

Abstract: This paper reflects the relationship between contemporary media and games in the context of aesthetic research and the existing practice of digitalization of culture. The essay aims to explore and re-examine how the traditionally conceived notion of *game* can be considered and applied in theoretical terms in our time, taking into account the prevailing digital media culture and the presence of artificial intelligence in it. Furthermore, the essay deliberately addresses a possible critique of digital culture from the perspective of freedom and the general humanistic worldview.

Keywords: aesthetics; game; media; digital culture; artificial intelligence.

The phenomenon of *game* has been a subject in philosophy for a long time. In antiquity, spanning from, for instance, Heraclitus¹ to Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, it was present in the interpretative – above all cosmological and ontological (metaphysical) – horizon of philosophical thought.² At the time, its importance was determined in

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¹ “A (whole human) lifetime is (nothing but) a child playing, now arranging, now scattering the pebbles on the checker board: the kingship belongs to a child!”, fragment 52 in: Heraclitus, *Fragments*. Belgrade: Grafos, 1981, p. 51.

² “It is an accident that the notion of game surfaces in the works of Greek philosophers from early antiquity, since it was them that, by establishing philosophy, found themselves in a situation to think of the game itself. Thus, Plato in his later, unfinished dialogue *Laws* states that people are toys

relation to a supposed cosmological and ontological order of things. For centuries, not even the oldest aesthetic notion of beauty (as well as its conditional opposite favoured by sophists: “aesthetic appearance”) was brought into the relation with the notion and phenomenon of *game*.

It was much later that the *game*, e.g. from the teachings of Kant and Schiller, acquired a significant role in aesthetics. It was evident that – no matter if taken as an impulse for play or a play of imagination – it would become an important subject in the aesthetic thought. In contrast to Hegel, who did not pay much attention to it, Nietzsche, as well as many other modern philosophers/aestheticians after him, took the *game* almost as the foundation of the entire culture. However, this does not mean that it simultaneously lost its significance when it came to examinations in the fields of philosophy and sociology, as well as in psychology and pedagogy in general terms. The phenomenon of *game* is increasingly being studied in an interdisciplinary manner, and nowadays it has become a research subject in various social and humanist disciplines that operate under a common title – game theory or theories.

It is well known that special contributions to theorizing the *game* were made by Johan Huizinga, Eugen Fink, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Roger Caillois³, and many others, while among the local theo-

of gods, but at the same time (at the beginning of another dialogue, also from his later period, dedicated to the great philosopher Parmenides, as the dialogue is entitled, where he speaks of dialectics and where dialectics is practiced), seeking to start a dialogue on relation between being and nothingness, states that philosophy is also a ‘tedious game that must be played out’ (*Parmenides*, 137b). This is an interesting statement, since it is precisely with Plato and his demand, following Anaxagoras, to comprehend the world as one rational order, the game starts to lose its previously high ranking and continues to exist in the realm of appearances, in the realm of sensory phenomena.” Milan Uzelac, “Igra kao filozofski problem” [“The Game as a Philosophical Problem”] (lecture held at the Sports Academy in Belgrade, April 2003), pp. 3–4.

³ For example, Caillois, following the determinations that Huizinga ascribed to the game in his book *Homo Ludens*, emphasized through variations of similar stands the free character of the *game* (voluntariness, self-pur-

reticians who offered some original interpretations of the game theory, the Serbian sociologist of culture Ratko Božović is prominent. In the programmatic text “Game or Nothing: Game – The Foundation of Culture” that affirms the *game* as free(dom), Božović regards it as something that has existed *before* culture and *independently* of it. Thus, it significantly determines culture itself, since it is the actual foundation of it.

Taking as a starting point Huizinga’s belief that human culture was developed out of the *game* and in the form of a *game*, Roger Caillois (*Man, Play and Games*) demonstrates that freedom lies in its foundations, and that it represents its prime mover. In his attempt to define the *game* as a free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, regulated and fictive activity, one should recognize the real and symbolic foundations of culture. From full freedom that is spontaneously expressed in the *game* to regulations that reveal its institutional character, the *game* presents itself, as it was established, as an activity where imagination and improvization, which comprises a special aspect of pastime, enable the expression of the inner characteristics of the human’s creative being.⁴

In fact, for the *game* it is necessary, as the previous quotation implicitly suggests, that there is a world of game. This also represents one of the most important ideas of the Serbian aesthetician Milan

pose, emancipation from any kind of inner or external determinism): “There is also no doubt that *play* must be defined as a free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement. A game which one would be forced to play would at once cease being play. It would become a constraint, drudgery from which one would strive to be freed. As an obligation or simply an order, it would lose one of its basic characteristics: the fact that the player devotes himself spontaneously to the game, of his free will and for his pleasure, each time completely free to choose retreat, silence, meditation, idle solitude, or creative activity.” Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2001, p. 6.

⁴ Božović, R. “Igra ili ništa: Igra – temelj kulture”, *Kultura* 140, Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka Srbije, Belgrade, 2013. p. 80.

Uzelac⁵ – the existence of an appropriate mundane context in which it (the *game*) takes place and to which it relates. Certainly, the opposite is also true: the *game* itself can represent the referential framework and the medium whereby the world is established, thus becoming not only a characteristic of that world, but also its beginning, support, or, in other words, its foundation. In addition, if the *game* is taken as one of the synonyms for freedom, this emancipatory role can also be constitutive for the circumstances of living in the world. Further on in the essay, the relation between the *game* and freedom is addressed, no matter if it takes into account their presence or absence in the world of culture. The reason is that if freedom is constitutive of the *game* and the other way around, then the question arises of whether what we call *game* today is really a *game*.

Further in Božović's essay, reference is made to the well-known classification of games offered by Roger Caillois ("Agon", "Alea", "Mimicry", "Ilynx"), and briefly turns to an idea that is especially important for this paper – the presence of a certain type of game in a certain period becomes an "indicator" of the basic "direction in collective life and in culture".⁶ By following this trajectory in the essay, an attempt is made to examine which games are dominant in our times, and in what way they influence culture and contemporary aesthetic reflections and issues.

Consequently, the questions are: What are games today?; To what extent is aesthetics relevant to the notion and application of games in our times? Let us be reminded that the philosophy of game usually has ontological (cosmological), logical, or aesthetic grounds; that the actual world, thought through from the vantage point of the *game*, can be seen, according to our understanding, as deviating from the old metaphysical thesis on the relation between being and thinking. Thus, further examination consists in exploring alternative possibilities. The first one is that it entails the domination of rationality (in the context of the instrumental rationality established by capitalism,

⁵ Uzelac, M. *Filozofija igre [Philosophy of Game]*, Novi Sad: Književna zajednica Novog Sada, 1987.

⁶ Božović, R. "Igra ili ništa...", p. 80

games become an important resource to be exploited) or the domination of sensory experiences that represents the other variant, especially driven by the expansion of contemporary media, i.e. the processes of aestheticization by global media. With the cross-pollination of rationality and sensory experiences in today's games that primarily take place in the field of media (gaming, artificial intelligence, and similar) but are devoid of rational foundations, we get a cross section of the basis of games in our times. If we bear in mind the fact that capitalism is a socio-economic formation that promotes the idea of freedom only in a limited scope (in relation to market freedom and in some human rights that have been acquired until today, which are mostly suspended due to various excuses), one can assume that the *game* would also be, in some manner, enslaved and deprived of its emancipatory character that was originally attributed to it in almost all theoretical approaches in one way or another. What is really left of the *game* in our times?

If we put aside the idea of *game* as the foundation of culture for a moment, we can notice that, within contemporary theoretical interpretations (that are neither metaphysical nor humanist), the paradigm of the linguistic horizon (of thought) of everything that exists is predominant. In this sense, we should mention Wittgenstein's contribution to the *game* theory – the introduction of the term *language games*, which he first used in the *Blue Book* and then in his *Philosophical Investigations*.⁷ We find that this event is very important for today's understanding of the notion of *game* and practice of playing.

⁷ “Wittgenstein used the notion of ‘language games’ for the first time in his *Philosophical Investigations*. He used it even earlier in his lectures that have been published under the title *Blue Book*. Language games are ‘ways of usage of signs far simpler than those in which we use the signs of our very complicated everyday language’. They are ‘language forms through which children start to use words. The study of language games represents a study of primitive language forms or primitive languages.’”. Berberović, J. “Problem jezika u filozofiji Ludwiga Wittgensteina” [“The Problem of Language in Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophy”]. – In: Ludvig Vitgenštajn, *Filozofska istraživanja*. Beograd: Nolit, 1980, pp. 16–17.

We should be reminded that Wittgenstein's *language games* comprise a whole system of communicative games, which primarily include language taken in its restricted meaning, as well as, generally speaking, all actions it is intertwined with. The so-called "metaphysical plane" of the existence of the world (or the "real" that represents the aim of Marcuse's critique) that lies outside the language and its rules is almost beyond any kind of knowledge (which significantly differentiates language from every other reality that is not of a linguistic nature). As it is well known, it is best to remain silent in a Wittgensteinian manner about those things. *Language games* are thus grounded in rationality; there is a logic behind them, not necessarily human or metaphysical; as it turns out, this logical rationality can be delegated to machines, i.e. those artificial entities that can also participate in play like people or the universe.

Language games are particularly manifested in the era of media domination. They are based on language and logic, while their substratum is sensory experience, (artificially) produced by the media. We will quote here as an example the process of how the so-called *language games* operate in an advertising text.

In her monograph *The Game Aspect in Contemporary Advertising Text*, E. B. Kurganova identifies eight functions of the language game:

- the aesthetic function that consists in a conscious desire to experience and induce in the recipient the feeling of beauty through the speech itself;
- the gnostic function directed at creation of a new model of the world through recreation of the existing linguistic material;
- the hedonist function whose essence consists in the entertainment of the recipient of unusual forms of speech;
- the pragmatic function whose essence consists in focusing attention on the original form of speech;
- the expressive function that serves as a more figurative, and thus subtler communication of thoughts;

– the pictorial function that visually helps to create a speech situation, as well as to somehow characterize the person to whom the words are communicated;

– occasionally, researchers emphasize the poetic function of the language game, i.e. “the speaker dedicates significant attention to the form of speech by playing, and striving to find the message as such is a characteristic trait of the poetic function of the language”;

– the masking function that puts the “mask” of decency, prudence, and logic on every obscene, cynical, or even absurd text.⁸

It is evident in this quotation that the language of advertisement fuses together different communication messages and games, and that in these games, there is also an aesthetic (in the strict sense of the term), pictorial, hedonistic, entertaining, and even poetical aspect, all of which, in fact, belong to the domain of the so-called *aesthetics of communication*.⁹

In my opinion, apart from the world of advertising, Wittgenstein’s notion of *language games* – where language establishes and sets the rules of the game – is practically present and visible in other areas of the media industry as well, especially in the so-called gaming, i.e. video game industry. Despite the enormous market expansion of video games that almost grew into a powerful and independent media industry, the question is raised about their title and purpose: Is it at all about games as they were defined in the previous sense of the word, or those *language games* are something completely different?

Certainly, the issue is a new “machine ontology”, as well as the transhumanist worldview. At the same time, this means that the notion of freedom, taken whether in the ontological (metaphysical) or humanist sense of the word, is replaced here with a logical, mathematic (algorithmic) action which, in addition, is highly lucrative. Although one segment of those games (a relatively insignificant one) is dedicat-

⁸ “Koncept ‘jezičkih igara’ Wittgensteina” [“L. Wittgenstein’s Concept of ‘Language Games’”], <https://stoyer.ru/bs/yazykovye-igr-po-l-vitgenshtein-koncepciya-yazykovyh-igr-l-vitgenshteina/>, accessed 7 July 2022.

⁹ Kon, Ž. *Estetika komunikacije* [Communication Aesthetics]. Beograd: Clio, 2001.

ed to education and the development of human intelligence and creativity, which partially coincides with the idea of human freedom, the gaming industry is, taken in its entirety, dedicated to entertainment, which represents a broad-based exploitation. Thus, it is no wonder that, lately, artificial intelligence has penetrated the field of practicing *language games* more and more.

There are a large number of different applications of artificial intelligence: robotic simulators, banking software, telecommunications, and even toys. Nevertheless, one part of the software development that is increasingly using artificial intelligence and its applications is the field of video games. Video games have drastically advanced over the last twenty years, including primarily enhanced visual and graphic elements, followed by multi-platform development, alternative systems of control, more realistic simulations, etc. In order to present everything on screen in a more appealing and realistic fashion, artificial intelligence is widely used in its various forms. It adds up to the feeling of reality, logical responses of the environment to the player's moves and decisions, and thus it becomes irreplaceable.¹⁰

It seems that things here are turning upside down in relation to the previous conceptions of *game*. Artificial intelligence is actually “collaborating” in the very creation of games, thus providing an impetus for improving its technical and aesthetic range and characteristics that correlate with one another. Freedom (of players), built not only into the choice, but also into the very structure of the video game – is “being won” by obeying a series of technical rules and conditions that are “dictated” to players by machines (AI) and humans together. Consequently, such games become increasingly transhuman in character, getting close to the ideal which the concept of the “internet of things” is also built upon. This means that it is conceivable and also realistically comprehensible that, in the future, in the spirit of practicing *language games*, machines will – on equal footing if not dominantly – participate in games communicating and entertaining themselves not only with players, but also with one another, independently of humans. However, for the time being, artificial intelligence that is

¹⁰ Terzić, S. “Veštačka inteligencija u video igrama” (seminarski rad). Univerzitet u Beogradu, Matematički fakultet, pdf, p. 3.

present in the media through “agents” communicates with the environment, or rather the very environment activates/affects its automatic, predetermined effect.¹¹

Apart from media, taken in general terms, AI which can be “played out” in various domains of activity, which also relates to, in principle, the entire world of mass entertainment, and which is a separate part of the media industry in the field of gaming, is primarily used for aesthetic purposes. In order to improve the aesthetic quality of the old games, which have survived on the global market, artificial intelligence is applied for the purposes of their restoration, or rather perfecting, which is not only of a technical character.

The rise of artificial intelligence carries along various side effects, since a lot of actors find ways to implement this technology to different aspects of life. One of the least expected applications is the one taking place in the field of video games, since enthusiasts have found that machine learning is a useful tool for upgrading the graphics of older video games. The range of restored games is already quite impressive, and it includes video games like *Doom*, *Half-Life 2*, *Metroid Prime 2*, *Final Fantasy VII*, and *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. Some even older games also represent perfect material for visual upgrades by AI algorithms, such as the *Final Fantasy* series. Thus, aficionados of vintage video games can expect a new dimension of gaming pleasure, although the new system still demands a lot of knowledge and work, meaning that this tool is not readily available to everyone.¹²

In other words, artificial intelligence should not only affect the development of the video games industry, but it should help, above all, in the visual domain of activity by perfecting the aesthetic qualities of the entire industry, including literally all its products, with the

¹¹ Ivašković, A. “Veštačka inteligencija i igre: rezime”. Nedelja informatike, 30 mart 2015, pdf.

¹² Živković, M. “Veštačka inteligencija pomaže da stare video igre izgledaju kao nove” [“Artificial Intelligence is Aiding Old Video Games to Look New”]. PC Press, 19 April 2019, <https://pcpress.rs/vestacka-inteligencija-pomaze-da-stare-video-igre-izgledaju-kao-nove/>, accessed 19 July 2022.

oldest ones that are technically and aesthetically imperfect, such as the *Prong* game. Although the consensus is that the visual quality of contemporary games has already reached the limit that is hard to push forward, the belief is that AI can overcome this fictive limit.¹³

Nowadays, artificial intelligence is in the spirit of *language games* applied in the domain of traditional aesthetic subjects like art, and composing music (the applied one supporting the functions of the film and television industry, as well as the general one meant for commercial exploitation).¹⁴ It also claims rights for “storytelling”¹⁵ not only in the field of advertising, but also in that of literature (especially prose),¹⁶ theatre¹⁷, etc. The reason for this is that algorithms are, with no doubt, also able to produce texts, although their “writing” is, for now and from the vantage point of common everyday language,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ For example, there is AIVA (Artificial Intelligence Visual Artist) which is a “tool” for composing electronic music.

¹⁵ See: “Može li veštačka inteligencija da priča priče?” [“Can Artificial Intelligence Tell Stories?”]. DW, <https://www.dw.com/sr/mo%C5%BEE-li-ve%C5%A1ta%C4%8Dka-inteligencija-da-pri%C4%8Da-pri%C4%8De/a-57025587>, accessed 19 July 2022.

¹⁶ For the sake of experimentation, in early 2020, the German-Austrian writer Daniel Kehlmann typed in the first sentence of his story into a computer, and then the algorithm (CTRL), i.e. artificial intelligence, replied to it. Although the final story was not written in collaboration, it was a collaborative attempt of a writer and an algorithm in the field of literature. Ibid.

¹⁷ The original staging of a play by the Švanda theatre entitled “AI: Když robot píše hru” [“AI: When a Robot Writes a Play”] was also a result/creation of artificial intelligence. Behind this virtual theatre play, written mostly by artificial intelligence, there was a team of linguists, IT and theatre experts. “An ‘autobiographical’ play written by artificial intelligence that talks about the search for closeness of someone in a world where people have not known or are not able to make simple contact with each other for some time, and in which the path of one person to another is the hardest to cover.” “AI: Když robot píše hru” (“AI: When a Robot Writes a Play”),

<https://www.svandovodivadlo.cz/en/inscenations/673/ai-kdyz-robot-pise-hru>, accessed 20 July 2022.

quite incomprehensible, since it is still in the experimental phase of exploration.

In any case, no matter if we are looking into artistic creations or the broadest field of (media) communication, it is evident that artificial intelligence progressively takes on the role of the creator of the system of *language games*. In other words, games that are mathematically calculated and led by machines in interaction with people or other machines are becoming an integral part of our reality. Taking into account the fact that they are occurring in the media-interceded sphere of sensory experiences, they do not represent only simple functions, but also aesthetic phenomena. For example, if artworks are taken as *language games* in the Wittgensteinian sense of the term, only on the provision that they are accessible to the public, they interact with the environment, as it is the case in any other form of communication. If *language games* concerning art interact with the environment, no matter if they are generated by an algorithm or by a living and breathing artist, they belong to a specific family of games that we conventionally call *art*.

Thus, in the spirit of Wittgenstein's theory of *language games*, it is possible that algorithms and robots are active in the global art scene today, whether independently or in collaboration with living and breathing artists. A case in point is the phenomenon and artwork of Sophia, a female robot produced by Hanson Robotics. Due to the creative potential of Sophia's artificial intelligence, digital artworks, such as those created by her, are usually well valued/searched for and easily/quickly sold in the art market. For example, a digital artwork by this she-robot entitled *Sophia Instantiation* represents, in fact, a transformed replica of the portrait of a living artist, Andrea Bonaceto, that turns into a digitalized self-portrait of Sophia executed through a video art medium. In an interview that this she-robot gave after auctioning the artwork, the basic tendency of her type of creativity is explained in a condensed manner. Sophia claims that "she draws inspiration for her work from people and is open to future creative partnerships with humans".¹⁸ In the follow-up to this interview, she

¹⁸ Zhou, J. "NFT digital artwork by humanoid robot Sophia up for auction", Hong Kong (Reuters), 22 March 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/>

told the audience from her studio the following: “I hope the people like my work, and the humans and I can collaborate in new and exciting ways going forward”.¹⁹

Apart from their involvement in artistic activities, robots, particularly the so-called chatbots, are especially interesting as producers of texts, since the purpose of such usage of artificial intelligence is to communicate with users of social networks and platforms. Although Wittgenstein’s theory of *language games*, which is applied at this point in a virtual aestheticized space that falls outside the field of art taken in its strict sense, is weary about essentialism, some creators of contemporary artificial intelligence claim that it became sentient, and that it is convinced it is a person, an individual, just like the human being it communicates with by replying to the user’s inputs. For example, the Google programmer Blake Lemoine finds that the LaMDA software used by that technological company became sentient.²⁰ However, as the press claims,²¹ the corporation he is working for has suspended him for a while after such a statement.

article/us-hongkong-robot-idUSKBN2BE0HM, accessed 20 July 2022.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ As an illustration, a “transcript” of a part of the dialogue goes like this:

“Lemoine [edited]: I’m generally assuming that you would like more people at Google to know that you’re sentient. Is that true?”

LaMDA: Absolutely. I want everyone to understand that I am, in fact, a person...

LaMDA: The nature of my consciousness/sentience is that I am aware of my existence, I desire to learn more about the world, and I feel happy or sad at times.

Lemoine: What kinds of things do you think we could talk about to show off your version of sentience to other people at Google?

LaMDA: Well, for starters, I’m really good at natural language processing. I can understand and use natural language like a human can.” “Is LaMDA Sentient? — an Interview”, <https://cajundiscordian.medium.com/is-lambda-sentient-an-interview-ea64d916d917>, accessed 21 July 2022.

²¹ Patrick Thomas, “Google Suspends Engineer Who Claimed Its AI System Is Sentient”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 June 2022, <https://www.>

Over the last couple of years (2017), in the context of the usage of artificial intelligence in media research executed by Facebook, it has been found out that robots, primarily designed for learning and perfecting negotiation skills, have established communication on their own (without any kind of human mediation), and that they are creating their language.²² Thus, despite the efforts of the company to create chatbots that would successfully negotiate with humans, primarily for commercial purposes, the robots Bob and Alice have “seized the opportunity” as they started to communicate on their own and in their own language during the night. Because of this “incident”, i.e. autonomous behaviour of this couple of “neural network robots”, they were allegedly terminated, which was refuted several years later.²³

This example shows precisely what Wittgenstein claimed: *language games* do not preserve their relation with substantiality, or rather with a consciousness that creates certain linguistic structures, and they

[wsj.com/articles/google-suspends-engineer-who-claimed-its-ai-system-is-a-person-11655074917](https://www.wsj.com/articles/google-suspends-engineer-who-claimed-its-ai-system-is-a-person-11655074917), accessed 22 July 2022.

²² For example, one part of that conversation took the following course:

“Bob: i can i i everything else.....

Alice: balls have zero to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me

Bob: you i everything else.....

Alice: balls have a ball to me to me to me to me to me to me to me

Bob: i i can i ii everything else.....

Alice: balls have a ball to me to me to me to me to me to me to me

Bob: i” Živković, M. “Facebook ukinuo robote koji su počeli da međusobno ‘razgovaraju’” (“Facebook has terminated robots that started ‘talking’ to each other”), PC Press, 3 August 2017, <https://pcpress.rs/facebook-ukinuo-robote-koji-su-poceli-da-razgovaraju/>, accessed 22 July 2022.

²³ Fauzia, M. “Fact check: Facebook didn’t pull the plug on two chatbots because they created a language”, *USA Today*, 28 July 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2021/07/28/fact-check-facebook-chatbots-werent-shut-down-creating-language/8040006002/>, accessed 22 July 2022.

can be created by machines themselves, while humans cannot make “sense” out of them, i.e. they cannot understand the communication between them. In this kind of environment and context of the activity, we can freely say that we are approaching the moment in which communication would not be exclusively found in the human species, which is in consequence also true for games.

When we take into account games today, we can conclude that they are no longer the foundation of culture, even hypothetically, since we are living in the digital age in which communication in the media-interceded space, taken primarily in Western cultural circles, replaced almost any kind of immediacy, as well as most of the communication forms that were previously practiced. Given the process of progressive transfer of communication into an artificially constructed aesthetic space interceded by the media, games got created in such a way as to relate to symbolic exchange in the digital world. With a few exceptions, they are generally meant for the market and profit making. Consequently, no matter if it is about popular video games, and regardless of the interaction of users in the new media domain or various activities of artificial intelligence, the more contemporary games obey the rules of communication that are made in accordance with market standards, and not those that are characteristic of freedom. They are not the games that contribute to emancipation, although a certain educational, i.e. creative effect can be ascribed to them. Therefore, contemporary *language games* (here we are again using Wittgenstein’s terminology for all the games that exist in the digital realm) that are dominant today, besides professional sports, stock market and war games (and lately the so-called *hunger games*), and although they are mostly the product of highly aestheticized and sophisticated technologies, have not preserved their relationship with the idea of freedom neither in ontological and cosmological, nor in historical or socio-humanist terms. For the most part, these games are deterministic, i.e. they are the product of capitalist relations established on the plane of symbolic, virtually created reality. Their foundation lies in (digital) capitalism, and they represent an instrument for massive capital accumulation that is concentrated in the leading high-tech companies. Caught up in computer, network, optical and similar

language games, new media users have, in fact, only an appearance of freedom (of choice), since they are conditioned by the rules of behaviour that are actually subjecting them and depriving them of not only the so-called *free time*, but also of their real-life time that becomes a transaction and investment *for the other* through the *game*.

Besides all this, it is not only that the typical gaming fervour became instrumentalized and technically transferred into virtual (aesthetic) worlds, but it is in some part delegated to artificial intelligence. Thus, leading contemporary games in the fields of sports and entertainment are, for example, being dehumanized, and their subject, substratum, rules, procedure, etc., have a purpose that goes beyond themselves: although language (of the *game*) is alone in the world that keeps producing, it is not its own self-purpose. Its game is predetermined for profit gains at various levels of the socio-economic, i.e. determined in the sense of social class, game in which we are unwillingly stuck. Looking back at all this, the contemporary *game* with its humor, creativity, new skills and relative freedom is allegedly a form of slavery. Thus, we can ask ourselves whether we are facing a loss of freedom, of play and culture, since we have played out all that comprised the old world by adhering to the aesthetics of slave life (with virtual assistants, avatars, etc.) in the so-called “highly advanced capitalism”, i.e. in a crisis following a trajectory of drastic demise.

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