Finding Wilderness through Games

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Abstract:

In forms of physical recreation associated with 'wilderness experiences', such as backcountry hiking or mountain climbing, technology is omnipresent. As a result, some may wonder whether genuine wilderness experiences are possible. In this essay, I argue that wilderness experiences are possible and that they can be enhanced through games. That is, I contend there are often physically challenging aspects to wilderness experiences that certain games can help to promote. This analysis will stress the fact that Bernard Suits delineated two comparable but distinct ways to engage in games. Following Suits's logic, I explain how 'literal skills' like walking or climbing can function as the 'constitutive skills' of games. I then consider how games predicated on 'literal skills' can help promote the meanings available in wilderness experiences.

Article:

Within American culture 'wilderness' has been conceptualized as 'the antipode of civilization' (Nash 2001). The term signifies uninhabited and uncultivated regions – the lands beyond society's boundary. However, as American conservationist Aldo Leopold famously noted, leaving society's boundary has also often meant engaging in certain kinds of activities. 'Wilderness', Leopold (1925) wrote, 'means a wild, roadless area where those who are so inclined may enjoy primitive modes of travel and subsistence, such as exploration trips by pack-train or canoe' (398). Nevertheless, for many people today, venturing into the wilderness and enjoying 'primitive modes of travel' has become increasingly tame. With carefully blazed trails, strictly delimited borders, dehydrated foods, synthetic tents, down sleeping bags, ultra-light backpacks, and other technologies omnipresent, some may wonder whether genuine wilderness experiences are possible.

In this essay, I argue wilderness experiences are possible and that they can be enhanced through playing games. That is, I contend there are often physically challenging aspects to wilderness experiences that games can help to promote. Toward this end, I begin by showing how activities like hiking and mountain climbing can satisfy Bernard Suits's (2005) criteria for game behavior. This analysis will stress the fact that Suits delineated two comparable but distinct ways to engage in games. Following Suits's logic, I explain how 'literal skills' like walking or climbing can function as the 'constitutive skills' of games. I then consider how games predicated on 'literal skills' can help promote the meanings available in wilderness experiences. On the surface it may appear that conceptualizing an activity as a game would prevent individuals from experiencing separation from a world of human designs. 'Yet, using Polanyi's notion of "tacit knowledge" and experimental "frames," I argue that this need not be the case (Polanyi and Prosch 1975).'

Conceptualizing Wilderness

It is important to note, this is not an ecological argument, nor an argument about the essence of nature. Furthermore, it is not that games are the only way to experience wilderness. Wilderness can be a serene encounter and can certainly be experienced in the absence of 'gamed-up' challenges. Nor do I argue that gaming on trails or over mountains invariably produces wilderness enhancements, only that they can. Finally, I do not advocate wilderness in a normative sense. Instead, my argument only offers an interpretation. In a culture where 'civilization' appears ubiquitous, I am pointing out how games can, and often do, help bring about a sense of immersion into a seemingly 'wild', remote, and uncivilized world. To put this another way, intentional efforts to engage with unnecessary challenges often helps produce more intense impressions of 'the wild'. To stimulate the departure from society's confines, people may well be advised to put specific kinds of artificial obstacles in their way.

A crucial assumption underlying these claims is that wilderness constitutes a culturally contingent and historically situated interactive experience. The interpretation Leopold provided above is but one notion of wilderness, for what wilderness has meant has evolved in relation to people's changing contexts and needs.[1] As a result, paradoxically enough, wilderness experiences may be understood as, in part, a social phenomenon that, at times, may be enhanced by technology. Although there is not space to provide a full genealogy of the term here, historians and philosophers alike have come to the general conclusion that there neither is, nor has there ever been, an idyllic and completely unspoiled 'wilderness'.[2]

Historically, however, wilderness has been associated with seemingly untouched nature. Thus, in most calls for recreational wilderness experiences, interaction with natural objects and processes continues to be central. As sports philosopher Kevin Krein noted, while physical and psychological challenges, minimalist living, or solitude might be important factors in experiencing wilderness, these qualities could be found within the confines of 'civilization'. As a result, a level of separation from the innovations of society and an ensuing level of contact with nature remains vital (Krein 2008, 298). Just as historical contingencies show there is no objective wilderness, history also confirms wilderness is not a purely internalized or subjective notion. As environmental historian Paul Sutter (2002) has claimed, a 'wilderness [experience]' is 'the product of intellectual engagement with specific circumstances' (10).

My argument acknowledges that within naturalistic environments wilderness experiences involve interactions with contemporary culture and other aspects of the 'civilized' world. As environmental philosopher Marvin Henberg (1984) described it, engagement with 'wilderness . . . [often] depends on convenient access and retreat, on carrying with us many of the comforts of home, and on knowing terrain or having accurate maps' (251). But even with such performance-enhancing aids, Henberg argues a sense of remoteness, self-sufficiency, and intimate contact with nature can be achieved. I agree. Technology does not necessarily preclude encounters with the 'antipode of civilization'. A variety of conveniences may actually help bring wilderness experiences to life. Aligned with this thinking, the following sections turn to an often overlooked 'technology' that I claim works to this end.

Suits's First Method for Creating Games

Some may not think of hiking, climbing, and similar activities often associated with wilderness as games. However, these activities are compatible, in principle, with all the characteristics required in Suits's (2005) definition. In this section, I will consider activities like hiking in light of the first of two ways Suits described game generation. This should begin to make clear how previously non-lusory activities can become 'gamed-up' (Kretchmar 2008).

As Suits noted, all games must have a specific goal or end state of affairs established before the game gets underway. Suits called this the 'prelusory goal'. In the case of a challenging hike, for instance, the prelusory goal may be to reach a given destination. Moreover, when a prelusory goal is too easy to be interesting, game players will employ restrictive constitutive rules. This is of course how most games are produced. Significantly, as Suits (2005) put it, the means permitted to achieve the prelusory goal are made to 'be narrower in range than they would be in the absence of the rules' (45). Thus a hike might include an added stipulation that restricts how one can 'successfully' reach a desired endpoint. For example, stipulating that one must travel by foot, take a more difficult route rather than an easier one, or finish a trip in a limited time span, could all become constitutive rules of a given traverse.

Obviously, there are often easier ways to reach the end of an arduous journey than hiking. One could take a bike, bus, or plane. Yet if limitations are accepted under Suits's final criterion, then a game is indeed underway. Namely, hikers would have to employ a 'lusory attitude'. That is, they accept restrictive means 'just so' they can experience the potentially 'just right' challenge that such acceptance creates. Thus, with prelusory goals, limited means, and lusory attitudes in mind activities like hiking or climbing can be converted into games.

Notably, Mitchell Berman (2013) recently provided a provocative counter argument to support a different conclusion. He argued that from a 'phenomenologically faithful' perspective sprints do not fit Suits's definition. Rather than limiting means, Berman (2013) said the rules in sprints, from a sprinters perspective, 'facilitate' the realization of the entirety of a sprint itself (p. 166).[3] In other words, even though restrictive rules are in play (i.e. one must stay in bounds and travel by foot) those rules do not experientially make sprints less efficient. Rather than limit means to a prelusory goal, rules work to make the activity in its entirety possible. If this is the case, sprinting and activities like it do not fall within the parameters of a Suitian game.

Yet, what Berman said of rules in sprinting – that they phenomenologically facilitate rather than limit an overall goal or state of affairs – could be said of almost any activity that has traditionally been called a game.[4] For instance, in the heat of action, do baseball players experience balls, strikes, outs, hits, and homeruns as artificial limitations or as the means by which to engage in baseball – that is, as 'facilitators' of baseball? From a 'phenomenologically faithful' perspective, in the midst of the action, most baseball players do not understand constitutive skills as the products of roadblocks meant to get in their way. Rather, strikes, outs, and hits (etc.) appear to be the essential means by which to achieve the ones' objective. Thus as Berman said of sprints, it could be said of baseball or hiking and the like. Adhering to the rules 'facilitates' the ultimate state of affairs at which baseball players aim; just as adhering to the rules of a sprint or a hike facilitates achieving the state of affairs sprinters and hikers desire.[5]

Regulative and Constitutive Rules

Still, linguistically we are far more comfortable calling 'abstracted' artificial challenges, such as baseball, games. Meanwhile, we are less likely to call seemingly 'literal' problems that involve non-abstracted 'natural' or 'literal skills', like running or hiking, games. In fact, I suspect that what led Berman to his conclusion about sprints and what may lead other philosophers to discount the possibility that hiking or climbing could be games stems from John Searle's (1969) well-known distinction between 'regulative' and 'constitutive' rules. The function of both types of rules will be important in the analysis to follow.

Admittedly, in hiking or climbing what Searle described as regulative rules seem to dominate. Regulative rules regulate behaviors whose intelligibility is logically independent of the rules themselves. In other words, regulative rules refer to behaviors that make sense even without knowledge of the rules. Searle provided an example related to fishing. If you want to catch a fish you ought to use a hook made of steel rather than butter. In this instance, the rules that 'facilitates or enable [a person fishing] to reach [their] goals, are matters of natural physical facts' (Searle 1969, 37). The rule 'to catch fish, you should use steel hooks' simply explains an observable behavior derived from natural laws and regular day-to-day occurrences. Many behaviors in games, however, such as scoring touchdowns or hitting home runs, cannot be described with regulative rules alone.

What needs to be added to establish games like American football and baseball are constitutive rules. Constitutive rules are stipulations that determine what an action means in a specific context. To understand a behavior generated by a constitutive rule one must have knowledge of the rule. Searle claimed speech acts work in this way. For example, pronouncing the word 'dog' in the context of the English language signifies a four legged furry animal that wags its tail and barks. Without knowledge of specific contextual stipulations – that is, the rules of English vocabulary – 'dog' would be meaningless.

Like language, most games are constituted by similarly functional constitutive rules. For instance, it is a constitutive rule of American football that a touchdown counts as six points. If a person without knowledge of the rules of football were to witness a touchdown they would be unable to discern this. Such a person would not, and could not, even know what a 'touchdown'

is. Thus football and games like it would be unintelligible without knowledge of constitutive rules that stipulate what counts in and as football.

Many activities associated with wilderness do not seem to work like this. In challenges such as hiking through uninhabited woods or climbing distant mountains, regulative rules seem to govern a majority of behaviors. That is to say, reaching a distant location by trekking across rugged terrain seems to be fully intelligible on its own. The difficulties and the meanings found in such a trek can be appreciated without reference to constitutive stipulations. Indeed, a host a regulative rules about endurance, nutrition, balance, strength, finding one's way, and the like might be formulated to explain the obstacles a long hike entails. In short, hiking and football seem to be very different phenomena.

I have a degree of sympathy with this line of reasoning, but I also contend that a more careful inspection of games shows how activities like hiking and climbing can be converted into gamed-up challenges, challenges with the potential to enrich wilderness experiences. To see why this is so, a second species of games, identified by Suits, will need to be revisited. But first, to buttress my stance that hiking and climbing align with Suits's definition, it will be helpful to attend to the origins of a game's constitutive skills.

Antecedent Behaviors

All games are based on pre-existing behaviors and skills that later and overtime find their way into games, often in novel ways. As Reddiford (1985) argued, within games 'unconstituted antecedently existing behaviors, or segments of behaviors . . . come by convention [by constitutive rules] to count as something of significance' (43). What this means is that behaviors found in all games are, in one way or another, born of regulative rules. Only later, with the help of constitutive rules, do 'constitutive skills' get incorporated into games and ascribed new meanings.[6]

Consequently, it is possible that once incorporated into a game, 'unconstituted antecedently existing behaviors' may continue to exist, virtually unchanged. That is, in games with minimal abstraction, antecedent behaviors (i.e. running) might become constitutive skills. Evidently, then, such constitutive skills, as mirrors of their literal antecedents, could be explained on their own. No constitutive rule is needed to describe most actions related to running, jumping, grabbing, catching, pushing, or many other skillful physical behaviors.

This leads to an important conclusion. The fact that activities like hiking make use of antecedent behaviors that can be described with regulative rules does not, *ipso facto*, mean physical activities like hiking cannot be turned into games. In truth, as Suits was well aware, most 'everyday' activities could be 'gamed-up'. (Suits noted walking, solving scientific problems, and building houses could become games, for instance). Thus, antecedent behaviors might indeed be co-opted in two generic ways – literally *or* abstractly. And indeed, games in which antecedent behaviors are employed without added abstraction will look very much like their non-game counterparts.

My suspicion is that the difficulty in distinguishing certain lusory activities like running and hiking from their everyday counterparts may be largely responsible for the reluctance to call artificial challenges that primarily involve such literal skills games. For it is true that without contextual and psychological information, it might be hard for an observer to tell game 'hiking' from 'hiking' for exercise or 'hiking' for work. Still, as I will examine further below, Suits was clear that game construction aims at the production of good problems. It is a pragmatic enterprise where highly abstracted skills like those found in baseball may be helpful, but they are not necessary.

Suits's Alternate Method for Creating Games

This reasoning leads me to highlight an often overlooked aspect of Suits's (2005) definition. A lusory attitude could be employed in two different but comparable ways. As noted in the previous analysis, a lusory attitude can provoke a limitation of the means to an objective that would otherwise be too easy to attain. On the other hand, a lusory attitude can promote the selection of a goal that is already provocatively difficult to achieve. In essence, neighboring projects that are too easy or too hard are avoided in favor of one that is just right. In such cases, no constitutive work is needed. The unnecessary but provocative problem is fine, as is. The lusory work is done by choosing, rather than constructing or manipulation.

Suits made this position clear in the following way. He argued that when it comes to exercising the lusory attitude

> there is . . . no difference in principle between creating a challenge by an artificial prohibition of more efficient means to a goal and artificially choosing a goal just because the means for its achievement present a greater challenge than do the means for achieving a different goal. (Suits 2005, 87)

As Suits might put it, without drawing up any constitutive limitations, instead of climbing 'Mount Easy' one can choose to climb 'Mount Difficult' because it presents a more interesting challenge. This is something that Berman's (2013) analysis of sprints also ignored. That is, even if the rules of sprints facilitate an overall goal rather than place limitations to it, the overall goal is still fundamentally to engage in a stipulated artificial challenge. Just as a hiker may aim to travel by foot across the entirety of a mountain because it is hard to do, a sprinter may aim to travel a short distance by foot in a limited amount of time. Both are simple. Both are subtle. Phenomenologically, neither may have restrictive rules. Yet, both generate provocative artificial challenges.

Suits's point, then, was that purposely and unnecessarily engaging in an already difficult task and purposely interposing unnecessarily inefficient means for achieving given objectives are equivalent paths to games. Significantly, the reason for this comparability is the common presence and power of a lusory attitude. This is the analytical glue holding Suits's definition together. Whether by interjecting inefficiency in an otherwise easy task or embracing a task for its inherent difficulty, as long as one employs a lusory attitude, a game player can encounter an interesting problem just to see how well they can negotiate its challenges. For Suits, in a sense,

rules are beside the point. As long as one engages in an unnecessary challenge and employs a lusory attitude, it does not matter if the problem was constituted or discovered.[7]

Potential Historical Actualities

Together the two Suitsian routes to games have interesting implications for wilderness experiences. The second way to engage in a game could lead to the first. That is to say, a game without rules could one day become a game with rules.

For example, when climbers game-climb 'Mount Difficult' they may not place any limits on how they will pursue their lusory goal. Climbing is the most efficient means and it is hard enough as is. But if a new technology were invented and implemented – say an escalator were constructed to carry people to the top of 'Mount Difficult' – then for those who might be tempted to take the now-available easier route, a constitutive rule would have to be employed: no escalators allowed (i.e. getting to the top does not count if one uses the escalator). A real life example of this can be found at New Hampshire's Mount Washington, where climbers forgo a road and cog railway to reach New England's highest peak. Whether tacitly or explicitly, a constitutive rule is used to preserve the charms and challenges of what was once 'naturally' presented as an game-ready and game-appropriate interesting obstacle.

The point, then, is there appears to be certain games today that have constitutive limitations but that are also *simulations* of activities that historically could have been games without such rules. Indeed, it is precisely because the skills involved in activities such as hiking and climbing are so similar to behaviors describable solely by reference to regulative rules that these activities, hypothetically, could have existed at one point in time as games without any constitutive limitations at all. Hence, rather than being conceived as part of a game which embraces inefficient means though restrictive rules, there was a time in the past when the antecedent behaviors or literal skills involved in activities like hiking or climbing were the most efficient means available to a given end. This is not something that could be said for the more abstract skills involved in games like baseball.

In other words, the literal skills of game-hiking or climbing could all have been, at some point in time, the most efficient means available for reaching a work-a-day goal.[8] At the same time, if these activities were approached differently, that is, with the help of a lusory attitude, those same behaviors could have been converted to games without any need for restrictive constitutive rules.[9] Yet today, in the presence of technological advancements, many 'literal games' that previously would have had no need for rules almost always require constitutive restrictions.[10] As a result, there are rule governed games today that appear to be simulations of potential historical actualities that could have been games without any rules. With this in mind, to re-formulate my claim about wilderness inducing games, the games at present that might enhance wilderness experiences are games that hypothetically *could have* existed at one time and under certain condition without restrictive rules.

Rules and Wilderness

The majority of this paper so far has aimed to show that hiking, climbing, and similar activities present a unique breed of artificially construed or identified challenges that might be dubbed 'literal games'. That is, they are games whose constitutive skills are intelligible without stipulated reconstructions or at least minimal work in this regard. It remains to be shown how and why this type of game can promote wilderness experiences.

Although present day literal games may be shot through with human innovations such as novel equipment, strategically arranged markers, human-made trails, and conditions imposed by one's own designs, by giving themselves wholly to their game and allowing themselves to be 'taken away' by the 'drama' of traveling through wilderness and engaging with a 'naturally' difficult task, I propose athletes often enjoy experiences of separation from society. A sense of departure from civilization, feelings of risk and loneliness, intimate connections to flora and fauna, along with physical exertion and exhaustion, all enhanced by seemingly 'natural' or 'literal' tasks, derived from antecedently existing behaviors, can sweep sportspeople away into a sense of traversing through an 'authentically' wild terrain.

Importantly, this is not to say the games that align well with wilderness experiences cannot have rules. They often do. But in the heat of most games, rules recede to the background of awareness and go unformulated. As I already noted above in reference to Berman's (2013) critique and as will be addressed here in more depth, athletes live, as Polanyi might say, *from* constitutive rules toward artificial problems (Polanyi and Prosch, 1975). They do not live toward the rules. Just as Searle (1969) noted of the rules of language, it is possible to tacitly follow constitutive rules 'without necessarily knowing (in the sense of being able to formulate) that we do' (42). My contention is that when this happens, with a proper imaginative willingness, and within proper natural surroundings, artificial obstacles predicated on literal skills may appear to be presented purely by 'nature'. The phenomenal experience, in other words, is lived as unmediated, thereby accentuating 'the antipode of civilization'.

To show how this can happen, I need to draw comparisons to story-telling, mythology, and various other forms of art. From this, it should become evident that being 'swept away' by 'artificial' drama is not uncommon. Polanyi's theory of 'tacit knowledge' and 'frames' illustrates how this might occur.

Tacit Knowledge

The crux of Polanyi's theory and a point that is central to my analysis of wilderness experiences is that awareness is formed by two concurrent modes of knowing. According to Polanyi, the personal collection of subsidiaries through hands-on experience generates stores of tacit knowledge too complicated and vast in scope to fully explicate. What becomes known consciously, what is made explicit, becomes so only within what Polanyi termed 'focal awareness'. Importantly, while people find the explicable world within their focal awareness, they only are able to realize things focally because of their tacit 'subsidiary awareness'. That is, individuals tacitly know *from* their subsidiaries *to* their focal awareness.

Notably for my thesis, because of their complexity and because they are the source of focal awareness, subsidiaries necessarily remain tacit, implicit, and un-analyzable. Indeed, whenever a

person turns their attention from an object of focal awareness to the copious subsidiaries that brought it about, the original object of focus begins to dissolve from attention. In games, the meanings brought about by artificially construed rules often work this way. For example, if a baseball player critically examined the arbitrary constitutive rules that bought about the 'real' drama of baseball, that drama and the way in which it came to life in the first place would be lost from view. As Polanyi would say, subsidiaries work analogously to eye glasses. They are a source of unified vision, people know from them, but eye glasses cannot examine themselves.

Polanyi claimed all knowledge works this way. But he pointed out that moral judgments, creations of art, and religious experiences (and as I maintain, the drama of games) rely on imaginative integrations of subsidiaries to create coherent meanings in ways that other integrations of tacit knowledge do not (Kretchmar 2012). Because of their reliance on imaginative connections of various disparate subsidiaries, these types of experiences differ from the more easily explicable meanings produced by connections made by a scientist, for instance. A scientific integration of tacit knowledge becomes easily discernible once it is initially made. Imaginative tacit integrations of subsidiaries, however, require a constant willingness and effort on the part of observers to gather the meanings that tacit knowledge produces.

Wilderness Frames

For this reason, Polanyi explained that imaginative endeavors require what he called a 'frame'. A frame refers to a proper context and willingness that will allow a person to be, with the help of their imagination, 'carried away' by a work of art, story, song, film, play, poem, or religious experience. Importantly, contexts and intentions work together. The setting indeed 'facilitates', but one must also be willing to give oneself to a frame to allow its drama to be experienced as 'real'. If an environment provides proper subsidiaries and a person gives themselves fully to a frame, however, then they will be able to 'live' it.

My claim is that a 'wilderness frame' may be brought about in this way. And more specifically, it is often brought about with the help of a certain type of challenging games, namely games constituted on literal, rather than abstract skills. In such games, 'natural' surroundings and tacitly functioning constitutive rules can work as subsidiaries as one's focus falls upon a central task or problem that must be solved by means of antecedently existing behaviors that historically existed without reliance on constitutive rules. In this situation, with a willing imagination, as the rules and artificiality of games recede into the background of awareness, gamers can attend to a task whose antecedents relied wholly on regulative rules. If the setting appears appropriate and game participants are sufficiently focused, they can become 'swept away' by the drama of being engaged in solving problems presented purely by 'wild nature'. Meanwhile, notions of civilization will be far from sight.

As Polanyi asserted, when we watch a play, for instance, 'we accept the clues which the play offers to the imagination for sharing its meaning, and we live in this meaning rather than the meaning these events would have for us in our "interested lives lives"' (Polanyi and Prosch, 1975, p. 87). In the same way tacit knowledge allows us to be carried away by the frame of a play so that we perceive the drama on stage as meaningful, gamers can be carried away by

'wilderness frames' which allow them to experience the drama of wilderness as meaningful. The key to being carried away by a play is to experience the drama taking place on stage as 'really' happening. Likewise, the key to being carried away by wilderness is to experience an environment and very often a central task or problem as 'really' separated from civilization.

Nevertheless, as per Polanyi's theory, if a person turns their attention from the whole of a play to its constitutive parts, if they critically examine tacit subsidiaries and the environments that produce the play's drama, the meanings of this work of art would disintegrate. Likewise, if a person engulfed in a wilderness frame were to critically examine the subsidiaries that brought about the frame they would find a civilized world upon them. By focusing on their mechanisms of integration, they may gain some knowledge of the frame's parts. But, they will invariably lose their awareness of the integration itself. How the parts could have produced the integrated experience in focal awareness will then appear inexplicable. Thus, if a game-hiker, for instance, drawn to the so-called wilderness by certain physical challenges, attempted to explicate the tacit knowledge that made a sense of wilderness possible, along with constructed trails, maps, compasses, equipment, food, clothing, etc., the ultimate presence of human civilization – oneself as the source of the game and of the concept of wilderness itself – would cause the frame to dissolve. The subsidiaries that brought wilderness to focal awareness would lose their meaning.[11]

The weight of this argument concerning wilderness experiences now rests on drawing parallels between games and the arts, and ultimately between wilderness and mythology. For Polanyi, '*trans*natural' imaginative integrations extend to myth. 'As with the meanings in poems, paintings, films, (or games) meanings in myths can be considered 'real' within a proper frame. 'Myth is an all-encompassing work of art,' Polanyi wrote, 'which like any other great work of art fills its subjects with inexhaustible significance' (Polanyi and Prosch, 1975, p. 128). While he admits myths 'are clearly works of the imagination', this does not lead Polanyi to discount their authority. For the truth in mythologies, 'like the truth of works of art, can consist only in their power to evoke in us an experience which we hold to be genuine,' Polanyi claimed (Polanyi and Prosch p. 146).

Thus, in games of human design the perception of presupposed wildness brought about by an imaginative frame may yield to an underlying essence of human-induced control. However, human innovations, conventions, and conceptions need not ruin the 'all-encompassing' experience of wilderness. By providing access to a suitable frame they may bring wilderness's seeming reality to life. The right equipment, the most up to date technological devices, knowledge of regulative rules, a willing imagination, and a sufficiently challenging game can spur sportspeople to imaginatively employ tacit knowledge within naturalistic surrounding and bring wilderness to the fore of awareness. More specifically, within such surroundings, the physical exertion brought about by a sufficiently challenging game predicated on literal skills may help willing participants experience 'actually' being engaged in a 'natural' endeavor and separate from society. Instead of leaving a world of human designs for a world without, athletes may tacitly use human designs to create drama filled experiences where such designs are seemingly absent.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have linked wilderness experiences to games. I have argued activities like hiking, climbing, and the like can be games in the two senses that Suits described. As games they are admittedly unique in that their constitutive skills are what I have called literal skills. They were and are intelligible without the help of constitutive rules. This also suggests that these games could have existed as historical actualities without constitutive rules. Rather than products of complex abstractions, the constitutive skills in these games could be described literally. Nonetheless, once a lusory goal is sought with a lusory attitude, per Suits, a game has begun.

Moreover, when a lusory attitude gives rise to constitutive skills that are replications of literal antecedent behaviors, rules hold a heightened potential to be implicitly assumed rather than explicitly formulated. Indeed, rules can be 'hidden' twice over. Artificial challenges often bring meaningful drama to life specifically because the artificial facets that created those challenges get tacitly employed. Meanwhile, in games based on literal skills, rules may appear doubly obscured, as those skills are describable by means of regulative rules. When such games occur, within naturalistic surroundings, the drama games produce can then highlight a sense of remoteness and separation from society. This explains why certain games are apt to embellish wilderness experiences.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. This account of changing notions of wilderness is based on my knowledge of the history of the concept in the United States. It may not apply in precisely the same way to other histories and cultures. It may not even apply to all histories and cultures within the United States. For the contingencies behind Leopold's definition see Sutter (2002).

2. See Nash (2001), Cronon (1995), Sutter (2002), Henberg (1984), and Anderson (2001).

3. Here is Berman (2013) description: 'As far as the phenomenology of the participants is concerned, all of the following ingredients appear to be components of the prelusory goal for a sprinting contest: that the goal is to run, that the goal is to run a relatively short distance, and that the goal is to run that distance faster than competitors who are running the same distance. . . [Thus] the proper characterization of the prelusory goal of sprinting includes the activity of running as well as other features . . . the rules of sprinting do not preclude more efficient means of realizing the goal' (p. 165). It is worth noting that rules Berman describes as 'facilitative' rules are constitutive rules. Although the rule that you have to travel by foot in a sprint may not 'phenomenologically' limit means, the rule still, in part, constitutes what counts as 'sprinting.' The same should be said for stipulations that call from one to walk during mountain climb or hike.

4. Berman (2013) considered this point but dismissed it (167).

5. Berman speculated that if his argument had force, among other logical outcomes, it may be that Suits's definition is unsound. This is still a possibility. Perhaps Suits should not have said the *sole* effect of constitutive rules is to limit means. Rather, following Berman's lead, by limiting means, constitutive rules in games *also* facilitate new challenges and these challenges in their entirety could be seen as the goal or state of affairs for which a game's rules are devised.

6. See (Torres 2000) for a discussion of 'constitutive skills'.

7. When Suits (2005) specifically addressed mountain climbing he never claimed there were any rules. He said *if* a mountain had an escalator, its use would be prohibited. This hypothetical prohibition, he claimed, evidenced the lusory attitude. In this example, however, the escalator was *imagined* as was the rule pertaining to its prohibition (85–87). Ultimately, then, it is the lusory attitude that is primary, not constitutive rules, in any act of gamewrighting or engagement. The lusory attitude causes people to create rules that gratuitously limit means to ends, just as it causes people gratuitously to search out inherently difficult problems. It is also worth noting, this analysis of games without rules speaks specifically to tests. In contests, at least one rule is needed to specify a starting time, see Suits (2005, 67–76).

8. If a person takes a 'job' because of the gratuitous challenges it entails there is a game element here, especially if the individual had other job options and chose to take the 'game-up' job particularly to engage with challenges that they would not have engaged in otherwise. This would be comparable to 'professional' athletes who chose their employment not out of necessity but *just so* they could engage a particular problem.

9. Suits appeared to be well aware of this. As he (2005) noted, after conquering the world (presumably as 'work') if Alexander the Great so chose he could have played a game had he 'given it all back and started all over again' with a lusory attitude (157).

10. A place where still no restrictions are implemented in a game might be climbing Mount Everest. The goal is to reach the summit and back, no matter the means.

11. Of course, it may be for this very reason that artificial limitations may remain tacit. Analyzing the parts of a frame is what I have tried to do in this essay. In doing so, it is true that this essay may actually problematize wilderness experiences. That is, if a person turned their attention to the artificiality of a lusory goal then it may be harder to think of oneself as separate from society. However, as I said at the outset, this is not a normative prescription for wilderness but an interpretation. At the same time, I continue to wonder whether explicit knowledge of games must ruin wilderness. Game-players generally do not find artificial obstacles at odds with genuine drama. And, if you look at the history of wilderness (at least in the United States) you see 'wildness' diminishing within conceptions of wilderness. It may be a historical derived cultural bias to hold that game behavior and wilderness should not co-exist.

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