Placing the Translation from Implicit to Explicit

Arenas, Psychoanalysis, and Ocean Voyages

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Abstract *The essay examines Clifford Geertz' Deep Play and its views on explicitness in the context of Balinese cockfighting. Drawing Geertz' analysis of the cockfight as social ritual, it carves out the translation from implicit to explicit expression of sentiments. The reading of Geertz' text leads to an analysis of the interplay between exclusion and inclusion. Hence, this paper tries to (1) outline this interplay, to (2) arrive at a preliminary understanding of what purpose this translation from implicit to explicit serves, with a focus on its imaginative features. To make these ideas more concrete, the paper then (3) discusses the empirical case of experimenting with the football simulation game Football Manager, and finishes (4) with a brief conclusion.*

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In his famous text *Deep Play*, Clifford Geertz describes the Balinese cockfight as a cultural means of expression to make explicit what usually remains implicit. Asking why a striking number of bets placed on the cockfight's outcome appear questionable from a classical economic utilitarian perspective, Geertz works out that the main goal of betting is to explicate and underpin one's own familial, friendly, and village community relationships; for instance, family members often bet on animals owned by their relatives. He expands and generalizes this argument: cockfighting—and, for example, theater in Western countries—is fundamentally about explicating what otherwise remains culturally implicit and offering an opportunity to come to terms with oneself as a society:

> As any art form—for that, finally, is what we are dealing with—the cockfight renders ordinary, everyday experience comprehensible by presenting it in terms of acts and objects which have had their practical consequences removed and been reduced (or, if you prefer, raised) to the level of sheer appearances, where their meaning can be more powerfully articulated and more exactly perceived. … An image, fiction, a model, a metaphor, the cockfight is a means of expression; its function is neither to assuage social passions nor to heighten them (though, in its play-with-fire way, it does a bit of both), but, in a medium of feathers, blood, crowds, and money, to display them. (79)

For Geertz the most important cultural aspects expressed in the cockfight center around aggression, violence, and sexuality, all topics which Geertz observes as not openly discussed or explicitly expressed in the Balinese culture. In his description, the alterity of the cockfight is given important meaning—albeit implicitly—through the clear demarcation from everyday events, marked also by the specific location of the arena. The arena is the ideal place to condense the events. What happens in the Balinese arena, theater, or even soccer stadium, has a unique status. While Geertz did not focus on the arena as much, both the specific space and the associated rituals and practices (like betting) take on a dramatizing function (Flick et al.). The arena allows for this dramatization by, among other things, ensuring basic observability of the action taking place (O'Donnell 408). My main thesis here lies in the complex interplay between exclusion and inclusion. Hence, this paper tries to (1) outline this interplay, to (2) arrive at a preliminary understanding of what purpose this translation from implicit to explicit serves, with a focus on its imaginative features. To make these ideas more concrete, the paper then (3) discusses the empirical case of experimenting with the football simulation game *Football Manager*, and finishes (4) with a brief conclusion.

1. Exclusion and Inclusion

The possibility of arenas and other similar places to create their specific focus rests on their ability to *exclude* many elements. Consider how most arenas look from the outside: closed-off, behind thick walls. There is a tendency, however, to take this point too far. A striking example stems from Game Studies: the notion of the *Magic Circle*, originating in Johan Huizinga's work *Homo*

Ludens. He understands the boundaries of games as central to their potential to distinguish themselves from ordinary life. Hence the necessity for clearly bounded spaces and temporalities (Böss et al.). The notion of the Magic Circle has led to heated debate in Game Studies (Consalvo; Jaakko; Juul), and though the main controversies have been laid to rest by now, the underlying idea remains extremely influential. Hence, much research, especially from the humanities, still treats games as bounded and isolated objects—often as some kind of quasi-text—and neglects their embeddedness in other everyday practices (Pargman and Jakobsson). This was a major issue in many Game Studies contributions to my own research focused on the football simulation game *Football Manager*. This game affords its players plenty of time for planning and strategizing, and much of this effort takes place outside of the narrow definition of "playing" as only the time spent in front of the game's screen. Instead, players scribble down notes, create Excel sheets, discuss widely with friends and strangers in online forums, take walks to think about tactics, etc. Geertz hints at such aspects, too, when talking about the everyday practices that surround the cockfights: taking care of the animals, feeding them well, etc., but also ubiquitous discussions about the last or next big fight.

The close embedding in other everyday practices and spheres can be better understood by focusing on a remark made by Erving Goffman in *Fun in Games*. In this work, Goffman develops the detailed notion of a "membrane." He thematizes games as encounters that usually take place in small groups and whose success depends on a definition of the situation shared by the participants. The "as-if" mode of a game (e.g., this wooden piece is a queen and can therefore move almost at will on the chessboard) constitutes its own unit of meaning, a "world for itself" (20). A matrix of possible events and a cast of roles through whose enactment the events occur constitute together a field for fateful dramatic action, a plane of being, an engine of meaning, a world, different from all other worlds except the ones generated when the same game is played at other times (26). This world must be actively created and jointly maintained by the players as it is constantly threatened by competition from other worlds or the leading definition of the situation. Just think of a game of chess suddenly interrupted by a ringing phone. In this respect, the active maintenance of joint activity requires a demarcation from other possible worlds. This function is assumed by the application of "rules of irrelevance" which exclude many elements that protrude into the situation as irrelevant. Goffman cites the example of completely different-looking pieces in the board game of checkers (19). Whether classically made of wood, or of whatever is currently available, like

bottle caps, the game pieces have a purely symbolic meaning; their material and aesthetic dimensions are irrelevant to the definition of the situation. The rules of irrelevance organize on a basic, somewhat epistemological level what is to be understood as part of the situation and what is not, thus preventing a complete overload and the resulting excessive demands.

Even more fundamentally, all participants must know and be able to agree on what is part of the game and what is not:

> The elegance and strength of this structure of inattention to most things of the world is a great tribute to the social organization of human propensities. Witness the fugue-like manner in which deeply engrossed chess players are willing to help each other reposition a piece that has been brushed aside by a sleeve, dissociating this event from relevant reality and providing us with a clear example of a fundamental process, the sustaining of subordinate side-encounter simultaneously with a main one that has been accorded the accent of reality. (20)

The chess piece must be put back in the right place to continue the game. However, to maintain the definition of the situation as "chess," it is necessary to share the knowledge that this is not a move by the player, but that the action is outside the game, or *extradiegetic* (Galloway 7). In more abstract terms: There are cases in which the game depends on attention being directed to factors external to the game, while at the same time, there is a necessary consensus to understand these actions as extradiegetic and not as breaking off the common diegetic framework. The restitution of the fallen chess piece is therefore both "irrelevant" and necessary for the continuation of the game. However, new events can also jeopardize the shared focus. For example, if the phone rings in the middle of a game of chess, or if one of the two players suddenly gets up to cook dinner, the game threatens to collapse. Such an event creates tension between the currently accepted definition of the situation and another, which sometimes suddenly imposes itself as a valid definition, as reality: "… just as the coherence and persistence of a focused gathering depends on maintaining a boundary, so the integrity of this barrier seems to depend upon the management of tension" (Goffman, *Fun in Games* 43).

This "management of tension" cannot simply rely on dismissing certain elements as irrelevant. In some cases, for Goffman, it is hardly possible to ignore certain characteristics or events, but it is possible to introduce them in such a way that they do not lead to any significant tension, and do not jeopardize the

prevailing situation, or even support it. Charm and tact often fulfill this role in group conversations (48). Just think of the embarrassing "elephant in the room" that threatens to destroy conversation, but which can be addressed by skillful explication—perhaps with the help of friendly irony. In such cases, the group is aware that, for example, a topic that is highly unpleasant for a participant is coming up. Tension arises between the current definition of the situation—friendly small talk—and another intruding definition: talking about an unpleasant, difficult topic. This tension becomes too great to simply ignore and pass over. It threatens to destroy the "world," for example, when the group disperses slightly embarrassed: "*I'm going to get something to eat*." The only way to get the embarrassing, tension-inducing point out of the way is to introduce it in a transformed way, perhaps in the form of a charming joke, and thus make it manageable. The "rules of irrelevance" are then accompanied by "rules of transformation."

For Goffman, this transformation often takes the form of a direct reversal in relation to games, particularly when it comes to social hierarchies, for instance, when children, as the youngest and with the lowest hierarchical position in the group, are allowed to roll the dice first. In other cases, transformative inclusion is used to ensure the exclusion of other influences that could potentially cause tension. As an example, Goffman cites a bridge game in which married couples do not compete against each other, but in mixed teams (30). The fact that several participants are in a relationship is too influential for the situation to simply fall under the rules of irrelevance. It is therefore integrated into the composition of the game partners, translated into a kind of diegetic logic, so that it can then become irrelevant to the game. With the rules of transformation, the potential inclusion of external characteristics is systematically introduced alongside the omnipresent external demarcation: "We found that the barrier to externally realized properties was more like a screen than like a solid wall, and we then came to see that the screen not only selects but also transforms and modifies what is passed through it. Speaking more strictly, we can think of inhibitory rules that tell participants what they must not attend to and of facilitating rules that tell them what they may recognize" (33).

The metaphorical description changes from a "solid wall" to a "screen," which does not simply operate as a simple demarcation to the outside, but rather proceeds dynamically and selectively on a case-specific basis and, as already described, transforms what it includes. In addition to "inhibitory rules," there are also "facilitating rules" that organize this type of inclusion (33)."We fence our encounters in with gates; the very means by which we hold

off a part of reality can be the means by which we can bear introducing it" (78). A wall, a sieve, gates—during the text, Goffman uses various metaphors that are not systematic but rather follow the train of thought on a figurative level. Eventually, he ends up with the metaphor of the membrane of a cell (65). Here, selective inclusion and exclusion, the transformation of the included, as well as activity and processuality are pointedly expressed.

In the footnote I want to subsequently focus on, Goffman refers to Melanie Klein and her description of the psychoanalytic consulting room. The psychoanalytic therapy method mobilizes a form of membrane that allows everything from the patient's perspective to flow into the situation without jeopardizing the valid definition of the situation as therapeutic (Goffman, *Fun in Games* 75). The strict emphasis on the professional psychoanalytic setting is essential for the possibility of this radically permeable and at the same time extraordinarily robust membrane. In this context, Goffman quotes Melanie Klein in a footnote with special reference to the spatial dimension inherent in the psychoanalytic therapy setting:

> More important still, I found that the transference situation—the backbone of the psycho-analytic procedure—can only be established and maintained if the patient is able to feel that the consulting-room or the play-room, indeed the whole analysis, is something separate from his ordinary home life. For only under such conditions can he overcome his resistances against experiencing and expressing thoughts, feelings, and desires, which are incompatible with convention, and in the case of children felt to be in contrast to much of what they have been taught. (qutd. in Goffman, *Fun in Games* 76)

The function of demarcation already discussed in Geertz's case of the cockfight appears once again: to enable access to, or explication of, what is otherwise implicit—in this case the unconscious. Goffman's reference to psychoanalysis is not aimed at demarcation *per se* but at its function of enabling inclusion precisely through segregation. This is made clear by the remark directly following the Klein quote in the footnote: "Perhaps then, an ocean voyage is fun not because it cuts us off from ordinary life but because in being apparently cut off from ordinary life, we can afford to experience certain aspects of it" (76).

Arena, psychoanalytical treatment room, and cruise mark a clear dividing line: what takes place here is different, subject to its own rules and contexts of meaning. This enables the appearance and explication of elements that otherwise have no place in Balinese society: violence, agonality, and openly sex-

ualized symbolism in the Balinese cockfight described by Geertz; feelings or desires that otherwise remain unconscious to the analysand because they are, e.g., shameful; furthermore, think of the openly revealed extent of at least verbal aggression in the soccer stadium. However, these elements do not come from nowhere, they are at least implicitly always already present, part of the everyday life of a culture. Geertz, Klein, and Goffman agree on this, even if the first two authors do not make it so explicit. What emerges in these separate places is therefore different not in terms of content, but in terms of appearance: from implicit, private, unconscious, and hidden, to explicit, publicly performed, and dramatized.

Goffman's characterization of the supposed separation is to be understood in this sense: What happens on the cruise is not strictly separated from "ordinary life," but rather allows certain aspects of it to emerge by the supposed separation, as if under a burning glass. Of course,—and Goffman remains brief and nebulous here—a very essential separation takes place. On the cruise ship, one generally leaves one's everyday working life behind, and (especially in Goffman's time without cell phones or the internet) much of one's everyday social contacts. In the psychoanalytic session, the usual conventions, for instance politely asking the therapist how they are doing today, are no longer applicable. That is essential for the business of transference and countertransference as it is a testament to stepping out of the usual social interaction regimen. And in the soccer stadium, the world is condensed into the famous ninety minutes and the round ball. Much is radically excluded from these situations. In this sense, it is important to treat Goffman's "apparently" with caution, to avoid the misunderstanding that this is an argument operating in the style of actuality: "*You think the 90 minutes in the soccer stadium are separated from everyday life, but the opposite is the case!*" Instead, the argument is more complicated and works dialectically, so to speak. By organizing exclusion, these culturally produced situations enable inclusion; they separate to make visible what otherwise remains absent and present. The membrane is both extraordinarily fluid and robust, like a spider's thread:

> Fighting cocks, almost every Balinese I have ever discussed the subject with has said, is like playing with fire only not getting burned. You activate village and kingroup rivalries and hostilities, but in "play" form, coming dangerously and entrancingly close to the expression of open and direct interpersonal and intergroup aggression (something which, again, almost never

> happens in the normal course of ordinary life), but not quite, because, after all, it is "only a cockfight." (Geertz 77)

To a certain extent, this absence of practical consequences also applies to the psychoanalytic setting, which allows the analysand, for example, to express her erotic desires to the therapist without, in theory at least, having to fear that this might jeopardize the prevailing definition of the situation or the framing of the situation as therapy. This separation of the usual consequences of actions is essential for the equally radically elastic and yet robust membrane. Nevertheless, it is neither the sole determining factor nor is it fundamentally necessary. In the example of the cruise, for instance, the decoupling of practical consequences of the event is not the main driver of stepping out of the usual social interactions.

We thus gain an idea about how exclusion and inclusion must work together to derive these specific translations from implicit to explicit. Geertz slightly oddly compares the Balinese cockfight to theater when hinting at how to understand it in his own Western cultural setting. Why not stick to sports and/or playful activities? To better understand the importance of such mundane, everyday cultural performances, I turn to Goffman once again. In his *Frame Analysis*, he makes a few observations about what he calls "stunts." "Whatever the viewers obtain from such exhibits, it is clear that interest in cosmologically grounded issues is an everyday concern of the layman and by no means restricted to laboratory and field researchers" (31). The "exhibits" Goffman is talking about here are those "stunts" performed by acrobats, knife throwers, "daredevil" drivers, but possibly also specially trained animals. These exotica are fascinating because of the opportunities they offer to learn something about the otherwise culturally implicit ideas about what is "normal." "Trained seals, sociable porpoises, dancing elephants, and acrobatic lions all exemplify the possibility of ordinary guided doings done by alien agents, thus drawing attention to the cosmological line drawn in our society between human agents and animal ones" (31).

Goffman appropriately quotes Victor Turner in a statement about monsters, whose cultural function he sees in their ability "to teach neophytes to distinguish clearly between the different factors of reality, as it is conceived in their culture" (Turner 104, quoted from Goffman, *Frame Analysis* 31). In the cases described, it is about radically exaggerated deviations from what is otherwise considered normal, about the "supernatural" and the unexpected.

2. Imagination as Generation of the New and to Keep Step

As was shown, exclusion and inclusion work together to create a unique kind of focus that allows for an explication of what would otherwise remain implicit. Geertz's thick description of the Balinese cockfight paves the way for this understanding. However, Goffman's contributions point to a slightly different function. While Geertz's characterization seems to be close to a psychoanalytical understanding demarcating unconscious and conscious, Goffman—especially when talking about "stunts"—rather points to an understanding that focuses on *generating* new insights instead of unearthing them. Both points are fairly alike, and in no way mutually exclusive. I also must clarify that I do not claim that Geertz follows a psychoanalytical framework; my goal is to subsequently focus on this latter understanding, on arenas, psychoanalytical couches, and cruise ships as places that not only make explicit what might have been implicit, but as places that foster the genesis of the new, and therefore allow for some kind of *imagination*, often collectively. In the sense of this interpretation, the Balinese cockfight for example does not merely express the formerly hidden aspects of aggression, violence, and sexuality, but rather, by allowing their expression, *creates* them in their specific meaning. This turn is closely connected to a practice-theoretical take that vehemently rejects any mentalist concepts (like the unconscious) and insists on the necessity to publicly perform and practice any given concept (Wittgenstein; Schmidt and Volbers; Reckwitz; Schatzki).

The places and practices formerly described—Balinese cockfight, psychoanalytical setting, cruise voyage—therefore play an important role in generating practiced ideas and concepts. In its function, this role is close to what Susanne Langer calls *feeling*. In *Scientific Civilization and Cultural Crisis,* she operates from the basic diagnosis of scientific progress that had become much too fast for the imagination of Western society to keep step with:

> The fact is, I think, that scientific production has outrun our imagination, and the change in our civilization—in the practical means and techniques of life—has advanced with a gathered momentum of its own and outstripped the advance of our thinking. Our technological civilization, consequently, seems to overtake and overwhelm us as though it were something foreign coming in upon us. (91)

This lack of imaginative capabilities would thus cause the incapability to symbolically express these newest scientific and technological developments (91). What might be done about this problem? For Langer, it is not predominantly theory that has to step in (such as in Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World / Alfred North Whitehead*); instead, she envisions art to be at the forefront of this quest. "It begins when imagination catches fire, and objects and actions become life symbols, and the new life-symbols become motifs of art" (92). To arrive at a deeper understanding of how this might play out concretely, I turn now to the video game *Football Manager* and present it as a means for imagination to catch fire, focusing specifically on the topic of experimenting using a simulation.

3. *Football Manager*: Experimenting on Theories

Propelled by the extreme progress that digital computing has made since the early middle of the twentieth century, there has emerged a new possibility for scientists to experiment and research. Today, scientific simulations are ubiquitous in our daily lives. Models of the future shape many of the most important political debates of today—just think of COVID-19 (Enserink and Kupferschmidt) and the climate crisis (Gramelsberger, "Climate and Simulation"). In these examples, simulations are radically future-oriented, projecting outcomes of today's actions that are highly undesirable in most cases. They serve as a warning sign that says: "*Don't take that path!*" Thus, there emerges a circular approach: in the first step, current states—COVID-19 infections, CO2 emissions, etc.—are extrapolated and give the picture of a predicted future; in the second step, this information is referenced to inform actual decision-making in the present. Hence, simulations offer a unique temporal approach in the grammatic form of the future-perfect (it will have happened):

> The future perfect offers a grammatical structure for a retrospective from the future. In so doing, the present changes: It is already remembered while it is still happening. On the one hand, it is present; on the other hand, it has already been presented. Whilst the events are still happening, they are already history and can be seen in historical context. (Bexte 220)

This way of "understanding backwards" from a predicted future state is not only important for simulations that directly target a yet unknown future. Many

simulations stand in for objects that are not in the future but out of the scientist's reach for other reasons: experimenting with these objects might be physically out of reach as with neutrino-stars, ethically problematic as in the case of nuclear weapons, or simply too complex or expensive (Sismondo). Nevertheless, in all these cases the scientist's grasp via simulations must be understood as a practice of *reverse-engineering*. Simulations are completely artificial, yet by experimenting with them, the scientist can conclude what they represent. According to Gabriele Gramelsberger, this marks a radical shift "from science to computational science" as "the fulfillment of the second half of the scientific revolution" (*From Science to Computational Sciences* 38).

The literature about scientific simulations is vast. Therefore, I want to highlight two different considerations: Deborah Dowling's ethnographic work on the experimental practices of scientists dealing with and using simulations and Alfred Nordmann's philosophical take on *techno-science* as a new form of science that breaks with the goal of representing its object.

3.1 Dowling on Blackboxing

Dowling uses ethnographic methods to study scientists dealing with simulations. She notes that, depending on the researcher's scientific orientation, simulations are either identified as "theoretical" or "experimental." (Dowling 263+) While definitions of theory and experiment vary greatly, she identifies two lines of argument that most researchers agree with. First, the object of theories is some sort of *representation* or description whereas the object of experiments is a thing or *reality*. Second, the practice of the theorist consists of analytically working on equations and forming new ideas whereas, in the case of the experimental scientist, it consists of testing, playing around, and tinkering with things (264). *Simulations* then can be seen as a hybrid of these two modes, combining the object of theories (artificial representations) with the experimental practice (testing and playing around).

What makes Dowling's observation so compelling is that she locates this entanglement of two previously separated approaches in the scientific practice itself. Therefore, she uses the term "strategic blackboxing" (265), referring to Sherry Turkle's observation in *Life on the Screen (1997)*, according to which there are two ways of interacting with computers: the one she calls "calculative" is characterized by addressing the computer explicitly as a *machine* that runs equations, and the other is the "simulation mode" that addresses the given interface without explicit reference to the "machine behind," that deals with the

surface, so to speak.[1] The practice of the scientists dealing with simulations consists of artfully combining these two approaches. On one hand, it seems mandatory for most scientists to understand the simulations they employ from a mathematical point of view.[2] On the other, when experimenting with simulations, the scientists shift that perspective and interact with the simulation as something "foreign"—that is, they employ the practice of strategic blackboxing. Thus, the hybridity of the simulation—being somewhere in between what was usually called theory and experiment—gives birth to a scientific practice that is itself a hybrid between these two formerly separated practices.

> By combining an analytical grasp of a mathematical model with the ability to temporarily "black-box" the digital manipulation of that model, the technique of simulation allows creative and experimental "playing around" with an otherwise impenetrable set of equations, to notice its quirks or unexpected outcomes. The results of a large and complex set of computations are thus presented in a way that brings the skills of an observant experimenter to the development of mathematical theory. (Dowling 271)

The suspense of theoretical interest, of trying to keep track of every single equation, allows the scientist to engage with the now blackboxed simulation as an entity in itself. This leads to the possibility of playing around with it, of discovering completely new and unforeseen consequences. Dowling speaks about "experimenting on theories," the simulation allows the scientist to face their theory. It is as though one's ideas and theories gain an identity of their own and take a seat at the other end of the table, eager to begin a discussion. This encounter with one's own (or a colleague's) theory is crucial for generating completely new ideas and a better understanding of the theory and its internal logic by developing a feel for it (269).[3]

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1 Harth (2014) makes a similar observation by differentiating between two ideal types of video game players: the one group 'trivializing' the game—and therefore their own practice of playing—by solely treating it as an algorithm that must be beaten by the most effective play possible, and the other group seeking immersion in the game's lifeworld and therefore, e.g., feeling emotionally close to certain NPCs (Non-Player-Characters). For an extensive analysis of interfaces in video games, see Jorgensen.

2 It remains unclear to me whether this is still the case in huge and interdisciplinary projects such as CERN.

3 Approaching philosophical metaphysics *speculatively*—as in the work of Alfred North Whitehead (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*)—might be understood as a similar attempt without relying on any machine. This is especially interesting as Whitehead's

3.2 Technoscience

Alfred Nordmann understands *technoscience* as a hybrid between technological engineering and science. Like Dowling's argument, what makes technoscience unique is theoretical representation and technical intervention coming together:

> In technoscientific research, the business of theoretical representation cannot be dissociated, even in principle, from the material conditions of knowledge production and thus from the interventions that are required to make and stabilize the phenomena. In other words, technoscience knows only one way of gaining new knowledge and that is by first making a new world. (2)

One of the most important possibilities for creating such a new world is the use of simulations. Nordmann stresses that technoscience is not something completely new but that the notion rather corresponds to an ongoing shift in how scientists understand their practices and which scientific subjects are seen to be at the forefront of innovation. He gives examples of nanotechnology, pharmaceutical research, and materials sciences as branches which gained influence and can be seen as embodying technoscience. Besides the break with a classic modern understanding of science as representation, this includes close collaborations between public institutions (like universities) with the industry, and hence a strong urge to direct the research by its desired outcomes (4).

But how exactly does technoscience break with the aspiration of representation? Nordmann explores the modern understanding of science using its methods to *mirror* the world in great length. This leads too far for this chapter. What matters is that technoscience *makes use* of its refusal to mirror some distant reality as in the Kantian sense of the thing in itself. Nordmann gives the example of the "onco mouse" that became famous through Donna Haraway's work. This is a genetically modified laboratory mouse that naturally develops what we know as human breast cancer. He argues, following Haraway, that the onco mouse does not represent breast cancer but rather *is* breast cancer itself. It "embodies the powers of cancer that are fought and

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novel takes on metaphysics not as an attempt at grounding any eternal truth but rather as a tool that—precisely by being systematic—allows to think "anew" and differently resembles the shift towards theory as something with which to experiment that Dowling depicts. Also note the closeness to Susanne Langer here.

must be defeated here" (16). There still looms a representational goal in the background but—just as with Dowling's strategic black-boxing—it is almost completely neglected in the actual scientific practice. In this sense, Nordmann compares the position of the onco mouse to that of a voodoo doll: the doll does not represent or mirror anyone but promises to channel its state directly to that of a given subject. This metaphorically describes best how the artificially created world of technoscience and its "real counterpart" relate to each other (15): "[T]he animistic suggestion of technoscience takes its objects as being endowed with powers that participate in the order of nature" (16). Thus, technoscience is not about neglecting any form of representation but rather shifts from mirroring or representing the "world as such" as an absolute goal towards a much more pragmatic (and in fact *pragmatist*) approach that is interested in *what works* for a given and not necessarily scientific goal, such as treating cancer. To make this point clearer, Nordmann refers to an example of a simulation that models the velocity and resistance of a ship in a harbor. As to getting scaling effects right, "in order to preserve physical truth one cannot simply scale down uniformly but must introduce distortions that compensate for the scaling effects" (20). Thus, there is a gap between a model that would be realistic in a representational, narrow sense and one that leads to useful predictions—relying on actively introduced distortions.

Finally, Nordmann briefly tries to put this into a broader cultural perspective and refers to an example that is very interesting in this context:

> This wider cultural context is particularly apparent in the way in which technoscience beholds the world, rather: interacts with it—for here, the characteristic mode of beholding has been instituted in the immersive and substitutive aesthetics of video games. The transition from artful constructions of immediacy to collapse of distance corresponds aesthetically to the transition from absorption to immersion. (23)

Modernity relies on a fundamental gap between world/nature/thing on the one side and researcher/observer/philosopher on the other, with the latter painfully trying to bridge the gap. Technoscience, on the other hand—this post-modern tinkering with reality—makes full use of collapsing this gap. Therefore, *immersion* is its aesthetic cultural mode and video games may serve as a prime example of this cultural frame. Together with this icomesaccording to Nordmann—a break with Weber's claim of modern science as dis-enchantment in support of a "reenchantment of the world through technology"

(Nordmann 25). Hence, technoscience's turning away from representation as an absolute goal might also lead to deep cultural shifts, maybe most importantly a return of a "magical relation to the world (paradoxically, through the rational and rationalizing means of technology)" (25). Next, I want to present the empirical case of the football simulation game *Football Manager* as the mundane art form in which some of the ideas about experimenting described above can become explicit and experienceable.

3.3. Dreaming about Football[4]

Football Manager, like the most prominent football simulation *FIFA* (EA Sports, 2021), is a series of games released annually. Unlike in *FIFA*, the player does not control the footballers directly. Instead, they *manage* their team. This includes scouting, buying and selling players, setting up tactics and formation, planning training, etc. Thus, the game consists mostly of spreadsheets detailing e.g., numerical player attributes with each ranging from 1 to 20.

Important in this regard is the complexity derived by the interplay between the huge range of attributes with how the individual player is used tactically as well as the role of talent. Scouts assess the potential of each footballer; for the video game player, signing young and talented football players is one of the most successful long-term strategies. This also marks one of the most discussed aspects of playing *Football Manager*: The hunt for the best talent is the most defining aspect of the game.

The importance of this aspect can only be understood in the light of the game's goal to represent professional football as realistically as possible.[5] Sports Interactive, publisher of the *Football Manager* series, provide a huge database that covers more than 200,000 players across the whole world, even under-19 youth teams. They claim to employ the biggest scouting network in professional football, working together with scouting companies that exclusively assess data for professional clubs (Parkin). Their scouting is said to be of such a high quality that professional football clubs use their database for actual and real-world scouting of new players. *Realism* is probably the

4 The following sub-chapter rests on knowledge derived from ethnographic research conducted since April 2021 as part of my Ph.D. project.

5 To a certain degree this goal is shared by most sports simulations, which makes them—albeit slightly neglected in game studies—a good example when focusing on simulations.

developer's most important target, met by regularly interacting with different actors from professional football on the daily management practices of a professional football club. Many professional footballers play this game, a fact that is celebrated in the *Football Manager* fan base. In 2017, the video game's slogan, "*Play the Game. Know the Game.*," promised a deeper understanding of professional football through gameplay (Sports Interactive, 2017). This promise extends to tactics but, more importantly, focuses on the potential of young players. With Sports Interactive's professional and highly effective scouting system, combined with the game's emphasis on discovering young talents, the typical *Football Manager* player gains far more insight into up-and-coming players than the average football fan. The experience of buying a young talent, analyzing his attributes, watching him in the game's 3D animations, and observing his progress over time leads to a much richer understanding of who that player 'really is,' rather than simply knowing him as 'talented.' I still remember discovering Erling Haaland in 2018, then an unknown young striker for Norway's Molde FK. He was clearly talented, but his combination of pace and height left me perplexed. How could those traits coexist? At the time, I thought there might have been an error in the scouting. Today, I'm still puzzled by this mix, but so is the entire football world, with Haaland now moving to Manchester City for a record-breaking wage.

The complexity of how a player's attributes work together can be deeply felt by an experienced *Football Manager* player. In 2018, achieving this "deep knowledge" about Haaland would have required extensive video scouting through other means. As space is limited, I want to focus on one pillar of my ethnographic research into *Football Manager* and connect it to two of my previous arguments.

To understand the fascination that *Football Manager* exerts over many players, despite being time-consuming and spreadsheet-heavy, I began to view the playing of the simulation as a *practice of daydreaming*. The most important aspect of this approach is that it allowed me to grasp the entanglement between football fandom and the practices stemming from this video game.[6] What if my club had just bought this or that young player? What if the manager relied on a different tactical setup? These questions keep football fans occupied and give rise to a specific form of daydreaming that is often shared in online fan

6 I understand "fandom" broadly in this case as entailing not only following your favorite club but also watching a lot of football and being interested in tactics, etc.

forums, etc. The realism of the game, together with its strong focus on a possible future that is shaped by the player's actions, allows for a *manifestation* of these daydreams. *Football Manager* can then be seen as some sort of playground where these dreams are acted out.

Hence, one of the main fascinations of the game lies in its ability to *test* these dreams, to see whether a tactic might or might not work. The video game players are thus making use of a similar if not exact principle that Dowling describes: They "face" their theories, experiment with them, and see them played out. This applies to tactical ideas as well as broader strategic decisions such as buying this or that young player and integrating him into the squad. It could even be argued that strategic blackboxing is utilized by video game players to a certain degree: Although they are not involved in creating or assessing the algorithmic rules of the game, many players are very explicit about wanting to keep the degree of realism experienced as high as possible. Cheating—in this case quitting without saving and trying again or looking up player potentials in the editor or specific online pages—is mostly neglected due to the player's wish to experience and experiment with a scenario that is as realistic as possible. Just as the scientist needs to suspend their interest in and knowledge of the underlying algorithmic rules to switch to an explorative and experimental mode, so too is it necessary for the video game player to not obtain access to underlying rules that would give away both the realism and the challenge of the whole endeavor.

As was shown, playing *Football Manager* as a practice of daydreaming is very closely connected to other types of daydreaming in football fandom. The twist I propose is that there exists some vague sort of alternative reality (or in German, *Ersatzwirklichkeit*) that cannot be reduced to the strict algorithmic workings of that specific game. Instead, it ranges from fan forums where tactics of the favorite club are discussed, to more traditional media coverage of transfers, tactics, statistics, etc. via marketing of the clubs up to playing *Football Manager*. It might even conclude what could be called secondary games of professional football, such as the strategic behavior of football clubs on the transfer market. This list is far from complete; professional football entails much more than a match of 22 players, and in this sense, *Football Manager* is a part of it. What is striking about this conceptualization is that now it is possible to understand this creation of a new world as a technoscientific *here* that can be manipulated directly. To some degree, it channels these manipulations directly to its neighbors from the list—and therefore to what makes up a huge part of the whole of professional football.

4. Conclusion

The arena of the Balinese cockfight, the psychoanalytic couch, the cruise ship—all these places allow expression. Following Geertz, this was described as a translation from implicit to explicit, allowing for cultural performances that allow expression of what would otherwise remain inarticulable. Referring to Goffman, this argument was taken one step further, away from a possible mentalist interpretation as consisting only in unearthing what was already existent as in the classical psychoanalytic understanding of the unconscious. Instead, I propose to understand this practice theoretically, as a public generation of new ideas, tacit understandings, etc. The article then turns towards Susanne Langer's point according to which scientific progress in the 20th century has been too fast for imagination to catch up with. This introduces the notion of imagination as well as a more nuanced understanding of the specific function of such an imagination. Langer locates the remedy to this problem mainly in artistic practices; I propose including such mundane practices as sports, games, and Goffman's stunts, too. To this end, I introduce an empirical case: *Football Manager*. I attempt to link two concepts from STS—Dowling's "experimenting on theories" and Nordmann's "technoscience"—with the briefly presented empirical case. Therefore, I hope to have sketched how this specific video game offers its players the possibility to grasp and experience some aspects of current developments in (scientific) simulation. Playfully, it becomes possible to engage with the inner workings of a simulation and to therefore, maybe, help our imagination keep up with the rapidity of scientific and technological innovation.

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