



## ESPORTS: PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

**Athanasios Kanellopoulos<sup>i</sup>,**

**Yiannis Giossos**

School of Physical Education and Sports Science,  
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,  
Athens, Greece

### **Abstract:**

Esports are increasingly popular and are becoming more similar to conventional sports. This is due to the social interaction and community-building aspects, as well as the sporting elements embedded in the virtual environments of the video games they include. Esports are a topic of interest for the interdisciplinary field of Philosophy of Sport, which examines the various dimensions of sport in relation to human values. The aim of this paper is to illuminate the existing philosophical debate on the relationship between esports and the Philosophy of Sport. The paper is a philosophical work that aims to highlight the arguments of sports philosophers on esports over the last twenty years. The argument of this paper is that the focus of philosophical interest is not located in matters of ethics but also not in the human being itself. The majority of philosophical papers on esports focus on whether they can be considered real sports or Olympic sports. Other topics include their definition or institutionalisation, physicality, skill requirements, cheating, and corruption. Rules and the identity of esports players are also of concern to philosophers in the field of Philosophy of Sport. This research is significant due to its relevance and timeliness in the field of esports, as well as its contribution to philosophical discussions surrounding the topic. By advancing both philosophical and empirical research and providing ample material for reflection and debate, the paper is a valuable resource for researchers interested in studying and reflecting on esports.

**Keywords:** video games; philosophy of sport; sport; phenomenology; Olympic games

### **1. Introduction**

Digital technology has changed modern sports culture, leading to new forms of competition based on video game players (Edgar, 2019). These are known as esports, which are organized competitive video games where players compete against each other online or through a local area network (LAN). Esports are a significant topic of interest

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [a.kanellopoulos@phed.uoa.gr](mailto:a.kanellopoulos@phed.uoa.gr)

within the academic field of study. As indicated by Brock (2023), meta-analyses indicate that the field has evolved from a state of near absence in 2002 to encompass numerous research disciplines by 2018, including Business Administration, Sports Science, Psychology, Computer Science, Law, Education, Sociology, and others (Reitman *et al.*, 2020). The Philosophy of Sport has, also, identified concerns surrounding esports. They present both a challenge and an opportunity for the discipline. While their existence challenges the traditional boundaries between sports and leisure, esports also offer an avenue for philosophical inquiry. This paper aims to illuminate the existing philosophical debate on the relationship between esports and the Philosophy of Sport.

The paper is a philosophical work that aims to highlight the arguments of sports philosophers on esports over the last twenty years. The thesis supported by this philosophical paper is that the focus of philosophical interest is not located in matters of ethics but also not in the human being itself. For this reason, the theses and reflections published in the two leading journals between 2005 and 2024 on the philosophy of sport—namely *The Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* and *Sport, Ethics, and Philosophy*—will be presented. Additionally, selected publications from related fields of sport with a philosophical approach will be included. It should be noted that this paper will also include arguments concerning digital games (or virtual games or video games), as these are the basis for the existence of esports.

The significance of this research lies in the relevance and timeliness of the topic of esports, as well as the emergence of concerns expressed by philosophers of sport. This is valuable for researchers interested in studying and reflecting on esports, promoting both philosophical and empirical research, and stimulating debate. Esports is a human activity that is likely to be here to stay.

## 2. Esports and Philosophy of Sport

The term *esports* is distinct from *gaming*, which refers to interactive entertainment with video games without organized competitive processes and often without competition against other players, but only against the computer machine. Esports are organized into tournaments and/or championships in which players compete for a specific prize (Adams *et al.*, 2019; Llorens, 2017).

Esports refer to a wide variety of video games, which can be categorized as fighting games, strategy games, sports video games, and metagames (Carlson, 2013; Farquhar, 2019; Funk *et al.*, 2018; Hemmingsen, 2021; Jonasson and Thiborg, 2010; Llorens, 2017; Mirabito and Kucek, 2019; Sturm, 2019; Young and Strait, 2019). Also, besides single-player video games, esports also include Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) or Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) (Jenny *et al.*, 2017; Koo, 2009). Esports constitute an ecosystem of interacting and interdependent factors and parameters, such as players, coaches, spectators, video games, game designers, video game publishers, tournament organizers, sponsors, and generally economic, administrative, social, technological, and athletic factors (Kanellopoulos and Giossos, 2024). Within this ecosystem, esports are characterized by social interaction,

competition, economic and cultural elements, entertainment, popularity, and professionalism (Kanellopoulos and Giossos, 2024).

Esports are attempting to be associated with modern traditional sports due to their categorization and organization of major events and championships, similar to conventional sports. Esports are becoming increasingly similar to conventional sports, due to the social interaction and community-building aspects for players and spectators, as well as the sporting elements embedded in the virtual environments of esports with sport-based video games (Miah, 2017). The attempt to link esports to contemporary sport is evident from the various announcements and discussions regarding their inclusion in the Olympics as a demonstration and medal event (Billings and Hou, 2019; IOC, 2023; Palar, 2021).

Regarding the discipline of Philosophy of Sport in particular, this is an interdisciplinary field that was formally organized in the 1970s. It explores the metaphysical dimensions, ethical complexities, social and political functions, and other dimensions of sport related to human values, leading to a change in the scope and focus of the problems it studies from ancient Greek concepts (Lunt and Dyreson, 2014). In terms of esports, their popularity has led to a broader discussion within the field of Philosophy of Sport regarding its relationship with contemporary sport.

It is evident that, regarding other issues pertaining to the Philosophy of Sport, esports have not been extensively discussed in academic philosophical literature. This is perhaps due to the relatively recent emergence of esports as a phenomenon that has only taken significant proportions in the last two decades. Nevertheless, the main topic of philosophical discussion appears to be the relationship between esports and conventional sports. Discussions in the literature are based on theories of sport and play articulated within the philosophy and sociology of sport, with prominent scholars in this area including Suits (2007, 2014), Guttmann (2004), Caillois (2001) and Huizinga (2016). However, sports philosophers have also proposed theses on esports, drawing on the ideas of Heidegger (1977), Deleuze (1990), and Goffmann (1956), among others.

The following paragraphs will discuss the main philosophical concerns related to esports. These include the definition of esports, whether esports meet the criteria to be considered a sport, or even an Olympic sport. Additionally, the place of esports in modern sport will be considered. Finally, a philosophical debate will be held on the criteria for their institutionalisation, physicality and skills, as well as on issues of cheating and corruption in e-sports. The rules and identity of players in eSports are also of concern to researchers in the field of the philosophy of sport.

The plurality of the aforementioned themes is in accordance with Brock (2023), who highlights the fragmentation of research on esports across various disciplines, including the Philosophy of Sport, which itself is an interdisciplinary field of thought. This, according to Brock (2023), gives rise to the formation of disparate ontological and epistemological commitments, which are susceptible to challenge. Brock (2023) proposes an interdisciplinary approach based on the Philosophy of Science and *critical realism* that combines realism and critical theory as a solution to this problem. The study of the structural properties of the competitive environment of esports, its cultural and cognitive

factors, its institutional framework and the adaptability of those involved with it to the above elements creates an integrated critical realist framework that leads to a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of esports (Brock, 2023).

## 2.1 Defining Esports

The effort to define esports is a common occurrence in the literature. While the definition of a concept may be considered to be predominantly an object of thought and debate in philosophy, the attempt to define esports is not limited to the field of Philosophy of Sport. As will be reflected at the end of this section, perhaps the most appropriate definition that could be attributed to them is the organised competitive mode of engaging in video games. The term “esports” was first used in 2017 by the Associated Press (Adams *et al.*, 2019), although it was also used unofficially several years before when esports began to develop to a large extent (Söderin, 2017; Wagner, 2007).

It is evident that there is no universally accepted definition of esports in the literature. Attempting to define esports is a challenging task, given that the term encompasses a multitude of elements, including cultural aspects, technology, sport, entrepreneurship, video games, entertainment, and communication media (Jenny *et al.*, 2017). In order to define esports, it is necessary to employ both theoretical and empirical approaches in order to highlight both the role of interactivity and the general characteristics of the culture of engagement with video games, i.e. gaming (Adams *et al.*, 2019). In the following, some of the attempts made to assign a definition to them will be presented.

The contribution of research to the study and analysis of esports is limited, resulting in research gaps related to their organisational structure and the experiences of the players themselves. The existing (mostly empirical) research on esports is largely descriptive and relates to past events. It mainly explores the reasons why spectators watch them, their consumer nature, competition, and the challenges they pose (Adams *et al.*, 2019).

From a philosophical perspective, the endeavour to define esports was initiated by Wagner (2006), who initially extended Tiedemann's (2004) definition of conventional sports to encompass esports. For Tiedemann (2004), sports are a set of activities where people develop and train their mental and physical abilities in order to compete with each other or to participate simply for recreational purposes. Wagner (2006) further expanded this definition to include the specific technologies employed by esports players, namely Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In particular, Wagner (2006) conceptualised esports as a domain of sporting activities where individuals engage in the training of mental or physical abilities through the utilisation of ICT (Jenny *et al.*, 2017). For Wagner (2006), esports represents the competitive, professional form of *gaming*.

However, this definition of esports is not entirely satisfactory, as it separates cognitive from physical skills, ignores the competitive events that form the basis of esports, and fails to acknowledge the online aspect. This has led to considerable debate about the extent to which physical skills are involved in esports (Jenny *et al.*, 2017). In

light of these considerations, Jenny *et al.* (2017) propose that organised video game competitions should be defined as esports.

In addition to Jenny *et al.* (2017), Witkowski (2012) also criticized Wagner's (2006) definition because the mere inclusion of ICT use in sports may include ICT-related activities that are not part of esports. Esports are a category of so-called "Sport 2.0", in which ICTs are linked to sport in various ways (Miah, 2017). Certainly, however, esports are based on the mediated use of computers via the internet or local area network (LAN), with players playing either individually or in teams in order to compete with each other (Adams *et al.*, 2019).

It is debatable whether esports can be defined solely on the basis of technology. Adams *et al.* (2019) argue that they are more than this, as they are characterised by a unique combination of language, terminology, behaviours, and shared passion that involves the participants. It would be more appropriate to link the term "esports" to the term "gaming", as defined by Wagner (2006).

In their 2019 analysis, Adams *et al.* sought to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts involved in Wagner's (2006) definition of esports. They defined esports as a form of "gaming", which they defined as a modern term for electronic-style interactive entertainment through video games. A video game must possess a competitive element that is made increasingly challenging, either by the game itself (i.e., by the video game designers) or by the gaming community, which is created on the basis of the particular video game. To comprehend this phenomenon, it is essential to acknowledge that it is frequently the video game communities, which are constituted by the players and all those associated with a specific video game, that determine the terms and regulations of a competition, or even the modification of the rules of the video game itself.

Returning to the analysis of Adams *et al.* (2019), it is evident that electronic interactive entertainment through video games should be organised. This would entail the video game industry creating tournaments and/or leagues in which players would take part. However, in addition to the players and the video game industry organising the competitions, there should be something else, according to Adams *et al.* (2019). This is a prize for the winner, regardless of its nature. It can be as simple as the cheers and approval of the viewers. The prize differentiates esports from mere entertainment through video games, which can exist among friends with a competitive nature but only as entertainment and fun (Adams *et al.*, 2019).

Another attempt to define esports was made by Segal (2014), who defined esports as *electronic video games played online*. Segal (2014) argued that although esports can be likened to conventional sports, since they have several similarities, they differ in that their players do not move from the place where they play. It is important to note that this is not always the case. Professional esports players are frequently required to relocate for the various tournaments or leagues that are held. Furthermore, due to the transfers that occur in esports teams, players may even change their places of residence (Adams *et al.*, 2019).

A concern that exists and that also relates to the content of the concept of esports is the extent to which human participates in them. Does the use of technology override

human activity? Adams *et al.* (2019) argue that electronic systems (i.e. computers) are simply an initial facilitation for the activity of esports. Esports require human activity; therefore, they are defined as competitive video games (both professional and amateur) that are organised through tournaments and leagues, sponsored by business organisations, and where people can gather to watch them. Similarly, Whalen (2013) argues that esports is a term used to describe organised and sanctioned video game competitions that take place within a video game tournament.

The actions of players in the real world have an impact on the virtual world of video games. Consequently, Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) define esports as those sports in which competitive games are played and facilitated by electronic systems that connect players and teams to each other through a human-computer interface. This definition emphasises the mediating nature of esports, which is facilitated by the internet and the virtual worlds in which they take place (Adams *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, Hemphill (2005) posits that esports involving video game simulations of sporting activities are embodied sporting practices with specific skills. They constitute a form of cybersport (Holt, 2016), which may be defined as an alternative sporting reality where athletes engage with sporting worlds represented digitally.

The preceding discussion indicates the difficulty in providing a clear definition of esports. However, the majority of views expressed in the existing literature converge on the idea that they are organised competitive video games, where players compete against each other over the internet or local area network (LAN). This activity, which resembles that of conventional sport, raises the question of whether it can be considered a sport for sports philosophers.

## 2.2 Esports as a Real Sport

The relationship between esports and conventional sports assumes that both are real sports. The concept of esports was first explored by Hemphill (2005), who investigated the potential of video game simulations of sports such as motorsports, football, and basketball. Drawing on the theory of Suits (2007, 2014) and the views of Meier (1981, 1988), he used a phenomenological approach to assess the physicality of video games: for him, an activity can only be considered a sport if it involves physical skills. Hemphill (2005) considers video games to be cybersports and sports that create alternative sporting realities: athletes 'expand' into digitally represented worlds, possessing the characteristics of immersion, interactivity, and cybersport intelligence, in line with Kretchmar's (2005) sport intelligence.

Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) explore the question of whether esports can be considered real sports, using Guttmann's (2004) definition of sport as an organized, competitive, and physical game. Esports are considered to possess the 'sporting qualities' of conventional sports. According to Guttmann (2004), sport is a social construct defined by the sporting 'world', which includes athletes, journalists, spectators, and others (Jonasson and Thiborg, 2010).

However, Holt (2016) argues that Hemphill's (2005) cyber sports cannot be classified as real sports because the physical skills of the players are not demonstrated in

the same venue as their performance. Additionally, esports video games lack prelusory goals and constitutive rules, which are necessary for a sport to exist according to Suits' theory (2007, 2014). Hemphill (2005) argues that there is no distinction between fine and gross motor skills, suggesting that esports involve physical skills and should be considered sports. Holt (2016) believes that the issue lies in esports that do not simulate real sports, based on the physicality criterion of a sport. According to Holt (2016), esports' simulations using devices such as Wii Sports can be more readily accepted as real sports due to their incorporation of physical activity that engages the entire body. The use of simulators also aids in the performance and application of motor skills in a unified space that integrates both the real and virtual environments.

The characteristics of virtuality and simulation are also discussed by Parry (2021) and Parry and Giesbrecht (2023) in the context of their reflections on the 2021 Olympic Virtual Series and 2023 Olympic Esports Series organised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the categories of esports included in them. Parry (2021) and Parry and Giesbrecht (2023) argue that only sports which are based upon specific, conventional sports with a specific mode of performance can be considered real sports. In a more specific analysis, they conclude that only two types of esports, namely virtual static rowing, and virtual static cycling, possess the requisite physical skills to be considered real sports. These two virtual sports belong to the category of esports with motion-based sports video games.

It is clear that there is a discrepancy of opinion with regard to the classification of virtual sports. Those in favour of a different approach believe that the only element of virtuality they have is the recording of the players' performance on a digital platform; they consider this to be digital measurement of the players' performance (Parry and Giesbrecht, 2023). In their 2023 paper, Parry and Giesbrecht argue that there can be no virtual sport, as in the virtual worlds of video games, virtuality refers to the players' experience rather than their physical effort. In any esports that are considered virtual, the physical effort of the players is real, occurring in the real world. Similarly, the events and avatars of video games are also real, as they are determined and created by the software and technology in question. (Parry and Giesbrecht, 2023)

Real sports, however, require real experience involving the body, not virtual. For this very reason, according to Parry and Giesbrecht (2023), simulations in this category are real sports, even constituting a sport category of their own (for example, cycling or indoor rowing). These simulations should not be classified as virtual or esports. The physical effort in these sports is real, just as the sporting experience experienced by the players is real since the virtual environments in which the digital performance measurement is displayed and the representation of the players through avatars do not affect it.

Returning to Holt (2016), he argues that the constitutive rules of esports, according to Suits' theory (2007, 2014), are embedded in the game software and cannot be broken by players. Therefore, these are not rules that make up the game, but regularities that are more akin to the laws of nature. In addition, certain esports do not have prelusory goals

that aim to achieve a particular virtual *state of affairs*, but instead these goals depend on the rules that define the virtual space in which they apply (Holt, 2016).

Şentuna and Kanbur (2016) also discuss the question of whether virtual games should be considered real sports. They note that virtual games lack the physical activity present in conventional sports, as argued by Sunay and Saracaloglu (2003) and Tanriverdi (2012). However, there are several similarities that can be found in that element of Suits' theory (2007, 2014) between conventional sports and esports, such as the widespread attendance of fans and the emotions they experience while watching. The players share similarities in their daily and intense training, discipline, commitment, dedication, concentration, and decision-making abilities (Şentuna and Kanbur, 2016). The team members also have a unified identity, wearing their own uniforms and undergoing physical training. High salaries and expensive transfers between teams are also common (Şentuna and Kanbur, 2016).

According to Şentuna and Kanbur (2016), both players and spectators based on subjective perception rather than objective evidence consider esports as real sports. This perspective is not entirely unfounded, as individuals often seek novel forms of entertainment and may resort to unconventional methods, even if they have no practical application. This concept is reminiscent of Deleuze's (1990) notion of the ghost, which Şentuna and Kanbur (2016) explore. However, for institutional recognition as a sport, a wider global acceptance is necessary. This process may take time, but it is not necessarily far away (Şentuna and Kanbur, 2016).

In addition to the previously mentioned researchers, Jenny *et al.* (2017) provide a concise history of esports and a definition of esports to discuss whether they should be considered real sports. They also refer to the definitions of Suits (2007, 2014) and Guttmann (2004). According to them, esports are organized video game competitions that involve competitive play and are governed by rules. They require skills and have a wide audience. However, some may consider this particular competition inadequate, as it does not involve physical contact with opponents. Additionally, esports lack physicality, except for those based on motion-based video games, and institutionalization. According to Jenny *et al.* (2017), motion-based video game esports can be considered real sports, but more time is needed to establish their stability and resolve any institutionalization issues. It can be concluded that the emergence of esports necessitates the revision and development of current definitions of sports, as noted by Jenny *et al.* (2017) and Jonasson and Thiborg (2010).

However, Llorens (2017) examines whether esports can be considered sports and the characteristics they must possess to be classified as such. She also explores the challenges that this new sport practice faces. Based on Suits' (2007, 2014) and Guttmann's (2004) definitions, Llorens (2017) distinguishes between mere engagement with video games (gaming) and esports. Esports are based on real competitive games with team competition and the aim of winning. Matches are played online or in local area network (LAN) competitions, with fixed time and game sets. Esports require personal interaction, concentration, skill, precision, body control, strategy, stamina, fast movements, and team strategy. Due to these elements, esports are considered a real sport (Llorens, 2017).



However, a potential issue with this perspective is the question of whether esports players should be recognised as athletes. This has implications for both public policy on sport and labour law for professional players (Llorens, 2017). Additionally, the recognition of esports as a legitimate sport by relevant authorities in each state would result in the provision of infrastructure, training, and support for players.

Pato and Remillard (2018) argue that esports video games should be considered a real sport. They suggest that while physical sports result from the simplification of their context, virtual sports result from the elimination of physical reality. According to the authors, sports are a human activity that is independent of the environment in which it is conducted, whether it is real or virtual (Pato and Remillard, 2018). Virtual sports can be considered sports if they retain their recreational and competitive elements. The distinction between a game and a sport is not based on the content, but rather on the meaning attributed to it and the way it is experienced by players and/or spectators. Therefore, any activity in life can become a sport or a virtual sport (Pato and Remillard, 2018). Şentuna and Kanbur (2016) also made a similar argument.

Pato and Remillard (2018) do not include physical abilities as a necessary component in the definition of sports, contrary to the argument made by Van Hilvoorde and Pot (2016) and others. The use of digital platforms and technology to transform the physical experience into a different one does not eliminate the sporting dimension of the activity. It is likely to preserve the emotional, social, and intellectual experience of sport and may even enhance it, creating new forms of reality. The aim is to establish the point at which a game becomes a sport and is no longer just a game (Pato and Remillard, 2018). The distinction between virtual games and virtual sports is determined by the outcomes of the actions that occur in each.

Pato and Remillard (2018) use Heidegger's analysis of the nature of technology (Heidegger, 1977) to distinguish between the virtual and the real. Their hermeneutic approach to sports examines the changes in meaning that occur when engaging with them in physical space or a virtual environment. To address this issue, the authors draw on Pierre Levy's (1998) work on the perception of the virtual as a powerful mode of being that emphasises processes of creation. In their study, Pato and Remillard (2018) describe the process that led individuals from work to recreational play, then to games, and finally to sports through the repeated application of a kind of "virtualization". Thus, it is concluded that esports represent the ultimate goal of a utopian process of humanisation developed through play. Technology is developed to facilitate everything, but ultimately, there is always a return to sport, and so effort, both physical and mental, returns with it. This is precisely what prevents human activity from becoming lost in technology.

Carlson (2013) studied esports and specifically fantasy sports, an important sector of the sports industry in the USA. Fantasy sports are based on activities in which players simulate the ownership, management, and certain aspects of coaching a selected group of real players in a particular conventional sport. Carlson (2013) addressed the metaphysics and ethics of fantasy sports, discussing them in relation to other competitive games, sporting games or games of cards, and in relation to the viewing of sports. Carlson's argument draws on the theories of Huizinga (2016), Caillois (2001) and Suits

(2014). According to Carlson (2013), competitive games that are not the real sports themselves, but rather rely on the real sports and alter viewers' perceptions of them, are considered 'parasitic'. These games contribute to the collective cultural views of the real sports. They also promote the viewing of sports, but direct viewers engaged in fantasy sports to focus on specific aspects of the sports that are relevant to their fantasy teams (Carlson, 2013).

Hemmingsen (2021) argues that metagames, an esports category in which players exploit bugs in software code, cannot be considered a real sport or esports. This is because, according to Suits' (2007, 2014) definition, metagames does not rely on the player's skills, despite the presence of competition. Instead, the competition is based on the 'physics' of the game, which includes the software and the player's actions in the real world. Hemmingsen (2021) argues that in metagames, subjective evaluations should be excluded unless clearly marked as such. Metagames are not virtual sports, as they do not rely on a specific number of attempts for competition. Instead, the competition is based on the 'physics' of the game, which includes the software and the player's actions in the real world. This highlights the importance of a player's perseverance and mental resilience. Thus, metagames emphasise the development of collaborative knowledge within the community, rather than competition aimed solely at pushing the game to its limits (Hemmingsen, 2021).

### **2.3 Esports and Olympic Sports**

In the philosophy of sport, there is debate not only about whether esports qualify as a sport, but also about their potential inclusion in the Olympic Games. Hallmann and Giel (2017) evaluate whether esports meet the five criteria for Olympic sports: physicality, recreation, competition, organizational structures, and widespread acceptance. Hallmann and Giel (2017) argue that esports meet the above criteria, except for physicality, and have organizational structures that the International Olympic Committee considers valuable and rule-governed, making them eligible for inclusion in the Olympic Games. They argue that esports could be considered a real sport and included in the Olympic Games if appropriate organizational structures are put in place, including a strong umbrella organization. However, their highly commercial nature is seen as a disadvantage for the sporting community.

In contrast, Parry (2019) disagrees that esports should be considered Olympic sports. The author defines an Olympic sport as a competition of human physical abilities subject to specific rules. The definition is based on conceptual analysis and excludes subjective evaluations. The author disagrees with existing definitions of sport, such as those proposed by Llorens (2017) and Jenny *et al.* (2017) and argues that similarities between esports and conventional sports are irrelevant.

Parry (2019) identifies the following characteristics of Olympic sports: they involve human activity, require gross physical participation and high-level skills, include competition, and operate within a regulatory and institutionalised framework. According to Parry (2019), esports involve indirect human activity through the computer, require indirect physicality, and involve subtle motor skills rather than gross motor skills

typically required in sports. Esports lack stable organisational structures with legal status and are not overseen by national or international institutions. Instead, they are organised and managed by private companies, resulting in executive ownership. The rapid and commercialised development of video games, coupled with the intense competition in the industry, has created a context that is challenging for the creation of stable organisational structures that are typical of sport (Parry, 2019).

As previously stated, Parry (2021) and Parry and Giesbrecht (2023) maintain that esports must be defined as real sports only when they can be considered to simulate conventional sports in a specific manner. If these conditions are met, as set out by Parry (2019), they argue that these could be considered as Olympic sports. In particular, they refer to virtual static cycling and virtual static rowing, which, for them, are not virtual sports but constitute a specific category of real sports in their own right (Parry and Giesbrecht, 2023). With regard to the simulations of other conventional sports, such as Taekwondo, included in the IOC's 2023 Olympic Esports Series, Parry and Giesbrecht (2023) argue that they cannot be considered real sports. This is because they are not serial competitive processes, with opponents competing simultaneously through avatars and not one after the other. This inability to support technological requirements renders them unsuitable for inclusion in the Olympic Games.

Conversely, esports that involve sedentary video games, such as FIFA, cannot be considered real sports because they do not require the appropriate physical exertion of the players to represent the sport in question (Parry and Giesbrecht, 2023). Video games based on representations of conventional sports are not themselves sports (Parry and Giesbrecht, 2023). The outcome of the virtual representation of the sport is the determining factor in players' performance, rather than their physical effort, which is not the same as that required in the video game sport. This category of esports does not differ from war strategy esports, except in terms of their content, which is of a sports type (Parry and Giesbrecht, 2023). For Parry (2021), the arguments put forth in favour of including esports in the Olympic Games programme, namely that they are similar to conventional sports, that they have been accepted by the sporting world (players, spectators and sports media) and that they have been recognised by certain institutions, are not sufficient to argue that they can and should be included in the Olympic Games programme. Consequently, the content of video games in esports is not the sole factor that precludes esports from being considered an Olympic sport. In light of the aforementioned considerations, Parry (2019) argues that esports, along with other "alternative" mind-related sports, may be considered sports. However, they are not yet included in the Olympic Games.

Mareš and Novotný (2023) critique Parry's (2019) argument, stating that the criteria he presents do not adequately represent all sports, particularly their competitive element. They argue that Parry's (2019) focus on performance, comparison, competition, results, records, and the bureaucratic organization of sports leads to a narrow definition of sports, as there are other individual and cooperative forms of sport that are also considered sports. Mareš and Novotný (2023) argue that sports should prioritize both recreational and structured competitive play, even in Olympic sports where these

elements are often overshadowed by their elite nature. The authors contend that esports should be considered sports due to their competitive and playful nature, as well as the structured format of the games, all of which are inherent components of conventional sports (Mareš and Novotný, 2023).

Mareš and Novotný (2023) critiqued Parry's (2019) definition on two main points. Firstly, they argued that the definition implies that all sports must have the necessary conditions of Olympic sports. Secondly, they noted that the definition does not reference the structure of a competitive game or its recreational characteristics. In response to this criticism, Parry (2023) provided a specific response. He argued that his definition only applies to Olympic sports because he was trying to determine whether esports meet the necessary criteria to be classified as such. This does not mean that all existing sports must follow this definition. He believes that each candidate sport should be analysed individually to determine whether it is a true sport. In a broader context, esports can be considered sports because there are sports that are not Olympic sports. Parry (2023) explains that not all competitive games and playful activities can be considered sports, based on Suits' (2014) theory regarding the necessary characteristics of sports.

## 2.4 The Physicality and Skills of Esports

As discussed in the literature, two key criteria for classifying a sporting activity as a sport are the body's participation and the required skills. Van Hilvoorde and Pot (2016) discuss the physicality and motor skills involved in esports. The authors argue that esports involve the learning and performance of specific motor skills, and that in some cases, they can even be considered a sport. They support their argument using the phenomenological approach of virtual embodiment, focusing on esports that simulate traditional sports.

Van Hilvoorde and Pot (2016) argue that esports can be used to cultivate digital literacy but cannot be integrated into physical education due to the lack of required direct and visible interaction between participants. They suggest that esports should be excluded from physical education as it is not a valuable pedagogical tool for this purpose. The pedagogical value of group sports depends largely on the direct juxtaposition of the athletes' actions, which is visible to all (Van Hilvoorde and Pot, 2016).

However, Ekdahl and Ravn (2019) also reflect on the participation of the body in esports, focusing on the embodied senses of professional esports players through which they perceive and experience the virtual worlds of video games. Esports may involve both physical and mental aspects. However, to understand the relationship between a professional esports' player and the virtual world of the respective video game, it is important to consider the physical and mental dimensions of the player together rather than separately. According to Ekdahl and Ravn (2019), players in esports engage both perceptually and sensorially, resulting in embodied engagement.

They argue that there is no objective spatiality in esports. The perception of an individual is influenced by the way their body is attuned and integrated with the surrounding space, resulting in a subjective sense of space. Ekdahl and Ravn (2019) argue that Merleau-Ponty's (2005) concept of *praktegnosia*, which refers to the way our practical

abilities shape our perception of the world, is relevant here. Merleau-Ponty also discussed the *virtual body*. The term 'virtual body' refers to the physical or kinetic relationship between the subject's body and the surrounding world, viewed as a field of possibility rather than a specific given. This definition emphasizes the subject's potential for interaction with their environment.

Professional esports players are capable of perceiving what is possible and achievable in the virtual worlds they operate in (Ekdahl and Ravn, 2019). Similar to traditional athletes, players immerse themselves in the virtual worlds to outdo themselves, requiring physical attunement to the virtual environment and the development of kinesthesia (Ekdahl and Ravn, 2019). In esports, new sensory motor systems are created, leading to an understanding of the somatization of professional esports players from a phenomenological perspective (Ekdahl and Ravn, 2019).

Additionally, Larsen (2020) developed a theory encompassing all the skills required in esports. The theory is based on the observation of over 100 hours of esports broadcasts on Twitch.tv, YouTube, and AfreecaTV. It is supported by discussions, reflections, and evaluations with esports players. The theory of skills in esports addresses seven specific domains (Larsen, 2020). It is based on game ontology, player epistemology, and socialization. Game ontology deals with the inner workings of the game, including objects and the game system. Player epistemology deals with player knowledge and emotions, metagame, reading the opponent, and emotional discipline. Socialization deals with player relationships, team cohesion, and player social skills.

Larsen's theory (2020) identifies seven skill areas: (1) knowledge of the properties, behaviors, and relationships of objects (weapons, tools, characters, etc.) of the game and their values, which can and do change in any game upgrade, (2) insight into the game systems, (3) understanding the metagame<sup>ii</sup>, (4) "reading" the opponent (known as *yomi*) by assessing their next move and intentions, (5) executing the game, (6) maintaining emotional discipline to avoid reacting impulsively, and (7) promoting team cohesion are all important factors in esports. Team-based esports involve dynamics between team members both in and out of the game, and require social skills, communication, and a willingness to learn.

## 2.5 The Institutionalization and Governance of Esports

According to Suits (2007, 2014), sport is characterised by institutionalization. Abanazir (2019) reflects on the institutionalization of esports, which encompasses the creation of institutions, organization and administration, regulation, and management of sport (Abanazir, 2019). Esports share similarities with conventional sports, as they both have organized tournaments and require administration.

---

<sup>ii</sup> Metagame understanding may be defined as a player's awareness of and ability to navigate their performance in the context of the video game itself (Donaldson, 2017). In the view of Donaldson (2017), this may entail the formulation of new strategies, the utilisation of mathematical techniques to ascertain the efficacy of a specific video game object (e.g. a tool of considerable avatar) or a combination of skills, or the analysis of data with a view to enhancing the player's effectiveness in the game.

However, in esports, the rules of the game are determined by the software code created by the developer and/or publisher of the video game, giving them direct control over the rules (Abanazir, 2019). The organizational structures in esports are based on video game publishers, franchisors, or third parties. This correlation between the interests of the organizers and the practice of esports is a problem (Abanazir, 2019). Many video game publishers have their own views, plans, and financial interests, which can lead to frequent withdrawal of video games from the market due to their unpopularity. Additional issues arise from changes to the virtual environment of video games through patches or upgrades made by the publishing company, which can be confusing for both players and viewers. Furthermore, the level of institutionalization of esports varies greatly from country to country.

All the characteristics listed above have an impact on both the normative and institutional framework of esports. According to Abanazir (2019), the institutionalization of esports cannot be compared to that of conventional sports as it is still in its early stages. Therefore, it cannot be used as a criterion for considering esports as a true sport. A uniform level of institutionalization should be established for esports management and organization, despite the potential antitrust law violations that may arise due to the private context of esports institutions (Abanazir, 2019).

Funk *et al.* (2018) suggest that esports and their associated sporting events should be managed within the framework of contemporary conventional sports. They argue that esports meet the criteria outlined by Suits (2007, 2014) to be classified as a sport, or are at least evolving in that direction (Funk *et al.*, 2018). They share many characteristics with conventional sports, including professionalism, uniforms, coaches, managers, agents, championships, major events, contracts, transfer fees, commentators, broadcasts, college scholarships, match-fixing, doping, gender exclusions, popularity, corporate sponsors, financial gains, and work and residence permits.

Both esports and conventional sports serve primarily as entertainment, fulfilling similar motivations for their spectators, such as socialization, appreciation of athlete performance, and admiration of iconic achievements (Funk *et al.*, 2018). As a result, both categories of sports satisfy similar consumer needs and require administration to meet them. However, they also face similar challenges that need to be addressed. Esports face several issues that require attention, such as the potential health impacts, the gendered and sexist culture of video games, the underrepresentation of women in esports, legal issues related to betting and the recognition of players as athletes, and labour concerns (Funk *et al.*, 2018). It is also important to address gender discrimination and homophobia in esports to promote an inclusive and abuse-free environment (Funk *et al.*, 2018). Esports management should utilize existing knowledge from traditional sports management (Funk *et al.*, 2018).

## 2.6 Rules and Cheating in Esports

One challenge that needs to be addressed in esports, both institutionally and managerially is cheating. Holden *et al.* (2019) discuss the use of performance-enhancing drugs, such as those legally prescribed for specific diseases like Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), as one way of cheating in esports. The authors reflect on the ethical implications of using such legal drugs, as well as the inadequacies of the anti-doping policy that currently exists in esports.

The World Anti-Doping Code (WADA) is flexible, allowing countries to adapt it to their own needs, even for esports. Therefore, there is no universal ban on drugs for esports players. However, it is important to note that some players claim to require certain drugs for their personal health (Holden *et al.*, 2019). Psychological pressure for high performance, competition, and long hours of training and competitions, combined with the young age of players, often leads them to seek supplementary preparations to cope with these pressures. This is also true in conventional sports.

Holden *et al.* (2019) build on MacIntyre's (2007) aretological moral theory, which is based on the value of internal and external goods, to argue for the promotion of virtue in the specific practice of esports. They suggest that the various organizations involved in the governance of esports should balance external goods, such as profit and external legitimacy, with internal goods, as these are not incompatible with each other (Holden *et al.*, 2019). They recommend revising the doping policy for conventional sports (WADA) and esports.

The issue of cheating is also discussed by Hemmingsen (2021), but from a different perspective. Specifically, Hemmingsen (2021) examines the ethos of a metagame. In this study, Hemmingsen examines rule breaking in a specific type of video game where players redefine the game's goals by circumventing the intended rules set by the designer (Hemmingsen, 2021).

Hemmingsen (2021) argues that a distinction should be made between the rules and ethos of a game. Ethos justifies, creates, and explains the rules established by the game community. According to Hemmingsen (2021), the ethos of metagames is based on three components: player skills, collective game knowledge, and the desire to subvert the intentions of the video game developer.

## 2.7 Esports and Contemporary Sport

How are esports connected to modern sport? Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) identified three scenarios: esports can be an alternative approach to sport, be part of it, or be the main form of sport in the future. Currently, the first scenario prevails, but esports are constantly evolving and may acquire new characteristics in the future, such as commercialization, globalization, and virtuality (Jonasson and Thiborg, 2010). Esports will need to improve its image in society to be accepted as a modern sport (Jonasson and Thiborg, 2010).

Jonasson (2016) argued that esports should be considered part of the history of sport and even a precursor to a hybrid phase of sport. The critique of esports, according to Jonasson (2016), revolves around their conformity to formalistic definitions of sports and their physicality. However, the debate should focus on whether esports should be considered a part of the history of sport, not only in the virtual space but also in the physical space. To support this argument, two traditions of sport history are drawn upon. One tradition links modern sport to the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, while the

other links it to the Roman games and spectacles in antiquity (Jonasson, 2016). The article discusses the relationship between conventional sports and esports, drawing a comparison between the Roman games and ancient Greek sport. The author argues that as the human element becomes increasingly limited in modern sports, the defining values of conventional sports must be examined to determine the potential threat that esports pose. The article raises the question of whether the defining values of traditional sports are standardization and competition, as seen in e-sports, or physicality and the human element.

Molina *et al.* (2024) concur with Jonasson (2016) in their assertion that the advent of the hybrid phase of modern sport is an unavoidable consequence of the modern digital era, which has shaped contemporary culture in such a way as to create new interests, needs and values. Accordingly, they argue that the debate should not focus on whether esports are real sports, but rather on revising the concept of sport. It is argued that modern sport should embrace esports as sports, subject to constraints, and utilise their *sportification* with specific purposes (Molina *et al.*, 2024). According to Molina *et al.* (2024), esports can contribute to the expansion and development of sporting competition and contribute to environmental sustainability, as they do not require the construction of sporting facilities and the associated environmental costs. They ensure the safety and physical integrity of athletes/players and can more easily provide social justice and equal opportunities in sports competitions (Molina *et al.*, 2024). In esports, the physical attributes required for success in some conventional sports are less significant, and participation in sports is encouraged regardless of an individual's geographical origin or place of residence (Molina *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, the number of participants in sports is also on the rise, in accordance with the Olympic ideal of participation.

The rethinking of the nature and values of modern sport, due to esports, is also discussed by Xu (2023), in the context of the hybrid nature of the latter. His research focuses on esports, particularly virtual sports, in the context of the global pandemic, where they provided an opportunity for physical exercise for those who were isolated. In the context of the modern information age, Xu (2023) posits that virtual sports reinforce the moral values of sport and its socio-cultural benefits, such as social connectivity and mental health. Xu (2023) argues that esports will occupy a distinct position in the organisation of sporting events in the present and future, and will be regarded as valuable instruments in the domain of education and training. The integration of artificial intelligence and esports has resulted in the emergence of a novel form of physical activity that addresses the shortcomings of previous iterations of digital games (Xu, 2023). The economic benefits of esports are considerable, to the extent that they have the potential to serve as a means of diplomatic engagement between different countries. Nevertheless, as he notes, further consideration is required with regard to the values of sport and issues of digital ethics, such as cybersecurity and data protection.

However, Conway (2016) raises concerns about the significance of digital sports games for their players. In his analysis of contemporary sport, he examines its digital imitation and its potential as a work of art. Heidegger's phenomenology refers to *enframing* (Ge-Stell), which suggests that the essence of modern technology lies solely in



its availability for consumption (Heidegger, 1977). Conway (2016) argues that the player becomes a mere piece of machinery that enables the evolution of the 'performance' of the digital game. He further argues that digital sports games are 'neurotic' (vorhanden) in many ways, which hinders their potential as a game and as a work of art. For Conway (2016), it is important to design sports technology with real sport in mind, rather than solely focusing on digital representation. The technology should provide a space for the user to engage with.

## 2.8 Identity Issues of Esports Players

Edgar (2016) discusses the concept of personality in relation to the experience of a virtual game. He argues that video games challenge the player to reflect on the nature of the personality constructed within the game in relation to the out-of-game self. The argument bridges Goffman's (1956) role theory with Descartes' (1998) and Locke's (1996) philosophical accounts of personality and personal identity, and with theses from Mead (1972) and Merleau-Ponty (2005).

In virtual worlds, players can adopt different approaches to their use of characters (avatars). *Mimetic* players project their real-world social roles onto their virtual characters, while *role-players* create characters with consciously adopted personalities to enhance gameplay. The *augmenters* control the game character as an extension of themselves, while the *immersers* pretends to be living in the virtual world rather than playing. According to Edgar (2016), players should treat game characters as individuals who are fundamentally distinct from themselves.

Patsantaras (2019, 2020), drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Badiou (2006) and Merleau-Ponty (2005) as well as those of Patsantaras and Kamberidou (2017), conducted research on the relationship between the physical (or biological) body and the virtual body (avatar) in the context of virtual Fitness Clubs. Although these studies are not directly related to esports, but more generally to exercise through an avatar technique, they can be indirectly related to it. The studies highlight the dynamics that develop between players of esports and the avatars that represent them in virtual worlds of video games, regarding the crucial issue of physicality, which is a necessary criterion for the existence of sports. Patsantaras (2019, 2020) and Patsantaras and Kamberidou (2017) conclude that the virtual athletic body is a novel and dynamic agent that transforms the ways in which individuals engage in athletic activities and the ways in which their bodily identity is constructed. In virtual Fitness Clubs, individuals have the opportunity to rethink their relationship with their physical (or biological) bodies and create a version of themselves that, previously, had not been realised (Patsantaras, 2019, 2020; Patsantaras & Kamberidou, 2017).

It is evident that this phenomenon can have a profound impact on the mental and social life of the practitioner, both positively and negatively. On the one hand, it can lead to engagement in exercise. However, on the other hand, it can lead to the differentiation of the individual's self-perception, due to a possible conflict between the real and virtual self of the athlete (Patsantaras, 2019, 2020; Patsantaras & Kamberidou, 2017). According to Patsantaras (2019, 2020), such a phenomenon affects social cognition, resulting in

alterations to social behaviour. Consequently, as he notes, in such cases, the issue of balancing the differences between different selves, identities and bodies, both online and offline, arises.

### **3. Conclusion**

The literature indicates that the rise and popularity of esports, and the attempt to link them with conventional sports, has prompted discussion within the field of Philosophy of Sport. This discussion has covered a diverse range of topics related to conventional sports. The philosophical aspects of electronic sports have been explored in relation to their definition, the history of sport, technology, competitive games, conventional and Olympic sports, the concept of the player-athlete, their physicality and skills, virtual worlds, their institutionalisation, their rules and cheating and the identity of the players. In these thematic fields, philosophers of sport formulate specific arguments concerning esports, as discussed in this literature review. Some researchers agree that esports are real sports, while others disagree. The same applies to the inclusion of esports in the Olympic Games. Regarding the criterion of physicality, it is widely argued that esports that simulate real sports meet this requirement. Esports demand specific skills and face issues such as cheating and corruption, similar to conventional sports. It is worth noting that esports are still in the early stages of institutionalization, making it a crucial factor in determining their classification as a legitimate sport. These are expressed that state the need for further development of the human element in them, their greater connection with real sport (in terms of their design) and the need to distinguish the identity of the players from the identity of the avatars in the game. Indeed, esports players can be considered athletes, under certain circumstances.

Esports have not been extensively discussed in the literature on the Philosophy of Sport, likely due to its recent emergence. This lack of discussion may be attributed to the relatively short time frame in which esports has gained popularity. The relationship between esports and conventional sports is a topic of debate, with no clear consensus. The current ontological approach to esports is overly formalistic and fails to consider the physical space in which esports occurs. Furthermore, the ethical aspects of sports, as fundamental aspects, have not been addressed in relation to them. Additionally, the preservation of the human condition of players, which is a crucial criterion for their ontology and ethics, has not been considered.

While the debate on whether esports should be considered a legitimate sport should continue, it is important to also explore other issues related to esports like their role in society, the digital transformation of the sporting experience, ethics and the human element in esports. Additionally, it highlights the need to investigate the value of esports in physical education and education in general, particularly given the high involvement of young people with video games.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### About the Authors

**Athanasios Kanellopoulos** is a PhD Candidate of the Philosophy of Sport at the School of Physical Education and Sport Science of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece. After receiving his master's degree in Education Studies, Athanasios decided to research how video games through esports are involved with Physical Education and Sport Science and if they can be considered as a kind of sport. His scientific and research interests are in the Philosophy of Sport, Open and Distance Education and educational technology. He has participated as a speaker in conferences on Open and Distance Education, on Sport Science and has publications in scientific journals and conference proceedings volumes.

**Yiannis Giossos** is an Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Sport at the School of Physical Education and Sport Science of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece. At undergraduate level teaches Philosophy of Sport, Philosophy of Education, Philosophy and Sport Ethics and at postgraduate level teaches Philosophy of Science. He has also participated in the development of the postgraduate program "Education & Technologies in Distance Teaching and Learning Systems - Educational Sciences" of the Hellenic Open University where he is the director of the program. His articles have been published in international journals and he has authored chapters in distance education-related books.

### References

- Abanazir, C. (2019), "Institutionalisation in E-Sports", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 117–131, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1453538>.
- Adams, K.L., Devia-Allen, G. "Le T. and Moore, M.A. (2019), "What Is Esports?", in Rogers, R. (Ed.), *Understanding Esports: An Introduction to the Global Phenomenon*, Lexington Books, London, UK, pp. 3–13.
- Badiou, A. (2006), *Being and Event*, Continuum, New York, NY.
- Billings, A.C. and Hou, J. (2019), "The Origins of Esports: A Half Century History of an 'Overnight' Success", in Rogers, R. (Ed.), *Understanding Esports: An Introduction to the Global Phenomenon*, Lexington Books, London, UK, pp. 31–44.
- Brock, T. (2023), "Ontology and interdisciplinary research in esports", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, pp. 1–17, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2023.2260567>.
- Caillois, R. (2001), *Man, Play and Games*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois.
- Carlson, C. (2013), "The Reality of Fantasy Sports: A Metaphysical and Ethical Analysis", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, Vol. 40 No. 2, pp. 187–204, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2013.785422>.
- Conway, S. (2016), "An earthless world: the contemporary Enframing of sport in digital games", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 83–96, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1177110>.
- Deleuze, G. (1990), *The Logic of Sense*, Columbia University Press, London, UK.

- Descartes, R. (1998), *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed., Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, IN.
- Donaldson, S. (2017), "Mechanics and Metagame: Exploring Binary Expertise in League of Legends", *Games and Culture*, Vol. 12 No. 5, pp. 426–444, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412015590063>.
- Edgar, A. (2016), "Personal identity and the massively multiplayer online world", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 51–66, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1168478>.
- Edgar, A. (2019), "Esport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 1–2, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2019.1558558>.
- Ekdahl, D. and Ravn, S. (2019), "Embodied involvement in virtual worlds: the case of eSports practitioners", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 132–144, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1475418>.
- Farquhar, L.K. (2019), "Fighting Games and Social Play", in Rogers, R. (Ed.), *Understanding Esport: An Introduction to the Global Phenomenon*, Lexington Books, London, UK, pp. 117–133.
- Funk, D.C., Pizzo, A.D. and Baker, B.J. (2018), "eSport management: Embracing eSport education and research opportunities", *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 7–13, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SMR.2017.07.008>.
- Goffman, E. (1956), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, Edinburgh.
- Guttmann, A. (2004), *From Ritual to Record the Nature of Modern Sports*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY.
- Hallmann, K. and Giel, T. (2017), "eSports – Competitive sports or recreational activity?", *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 14–20, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SMR.2017.07.011>.
- Hamari, J. and Sjöblom, M. (2017), "What is eSports and why do people watch it?", *Internet Research*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd., Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 211–232, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085>.
- Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London.
- Hemmingsen, M. (2021), "Code is Law: Subversion and Collective Knowledge in the Ethos of Video Game Speedrunning", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 435–460, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2020.1796773>.
- Hemphill, D. (2005), "Cybersport", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 195–207, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2005.9714682>.
- Holden, J.T., Kaburakis, A. and Wall Tweedie, J. (2019), "Virtue(al) games—real drugs", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 19–32, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1459814>.
- Holt, J. (2016), "Virtual domains for sports and games", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 5–13, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1163729>.
- Huizinga, J. (2016), *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, Angelico Press, Kettering, OH.

- IOC (2023), "IOC announces Olympic Esports Series 2023 with winners to be crowned at live finals in Singapore from 22 to 25 June", *International Olympic Committee*, 1 March, available at: <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-announces-olympic-esports-series-2023> (accessed 4 March 2023).
- Jenny, S.E., Manning, R.D., Keiper, M.C. and Olrich, T.W. (2017), "Virtual(ly) Athletes: Where eSports Fit Within the Definition of 'Sport'", *Quest*, Vol. 69 No. 1, pp. 1–18, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1144517>.
- Jonasson, K. (2016), "Broadband and circuits: the place of public gaming in the history of sport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 28–41, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1171250>.
- Jonasson, K. and Thiborg, J. (2010), "Electronic sport and its impact on future sport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 287–299, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903522996>.
- Kanellopoulos, A. and Giossos, Y. (2024), "The esports ecosystem", *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 6, pp. 127–144, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejsss.v9i6.1699>.
- Koo, D.M. (2009), "The moderating role of locus of control on the links between experiential motives and intention to play online games", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 466–474, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.10.010>.
- Kretchmar, S. (2005), *Practical Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity*, 2nd ed., Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL.
- Larsen, L.J. (2020), "The Play of Champions: Toward a Theory of Skill in eSport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 130–152, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2020.1827453>.
- Levy, P. (1998), *Becoming Virtual. Reality in the Digital Age*, Plenum Trade, New York, NY.
- Llorens, M.R. (2017), "eSport Gaming: The Rise of a New Sports Practice", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 464–476, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2017.1318947>.
- Locke, J. (1996), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, IN.
- Lunt, D. and Dyreson, M. (2014), "A History of Philosophic Ideas about Sport", in Torres, C.R. (Ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to the Philosophy of Sport*, 1st ed., Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, UK, pp. 17–37.
- MacIntyre, A.C. (2007), *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.
- Mareš, L. and Novotný, D.D. (2023), "What Is Sport? A Response to Jim Parry", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 34–48, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2022.2064538>.
- Mead, G.H. (1972), *Mind, Self, and Society*, 18th ed., The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.
- Meier, K. V. (1981), "On the Inadequacies of Sociological Definitions of Sport", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 79–102, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/101269028101600206>.

- Meier, K. V. (1988), "Triad Trickery: Playing with Sport and Games", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 11–30, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.1988.9714458>.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2005), *Phenomenology of Perception*, Taylor and Francis e-Library, London, UK.
- Miah, A. (2017), *Sport 2.0: Transforming Sports for a Digital World*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Mirabito, T. and Kucek, J. (2019), "Sports Video Games (SVGs) in the Esports Landscape", in Rogers, R. (Ed.), *Understanding Esports: An Introduction to the Global Phenomenon*, Lexington Books, London, UK, pp. 135–151.
- Molina, P., Gómez-Gonzalvo, F. and Valenciano-Valcárcel, J. (2024), "The sportization of esports and its implications in the near future of sport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2024.2324390>.
- Palar, S. (2021), "Olympic Virtual Series - Things you need to know and how to watch", *International Olympic Committee*, 22 June, available at: <https://olympics.com/en/news/olympic-virtual-series-everything-you-need-to-know> (accessed 4 March 2023).
- Parry, J. (2019), "E-sports are Not Sports", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 3–18, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1489419>.
- Parry, J. (2021), "Esports Will Not Be at the Olympics", *Journal of Olympic Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 1–13, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5406/jofolympstud.2.2.0001>.
- Parry, J. (2023), "On the Definition of Sport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 49–57, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2022.2077814>.
- Parry, J. and Giesbrecht, J. (2023), "Esports, real sports and the Olympic Virtual Series", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, Vol. 50 No. 2, pp. 208–228, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2023.2216883>.
- Pato, A.S. and Remillard, J.D. (2018), "eSport: Towards a Hermeneutic of Virtual Sport", *Cultura, Ciencia y Deporte*, Vol. 13 No. 38, pp. 137–145, doi: <https://doi.org/10.12800/CCD.V13I38.1076>.
- Pasantaras, N. (2019), "Presence and body-ownership: The case of the exercising avatar", *European Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science*, Vol. 5 No. 11, pp. 63–82, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejpe.v0i0.2579>.
- Pasantaras, N. (2020), "Virtual bodies (avatars) and sport exercises: some important thoughts", *European Journal for Sport and Society*, Routledge, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 339–356, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2020.1792087>.
- Pasantaras, N. and Kamberidou, I. (2017), "Virtual Bodies and Sport Activities: The case of the Avatars in Second Life Fitness Club", *Presentation in 13th Conference of the European Sociological Association "(Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities"*, Panteion University of Social & Political Sciences, Athens.
- Reitman, J.G., Anderson-Coto, M.J., Wu, M., Lee, J.S. and Steinkuehler, C. (2020), "Esports Research: A Literature Review", *Games and Culture*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 32–50, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019840892>.



- Segal, D. (2014), "Behind League of Legends, E-Sports's Main Attraction - The New York Times", *The New York Times*, 10 October, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/12/technology/riot-games-league-of-legends-main-attraction-esports.html> (accessed 21 May 2022).
- Şentuna, B. and Kanbur, D. (2016), "What kind of an activity is a virtual game? A postmodern approach in relation to concept of phantasm by Deleuze and the philosophy of Huizinga", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 42–50, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1177581>.
- Söderin, J. (2017), "Feature development for esports broadcasts with a focus on the intermission between matches", Stockholm, Sweden. Degree project
- Sturm, D. (2019), "Not Your Average Sunday Driver: The Formula 1 Esports Series World Championship", in Rogers, R. (Ed.), *Understanding Esports: An Introduction to the Global Phenomenon*, Lexington Books, London, UK, pp. 153–165.
- Suits, B. (2007), "The elements of Sport", in Morgan, W.J. (Ed.), *Ethics in Sport*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL, pp. 9–19.
- Suits, B. (2014), *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia*, Broadview Press, Ontario, Canada.
- Sunay, H. and Saracaloglu, A. (2003), "Türk Sporcusunun Spordan Beklentileri İle Spora Yönelen Unsurlar", *SPORMETRE Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 43–48, doi: [https://doi.org/10.1501/SPORM\\_0000000011](https://doi.org/10.1501/SPORM_0000000011).
- Tanriverdi, H. (2012), "SPor Ahlaki Ve Şiddet (Sports Ethics and Violence)", *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 8, pp. 1071–1093, doi: [https://doi.org/10.9761/JASSS\\_361](https://doi.org/10.9761/JASSS_361).
- Tiedemann, C. (2004), "Sport (and Culture of Human Motion) for Historians, an Approach to make the Central Term(s) more precise", *Paper Presented at the IX International CESH-Congress*, Crotone, Italy.
- Van Hilvoorde, I. and Pot, N. (2016), "Embodiment and fundamental motor skills in eSports", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 14–27, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1159246>.
- Wagner, M.G. (2006), "On the Scientific Relevance of eSports", *Paper Presented at the Symposium Conducted at 2006 International Conference on Internet Computing & Conference on Computer Games Development*, Las Vegas, NV.
- Wagner, M.G. (2007), "Competing in Metagame Gamespace", in Borries, F. von, Walz, S.P. and Böttger, M. (Eds.), *Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The next Level*, Birkhäuser Basel, pp. 182–185.
- Whalen, S.J. (2013), *Cyberathletes' Lived Experience of Video Game Tournaments*, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Witkowski, E. (2012), "On the Digital Playing Field: How We 'Do Sport' With Networked Computer Games", *Games and Culture*, Vol. 7 No. 5, pp. 349–374, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412012454222>.
- Xu, Y. (2023), "The Evolving eSports Landscape: Technology Empowerment, Intelligent Embodiment, and Digital Ethics", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 356–368, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2023.2168039>.

Young, S. and Strait, L.P. (2019), "Counter-Strike or Counterpublic? Audience Creation, Transnational Discourses, and the Rhetorical Legitimation of Esports in TBS's ELEAGUE", in Rogers, R. (Ed.), *Understanding Esports: An Introduction to the Global Phenomenon*, Lexington Books, London, UK, pp. 167–182.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).