively cultural-human processes. These arguments presuppose that to play is a purpose in itself and an end in itself; therefore the development of the individual self as a psychosomatic organism—governed by intra-organismic drives common to other living systems—should be studied solely within a given culture in which it is playing with others as entertainer or creator and contributor to or partaker in the entertainment.

The paper will show how the concept of play has been referred to numerous interactions between mental activities, such as cognizing, thinking, understanding, or interpreting, which constitute prerequisites for the growth of humankind, as well as how the spontaneous and harmonious play of cognitive powers of man may form a basis for his feelings of pleasure. It might be worthwhile to consider the relevance of organismic drives, urges, instincts, or desires being responsible for the harmony of emotion and reason, among which the aesthetic drive of play through art occupies a considerable place.

Moreover, it is worth examining what distinguishes man from the rest of nature, when considering that he makes the form of objects enter into his enjoyment and keeps in view the forms of these objects which satisfy his desires, or that he is not only apt to increase his pleasure in extent and intensity, but also to ennoble these objects in style and kind. Not to be omitted are playful instances of bodily movements, or higher mental powers in games.

Studying respective works of selected thinkers, the paper describes various aspects of human intellectual playacts, such as evoking imaginative illusions, transforming the contents of memory, or amusing oneself with passions, mendacities, while suspending pain in search of pleasure. In view of the multiplicity of games in different cultures, it will be reasonable to sketch phenomenological images of players, with their imitative faculties enabling them to simulate states of affairs from their surroundings. Whereas the play of children is mostly characterized by imitations of here-an-now facts, the prevailing part of adults involvement amounts to aesthetic and creative dimensions of their everyday reality attaining this way a sort of inward affinity to its mental image.

Consequently, play is shown as a phenomenon of personal and social lifeworld experienced directly and individually. Even though it is shared collectively, everybody is familiarized with its multiple forms from the first-person perspective. Therefore, the paper finally argues that human individuals experience their play as a possibility of their personal activity in their social lifeworld, perceived thus as their own playworld.

Specifying the Sources of Inspiration

A direct source of inspiration for the following reflections on play as a joyful activity of humans constitutes the relevant works of the twentieth-century scholars interested in the multilevel communication processes in the world. These include, in particular, the essay "A theory of play and fantasy" written by Gregory Bateson (1976 /1955/: 177–193), which provides psychological frames of reference for the definition of play, basing on observations in psychotherapy, as well as the collection of papers published by Thomas A. Sebeok under the title *The Play of Musement* (1981), which offers conceptual and methodological tools for the tasks of semiotics.

What has been brought up as intriguing issues by both researchers comprise: firstly, similarities and differences between semiotic processes in the worlds of animals and humans, secondly, playful aspects of such sign activity in nature and culture which is "an end in itself", and finally, the semiotic basis for human predilections for imagination and daydreaming as well as cognitive strategies and operations of the human mind as semiotic processes. All of these issues, belonging to the ecology of living systems, constitute as such the investigative domain of semioticians.

The lines of reasoning of both Bateson and Sebeok, who had made allusion to the notion of play, accentuated the unity of communicative processes in nature and culture, on the one hand, and the inventive creativity of some behaviors characteristic exclusively of humans, on the other. Bateson argued, pursuant to his deliberations on the nature of mind in a systemic

formation of ideas, or transmission of information in the world of life, that people communicate not exclusively in conformity with logical rules (1976: 193). He was of the opinion that that the cause for such an illogicality lies not only in their "carelessness or ignorance" (Bateson 1976: 193).

What is more, in Bateson's view, variability and/or changeability of both form and content of messages are possible, as far as communication, taking place at different levels of abstraction, is such a sophisticated process that its paradoxes can instigate also the course of its evolution. According to this line of reasoning, all forms of communication, revealing the states of mood of its participants independently of mechanical reactions to external signals, might be compared to playful behaviors having always a stimulating purpose.

It is therefore understandable how metacommunicative abilities of certain organisms, the developments of which must have taken place gradually, are to be considered as prerequisites for the performance of various types of playful activities. Among such activities that resemble play because of their metacommunicational character, Bateson places, for example, threat, histrionic behavior and deceit. Occurring at the level of intentional communication, where signs may be at least partially controlled by communicators, they fundamentally differ from each other in relation to the play *sensu stricte*. In keeping with Bateson, the following conclusion may be drawn that, without play, "the evolution of communication would be at an end. Life would then be an endless interchange of stylized messages, a game with rigid rules, unrelieved by change or humor" (cited and quoted after 1976: 193).

To the achievement of Sebeok, in turn, belonged the popularization of the expression the "play of musement", coined by Charles Sanders Peirce with the aim at depicting a playful exploration of new knowledge. Using it metaphorically, in the title of one of his books of collected papers, Sebeok (1981), as the interpreter and popularizer of the works of this founder of American pragmatism, undoubtedly wanted to render the multidirectionality, polymorphism, and multivalency of semiosis, the semiotic processes in nature and culture in their entirety.

For Sebeok, there is a qualitative difference between the sign processes in the human and animal worlds, which follows, as one might reason, from the exceptionality of representational and modeling abilities and activities of human individuals. As he claimed, verbal signs mostly appear against the background of nonverbal signs.

Humanistic Approaches to Play and Playing Activities

Ancient Roots of the Concept of Play

The history of the concept of play can be traced, according to Armand D'Angour, the author of the article "Plato and play. Taking education seriously in ancient Greece" (2013: 293–307), back to ancient Greece. It was linked there—through the word *παιδιά* (paidiá 'playful engagement'),—with the verb

παίζειν (paizein ‘to play’) as etymologically related to the noun *παῖς* (paîs ‘child’).

As D’Angour suggests, being engaged in an exhausting work, the partakers of the Greek rural culture have initially associated play rather with some activities of children than with serious activities of adults (2013: 294–297). Besides, as he points out, there are some formal and semantic convergences between the notions of play and education, which have been correspondingly expressed through the Old Greek words *παιδιά* (paidiá) and *παιδεία* (paideia).

While reading D’Angour (2013: 294–307), one may learn that Western culture has owed to the ancient Greeks a vast array of connotations awaken by the concept of play. Already in the archaic Greece, between the eighth and fifth centuries B.C., participants of religious ceremonies and social meetings used to play games and/or music. They sang songs, played the lyre, competed in composing impromptu verses, word games, riddles, etc. The children of Greek aristocrats were trained in gymnastic competitions and verbal contests. In the classical period, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., music, dance, sporting, artistic competitions and the passionate quest for intricate knowledge were acknowledged to be modes and forms of play. From that time on, one speaks also about playing a part on stage or a role in society or government.

Apparently, the word *manipulation* was also associated with play already in Athens of the fifth century B.C., where political rhetoric and drama developed. As D’Angour (2013: 297) admits, the comedies of Aristophanes (c. 450–c. 388 B.C.) represent “the most amusing instances of play with words,

scenes, and characters" known in ancient times. All in all, even though there is no clear-cut distinction between play and seriousness, the creative writer resembles somewhat a child at play.

Among other authors, who have been probing into ways of perception of playfulness in antiquity, one should mention Thomas Banchich. In his allegorically formulated article "A gag at the bottom of a bowl? Perceptions of playfulness in archaic and classical Greece", Banchich remarks that during the superseding "millennia, cultural norms and contexts" have been "in some ways vastly different from our own" and what is more that "the demands of teasing out the force and significance of ancient Greek words and images make the problem of giving a meaning to *paidia*" (2017: 332), which is quite unresolvable today. In order to at least partially produce the image of play, Banchich proposes to consider its anthropomorphization, in the Greek mythology, through *Παιδιά* (Paidiá), the patroness of amusement and festivities, belonging to the retinue of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty.

The Role of Play in the Universe of Humans and Animals

The interest among European thinkers in playful activities of living organisms that result from their mental endowments, or inborn instinctual drives, was mostly evoked by the classical tradition in education, with a special emphasis on ancient Greek and Roman heritage in literature, culture and philosophy. In the ethological perspective, play is seen as a kind of human

comportment, or animal behavior, usually repeated by the force of habit, which allows the players to get in touch with one another for the sake of mutual entertainment. In the case of the young, play is assumed to be their preparation for life through the imitation of reality.

Bearing in mind the distinction between contemplative and locomotive activities as forms of plays, it will be rightful to ponder here to at least three thinkers, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Friedrich Schiller 1759–1862), and Karl Groos (1861–1946) in particular. In modern philosophy, the concept of play was used by Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) to designate the interactions of man, such as consciousness, cognition, thinking, understanding, experiencing, acknowledged as the prerequisite of human growth.

Departing from the concept of the purposiveness of nature, while searching for the principles of judging beauty in painting and other visual arts, Kant has tried to explain how imagination and understanding complement each other. In his view, just the spontaneous and harmonious play of the cognitive powers is the basis for the feelings of pleasure of the individual. Being aware of the subjective character of aesthetic judgments, Kant (1790, cited after English translation 1987: 62) deliberated, *inter alia*, whether man becomes conscious, in a judgment of taste, of a reciprocal harmony between his cognitive powers, aesthetically, that is, "through mere inner sense and sensation", or rather intellectually, that is, through consciousness of the intentional activity by which these powers are brought into play.

Schiller has argued in his "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen" (1795) that play is typical of man as a being not

contented with the satisfaction of his natural needs (cf. especially Letter XXVII in the English translation of 2010). For him, art and play being indispensable in the aesthetic education of man, treated both as a citizen of the state and a free individual of the country, are significantly different from the work itself.

Considering aesthetic experiences of humans, Schiller has distinguished two opposite kinds of instincts, *der Stofftrieb* 'the material instinct', called also *der sinnliche Trieb* 'the sensuous instinct', conforming to the rules of nature, and *der Formtrieb* 'the formal instinct', related to the rules of reason. Since both the sensuous and the formal instincts integrate body and mind of humans while keeping them physically and morally in balance (cf. Letters XIII, XIV, and XV in 2010), so there must be also, according to Schiller, a third kind of instinct, which is responsible for the harmony of feeling and reason, namely *der ästhetische Spieltrieb* 'the aesthetic instinct of play'.

In Schiller's depiction, what essentially distinguishes man from the remaining part of nature, is that "he makes form enter into his enjoyment, he keeps in view the forms of the objects which satisfy his desires, he has not only increased his pleasure in extent and intensity, but he has also ennobled it in mode and species" (quoted after 2010: 66). In his belief, the wasteful nature can afford not to make use of the surplus of energy and materials. Some anthropomorphic examples of play in nature provided by Schiller in Letter XXVII, such as, *inter alia*, the roar of the lion, whose "exuberant force rejoices in itself, showing itself without an object", the flit of the insect that expresses rejoicing at life in the sunlight, or the song of the bird, etc., may testify to the correctness of his argument. What is more, as Schiller put it poetically,

similarly to the animate world, “even in inanimate nature a luxury of strength and a latitude of determination are shown, which in this material sense might be styled play”. He had thereby in mind a tree that “produces numberless germs that are abortive without developing”, and “sends forth more roots, branches and leaves, organs of nutrition, than are used for the preservation of the species” (cited and quoted after 2010: 67).

The next scholar appropriate for the topic of discussion is Groos known through his works of 1896, *Die Spiele der Thiere*, and 1899, *Die Spiele der Menschen*, (cf. 1896 and 1912 /1901/ [1899]), in which he expounded his theory of play as an activity performed instinctively, without serious goals, even though essential to the life of animals and humans. Combining the achievement of evolutionary biology and psychology, this German philosopher believed that, in its many manifestations, play fulfils the same functions in the animal and human worlds, as far as it prepares the individual organisms to proper behaviors in their mature life.

Significantly enough, Groos himself (cited after 1912: v) admitted that it was his interest in aesthetics which first evoked his fascination for the subject of play. Exhibiting psychosomatic mechanisms of human perception, he described the nature of playful behaviors from the viewpoint of operations that the sensory apparatus of humans can perform, namely, being capable of sensations of contact, temperature, taste, smell, hearing, both receptive and productive sound-play, as well as sensations of sight, especially, the perception of brightness, color, form, and movement.

With reference to the appreciation of beauty in nature, art, and other domains, Groos (1912: 60–67) was convinced, among the other things, of the dominance of the faculty for recognizing (perceiving) the visible form of objects and hence, its higher biological value in comparison to the very important faculty for recognizing the color or brilliancy. According to Groos, not only adults, but also small children, have an extraordinary capacity for illusion in the observation of form; therefore, they are able of aesthetic enjoyment.

Not contenting himself with describing the instances of the playful use of movement apparatus (bodily organs), either for a destructive (analytical) or constructive (synthetic) relocation of foreign bodies, exercising endurance, throwing and/or catching games, etc., Groos (1912: 121–158) examined also instances of the playful use of higher by humans. In addition, he described also aspects of human intellectual playacts, such as memory, imagination, for example, evoking illusion and transforming the contents of memory, including teasing mendacities, to subsequently move on to attention, and reason, amusing oneself with passions, especially the pleasurable sensations and the feelings accompanying physical pain, mental suffering, surprise, and fear, as well as the mixed feeling of suspension between pain and pleasure.

Considering the multiplicity of games in different cultures, Groos sketched the image of the player, from the viewpoint of general tendencies of humans to bring the inborn predispositions of their organisms into action. These predispositions involve the faculties of observation and imitation enabling an

individual player to simulate the respective movements from the surround world.

Whereas the play of a child is mostly characterized by external imitation, the prevailing part of aesthetic involvement of an adult amounts, according to Groos, even to an inner form of simulation through which a given individual puts him- or herself, while using his or her imaginative powers, into an observed object, attaining this way a sort of inward affinity to its mental image (cf. 1912: especially 322). Groos' positivistic approach to play evolved, in fact, simultaneously with current viewpoints of those thinkers whose ideas anticipated the rise of semiotic and linguistic turn in modern philosophy triggering off corresponding trends in phenomenologically oriented studies on human relations.

The Pure Play as a Mental Sign-Production for (A-)"Musement"

Before considering the human predilection for play in the spirit of pragmatic semiotics of Peirce, it is proper to bring out his understanding of the nature of cognition regarding man as an acting being, and more precisely, a being who thinks for the tasks of his action. It was Peirce who argued, that the conduct of man, being usually in conformity with his believes, sometimes causes his curiosity, surprise, and doubt, which constitute the origin of an inquiry that may, in turn, facilitate to reject the established, old beliefs, and lead to the creation of new beliefs on the basis of knowledge which man already possesses.

Worth exposing is Peirce's claim that new beliefs, as the result of mental operations, which start from a random, arbitrary arrangement of beliefs shaping the habits of action, are always closer to the truth than the old ones. This claim is especially visible in his statement that an "[i]nquiry properly carried on will reach some definite and fixed result or approximate indefinitely toward that limit" (1935 /1896/, CP 1.485), by which he meant that even though the truth is only a certain ideal, unattainable in any finite time through consideration (or experimentation), the search for it must be seen as a perfectly self-controlled process.

Peirce devoted his attention to the spontaneous activity of human mind in which it engages in a purposeless pure play, viz., musement in his essay "The neglected argument for the reality of God" (1935 /1908/, CP 6.452–491). In his reasoning, such a mental activity, the aim of which is to find most simplest solutions and most probable explanations rather than to experience aesthetic enjoyment, amounts to abductive inferences which the individual conducts on the basis of his/her experiences, including observations.

The interests of Peirce in thinking processes, which came to light, *inter alia*, in his deliberations on theological questions of the reality of God, led him to clearly articulate his view that the human mind is not infallible, though attuned to truth. Accordingly, although the mental life of the individual does not amount to direct experiencing by him or her the external world, as Peirce assumed, he or she is capable of thinking, reasoning, inferring, drawing conclusions, etc. According to Peirce (CP 6.455), pure ideas that inhabit human

minds, actual objects and beings that perform the function of signs, constitute the first, the second and the third universes of human experience respectively.

The play in a pure sense, as a lively occupation of human mind, which it takes up of its own free will and without any constraint, comes about—as Peirce (CP 6.458) claimed—between these three universes. It assumes different forms, from aesthetic contemplation, the acts of imagination, moral cogitation, wondering at something in one of the universes and/or connections between the universes. Besides, it also leads to speculations pertaining to the causes of such connections. Peirce depicted the nature of pure play, distinguishing phases in it, in the following way:

> It begins passively enough with drinking in the impression of some nook in one of the three Universes. But impression soon passes into attentive observation, observation into musing, musing into a lively give-and-take of communion between self and self. If one's observations and reflections are allowed to specialize themselves too much, the Play will be converted into scientific study; and that cannot be pursued in odd half-hours (CP 6.459).

For Peirce, normative sciences are ordered hierarchically. Specifically, logic as a science, explaining how to conduct research and teaching how to conduct faultless reasoning, is superordinate to ethics, which deals with self-controlled and voluntary behavior, and which is, in turn, subordinate to aesthetics, which deals with what is admirable, praiseworthy, laudable, etc. Referring, in this particular context of logic, to the reasoning processes of human individuals, one has to admit that, while making inferences, they do not

always follow the principles of formal argumentation proceeding in conformity with well-established rules. They mostly engage in informal, yet rational thinking, i.e., rather in the so-called argument, which is not controlled by the self of the muser, but through the association of thought as signs. The argument as a reasonable thinking allows the individual to come to definite beliefs irrespective of definitely formulated premises.

Dealing with standards of proper thinking, Peirce drew conclusions pertaining to mental abilities of humans. Firstly, humans, while solving problems, riddles, etc. prefer and/or naturally come to common-sense solutions which are easier for them, not in terms of formal logic, but because they are prompt by instinct. Secondly, beliefs and convictions of humans fulfill normative functions in this sense that they determine their aims and goals, as well as values, such as beauty, good and truth, which steer their desires and behaviors. Thirdly, it is the normative sciences which differentiate between good and evil in cognition, actions, feelings, sensations, desires, etc. But these actions, feelings, sensation or desires of thinking individuals are, at least to some degrees, controlled by themselves. Fourthly, it is the logic which investigates the correct reasoning that can be accepted by somebody who tries to uncover the truth; nevertheless, people themselves reason properly/correctly or wrongly/incorrectly. And finally, people, possessing their own individual experiences, conduct their reasoning singlehandedly and independently of any principles of scientific logic. They are able to control their passions and attune their communicative behavior to ideals accepted by them voluntarily. Therefore, while their common-sense thinking is subordinate to individual

experiences, beliefs and values, their natural instincts are practically determined by the selection of their pragmatic means in interpersonal communication.

Thus, bearing in mind the semiotic nature of thinking processes, Peirce spoke in favor of focusing on the concepts with respect to their true meaning which must be disclosed not only through a mere recognition of "the concept under every disguise, through extensive familiarity with instances of it", and "an abstract logical analysis of it into its ultimate elements, or as complete an analysis as we can compass". According to Peirce, it is also important to "discover and recognize just what general habits of conduct a belief in the truth of the concept (of any conceivable subject, and under any conceivable circumstances) would reasonably develop" (quoted and cited after CP 6.481). The examination of the meaning (viz. truth) must thus go beyond the study of the form-and-content-related situational variation of particular concepts, and encompasses the verification of its usability by the individual(s).

The Meditating Role of Subject in Transcendental Phenomenology

The matter of contemplative meditation, being experienced by the self-aware subject, was explored by Edmund Husserl in his *Méditations cartésienne* of 1931, a collection of lectures (cf. 1960 [1931]), which he delivered at the Collège de Sorbonne in Paris in 1929, recapitulating the guidelines on the study of consciousness elaborated by himself (published considerably later than Peirce's essay on play). Independently of the erudite heritage of Peirce,

Husserl focused on conscious experiences, perception, remembering, imagining, judging and valuing as intentional mental processes. Exactly taken, meditation, improving human cognition, was for him akin to the methods of phenomenology that detect the essential structures and contents of consciousness. It should be therefore used by philosophers who must seek for knowledge in reason itself.

Throughout his lectures, Husserl justified the anteriority and superiority of the thinking (meditating) ego, that is, the transcendental-phenomenological ego (subject) in relation to the being of the world (cited after 1960: 18). What he attempted to prove, was that conducting meditations must prevent the philosopher from accepting the existence of both the objective world as such and the objectively apperceived facts, as facts of internal experiences, to exclude them "from the field of judgment". As Husserl insisted, the meditating ego of the person should take an attitude that implies the reduction of his or her own natural ego, that is, the state of psychological self-experience should cease in consequence to the transcendental-phenomenological self-experience (quoted and cited after 1960: 25–26).

In the view of Husserl, philosophers cannot disregard the fact that consciousness possesses the following properties: it is subjective, as it is a consciousness of a subject aware of both the object of consciousness and consciousness itself; it is intentional, as it has a content; and it implies intuition. Phenomenology, in turn, is a science of essence(s) of things, exactly of that which is identical in all variations of the thing being investigated and detectable in appearances (phenomena). The improvement of mechanisms of

thinking through removing doubts from reasoning is, according to Husserl, possible thanks to the elimination of that what does not have any significance with regard to the essence of things, especially such phenomenological techniques, as reduction, ideation and essential intuition. As Quintin Lauer, in his book *Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect* (1965 /1958/: 58–59) has noticed, it is due to the ideation that phenomenology must be called as "meditative". Ideation, concerned with grasping the essences of things as ideal, consists "in submitting the original perception or imagination to a series of 'free variations'" and allows "to 'see', to perceive the identical element underlying all variations, actual as well as possible". As Lauer (1965: 62) continues, it is the intuition that facilitates "a rational penetration into the data of experience", because thanks to it, techniques recommended for phenomenologists cease to be "independent factors in an over-all process known as 'intentional constitution'".

Husserl's understanding of phenomenological investigations as a perfectly controlled process justifying itself spontaneously, brings to mind Peirce's notion of play. As to the instinct, described by Peirce, it is comparable with the intuition, which was appreciated by Husserl with respect to its role in the constitution of things. Both philosophers stressed the relatedness between the human beings as musing or meditating subjects moving about in their playworlds.

Towards an Idea of Human Playworld

The phenomenological concept of playworld was coined by Eugen Fink, a German philosopher whose works constitute a significant contribution to the experience-of-happiness-related aesthetics. As such, it bears resembles to the concept of lifeworld, in German *Lebenswelt*, introduced as the main notion of mundane phenomenology by Husserl, in his lectures (held at Prague in 1935 and Vienna in 1936, first published in 1954) "Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie" (cf. 1970 [1954]).

As specified by Fink in one of his publications under the title *Oase des Glücks. Gedanken zu einer Ontologie des Spiels* play is a phenomenon of personal and social life (cf. 2016 [1957]: 15). Experienced directly and individually, it is known commonly and collectively; hence, everybody is familiarized with its multiple forms from the first-person perspective. As a matter of fact, human individuals experience play, in Fink's outlook, as a possibility of their own activity in the social lifeworld, understood as their own playworld:

> In the projection of a playworld the one who plays conceals himself as the creator of this 'world' He loses himself in his creation, plays a role, and has, within the playworld, playworldly things that surround him and playworldly fellow human beings. What is misleading about this is that we imaginatively take these playworldly things themselves to be 'actual things'; indeed, in the playworld, we

even repeat the difference between actuality and appearance in various ways. (Fink 2016: 25).

Thus, the essence of human playing is determined by the awareness of the player of its doubleness and the ability to distinguish between actuality and appearance. Fink believed that every sort of playing produces a playworld.

Compliant with Fink, the world is, on the one hand, reflected in play, and, on the other, it offers a proof of itself in play. Playing in the actual world, the individual attains a realm with its own inner space and time that gains a foothold in real things.

Concluding Remarks

The terms *creator*, *actor*, *consumer*, *participant* point out, in this particular context, to both the causative role of semiotic selves engaged as physical persons in play at different levels of semiosis and (mutual) dependencies and relations between them as mental subjects initiating and/or (trans)forming respective chains of signs. In spite of/or owing to their natural endowment, while "playing", they develop and/or reveal their inventiveness and creativity and adopt certain (social) roles and (communicative) strategies. Ceasing to be outside observers and becoming members of groups, they can make profit and/or experience loss as participants of (a)musement.

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