Distance and Fear
Defining the Play Space

Sebastian Möring

This paper proposes to take the play space into consideration when analysing computer games. While analysing computer games using *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger one realizes that his notion of fear describes a situation that seems to be essential for many action games. Fear as an objective structure can be stated if something harmful is in a definite range with something else that can be injured or killed by it. Fear exists as long as the harmful entity is at a critical distance and as long as the fearsome (e.g. 'killing') is possible, but does not happen. Between the threatening entity and the threatened entity emerges a certain space which I regard as the 'play space.' The play space as opposed to the often architecturally described 'game space' can firstly be regarded as the vital space in a game and secondly as a distance that must be ensured for the game to be continued.

The play space emerges in the game space between a player-controlled entity and the game limits as well as within the game space between a player-controlled entity and harmful objects. It is within this space that actions take place and options re-main available. While the game is being played the dimensions of the play space dynamically change due to changes in gaming situations. Heidegger divides this space into a near and a far space and thus allows the distinction of a space of necessity in very close distance and a space of possibility within a greater distance. Additionally, I propose further distinctions regarding the properties of 'play space' with the help of proxemics.

Game Space and Play Space

In *Rules of Play* Salen and Zimmerman's (2004, 478-481) demonstrate that the term 'play space' defines a space which includes play actions and excludes real-life actions with real-life consequences at the same time: Such a space can be a children's room, or a playground in the park. Its primary characteristic is that it is a safe space in which actions have no real-life consequences and can therefore also contain elements which are a cultural taboo. The main purpose of this play space

is play. This play space is not necessarily structured to play a particular game, but rather to provide a space where numerous games can emerge out of play or can be played in it due to its specific properties. On an urban football cage, for instance, one could also play basketball or hopscotch and so on.

In his work *Casual Revolution* Jesper Juul (2010, 16-18) mentions the player space which is situated in front of the gaming console. Michael Nitsche (2008, 16) suggests five conceptual planes for the analysis of game spaces: a) 'rule-based', b) 'mediated', c) 'fictional', d) 'play' and e) 'social'; with using the term 'play space' (d) to address the "space of the play, which includes the player and the video game hardware". As opposed to Juul the play space for Nitsche serves as the space of communication between the player on the one side of the screen and the game on the other side, in order to "connect the material world and the fictional one" (ibid., 13). Like Salen and Zimmerman, Nitsche refers to the difference of the material or real world and the fictional world of the game. However, Nitsche's theory is confined to videogames while Salen and Zimmerman refer to non-videogames.

In videogames the term 'game space' mostly describes their architectural structure. It is furthermore "defined by the mathematical rules that set, for example, physics, sounds, AI, and game-level architecture" (Nitsche 2008, 16). Nitsche calls this the rule-based plane of the game space (a). Unicursal labyrinths which provide the fundamental spatial structure for many first-person-shooters are an example for such spaces.

However, I neither want to talk about the space in front of the videogame console and television nor explicitly about the rule-based game space. This paper focuses on the play space that emerges in agonistic games like many action and real-time strategy games. The perpetuator of this space is the fear-structure that emerges from the gameplay of these games, within the limits of the game space as well as in between the player-controlled objects and threatening entities.

Competition and Fear

Referring to Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (2008) one can apply the existential structure of the 'being-in-the-world' [*Dasein*] to computer games and assume that a game exists as long as it is played. It occurred to me that Heidegger's notion of fear describes a phenomenon commonly observed in action games (or other agonistic games like real-time strategy games). Fear is a mode of the 'disposedness' [*Befindlichkeit*] of a Dasein (derived from its fundamental existential situation in the light of inevitable death, which Heidegger calls 'Angst' as the 'basic disposedness' [*Grundbefindlichkeit*]). This concept is best described as a mood in which a Dasein is always already in the world. Thus, Dasein experiences its world and itself

always in a mood. I propose that the mood of fear is a fundamental structure in agonistic computer games like action and real time strategy games.

Fear is not understood as an often psychologically explained emotion for example induced by some kind of horror, which applies at the shell or the representational layer of computer games (Aarseth 1997, 40; Mäyrä 2008, 17-21). Even if both, the mechanical layer (core) and the representational layer (shell) of the game, are sometimes hard to keep apart I am looking at fear at the level of the game mechanics/structure (Aarseth 2011, 59), or the "core, or game as gameplay" (Mäyrä 2008, 17). With Ernest Adams (2010, 19) gameplay can roughly be understood as consisting of a) the challenges which a game provides as well as b) actions to overcome these challenges although not all actions are "tied to specific challenges". With the help of Caillois' difference *ludus* and *paidia* it is possible to derive a notion of gameplay which is based on implications of these terms (Caillois 2001). The play element is derived from the notion of *paidia*, which is considered as "unstructured and lacking in rules" (Slethaug 1993, 65). The game element is derived from the notion of *ludus*, which "has certain moves, rules and goals" (ibid. 1993, 65).

As opposed to Caillois (2001, 53), who considers *ludus* and *paidia* two different kinds of play, gameplay is here understood as consisting of a) the game, which itself consists of the game rules as well as the ruled game space, the challenges and possible game actions and b) the play, which can be considered as the actualization of a possible action from the space of possibility that is enabled by the game at a certain moment of the game at play. In line with the distinction of games as objects and games as processes (Aarseth 2001; 2011) the game part of gameplay signifies the game as an object (the potential game) and the play part of gameplay signifies the game as a process (an actual game at play).

Following Huizinga (1998, 31-35 and 46-75), *agon* or contest "bears all the formal characteristics of play" and therefore accounts for the play element in all kinds of cultural institutions featuring agonistic figurations such as war, the stock market, poetry etc. For Caillois (2001, 14–17) *agon* is characteristic specifically for games of 'competition' featuring an agonistic structure as opposed to games of 'chance' (*alea*), games of 'simulation' (*mimicry*) and games of 'vertigo' (*ilinx*). As such one can say the gameplay of games of *agon* is characterized by elements of competition.

Furthermore, Huizinga (1998, 51) emphasizes the close relationship between contest and fear when he observes that the Greek terms *agon* and *agonia* share an "intimate connection," in that the "latter word originally meant simply 'contest', but later 'death-struggle' and 'fear'". Studying the concept of dramatic suspense in the Scholia of the *Iliad* German philologist Andreas Fuchs (2007, 29) offers a similar insight. The terms 'fear' or 'anxiety' and 'competition' have the same etymological root: which is the Greek term *agōn*. As there is an etymological relationship between competition and fear, one can assume that fear is a fundamental structure in the gameplay of games of competition like in action games or turn-

based and real-time strategy games. However, Heidegger's notion of fear is based on Aristotle, who in his *Rhetoric* (book 2, chpt. 5) defines it as follows:

> Let fear be defined as a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain; for men do not fear all evils, for instance, becoming unjust or slow-witted, but only such as involve great pain or destruction, and only if they appear to be not far off but near at hand and threatening, for men do not fear things that are very remote; all know that they have to die, but as death is not near at hand, they are indifferent. If then this is fear, all things must be fearful that appear to have great power of destroying or inflicting injuries that tend to produce great pain. That is why even the signs of such misfortunes are fearful, for the fearful thing itself appears to be near at hand, and danger is the approach of anything fearful.

Aristotle's definition of fear as a 'painful or troubled feeling' is caused by something dangerous or 'fearful' which is 'imminent,' i.e. something that is possible to happen but has not happened, yet. The imminence thereby is seen as temporally imminent as well as spatially imminent. His definition clearly states that fear requires the fearful thing or event to be near rather than far. Additionally, Aristotle's examples show that particularly agonistic relationships are predestined for fear, like this is the case in relations between rivals, enemies, or between stronger and weaker, as well as relations of inequity, vengeance or dependency.

To explain fear in Heidegger's *Being and Time* in the shortest possible manner I shall quote Hubert Dreyfus' (1991, 176) commentary on Heidegger's work, who explains the three-fold structure of fear as follows:

> *The fearing as such* […] is the mood that lets something matter to us as fearsome. […] *That which is feared* [is] [s]omething specific coming at us, in some specific way, from some specific sector of the environment. […] *That which is feared for* [is] Dasein itself as threatened in some specific respect. This need not be some part of the body. Fear can threaten Dasein's self-interpretation by threatening its projects.

I am mainly interested in that *which is feared* and that *which is feared for.* The latter can be regarded as a) the player who fears for his being in the game; or b) the playing of the game, that is the game at play, which is constantly threatened in its very existence and therefore is the 'subject' of fear.

The objects of fear or that *which is feared* are harmful objects in the game space threatening an object in the game that is not to be hit, injured or killed. These objects often point at the direction of the objects that should not be hit. Heidegger calls them 'detrimental' [*abträglich*] in relation to the object that is not to be hit (these objects are usually represented as characters, avatars or geometric objects).

Fear is at play if the harmful object is at an approachable distance from where it can be harmful or not. Heidegger calls this a 'threat'. The emerging uncertainty – whether the approaching harmful object(s) will finally be harmful or not – is fundamental of fear. Temporally seen, the fearsome is always in the future. As soon as it happens it does not exist anymore. Seen from the spatial point of view the fearsome is always within a certain distance from where it can harm or not. For Aristotle as well as Heidegger the fearful/harmful is near (no matter if temporally near or spatially near) which makes it an essentially spatial constellation which often occurs in situations of competition and consequently in respective games.

To demonstrate this on computer games I will look at the popular game classic called *Tetris* (Pajitnov 1984). The top limit of the game space can be regarded as that *which is feared*. It is not to be touched by the bricks the player has to fit into each other in order to complete the lines leading to their deletion and therefore opening of more space. In between both entities the upper limit of the game space and the highest brick is a space that has not much been defined, yet. However, this space seems to have an important function since the game's instruction could simply be: "Maintain the play space!" This is the most important space of the game at play and its maintenance is necessary for the game's existence. In *Tetris* at play, the player is not interested in the bottom lines within the game space, since she must manage the expansion and contraction of the space between the upper limit and the highest brick. She is interested in the play space, which she has to ensure and where the game play actions take place.

The Play Space: The Space between

According to Sybille Krämer (2005, 12), a German philosopher, we refer to "the Fluxus of a swinging, often returning to itself and repeating motion" when we talk about play. In her opinion the dynamics of play require a to-and-fro motion – and to explain her reasoning she refers to Helmuth Plessner's saying of "keeping oneself in-between [*ein Sich-Halten im Zwischen*]" (ibid.). This 'in-between' which I regard as the play space is maintained thanks to the fear structure derived from Heidegger. This point of view is strengthened by Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004, 107), a student of Heidegger, who applies a notion similar to the play space as proposed in this paper, which is translated as 'playing field':

> Games differ from one another in their spirit. The reason for this is that the to-and-fro movement that constitutes the game is patterned in various ways. The particular nature of a game lies in the rules and regulations that prescribe the way the field of the game is filled. This is true universally, whenever there is a game. It is true, for example, of the play of fountains and of playing animals. The playing field

> on which the game is played is, as it were, set by the nature of the game itself and is defined far more by the structure that determines the movement of the game from within than by what it comes up against – i.e., the boundaries of the open space – limiting movement from without.

Two aspects of this quotation are important for my argument. Firstly, Gadamer says that the nature or the character of the game is primarily defined by the "the structure that determines the movement of the game from within" (ibid.). This can be read as a statement for the shift of attention from the game space to the play space. Secondly, the to-and-fro movement which especially characterizes the "playful character of the contest" (ibid., 105) is the result of "rules and regulations that prescribe the way the field of the game is filled" (ibid., 107). Consequently, fear has to be seen as the rule that provokes the characteristic to-and-for motion of the play space in games of competitions.

In *Tetris* at play are the compulsory actions enacted to guarantee a minimal distance between the highest blocks and the upper detrimental game space limit. It should be noted that in *Tetris* the bricks can be considered as threatening the upper limit, which is also the threatened object. However, if we regard the whole game at play as a Heideggerian Dasein – whose basic purpose is to be 'there' [*da*] or to be at play (i.e. game as a process) – it does not matter which of the entities is the feared or the fearsome since it is the possible dangerous physical contact of the two that could in the worst case end the game's existence or the game session. Therefore, the contact of the two is actually fearsome.

Regardless of whether one *plays* the game or one plays *with* the game, one always has to consider the fundamental condition of possibility of maintaining the play space as a basis for all other play activities. Consequently, this maintenance of the play space can be seen as an essential part of what Olli Leino (2010, 134) terms the *gameplay condition* based on Sartre's (2003) *Being and Nothingness*. Thus, I propose a shift of attention from the game space to the play space. Nevertheless, the game space provides the play space with general limits. Hence, the characteristics of the game space within which play takes place have to be taken into consideration, too. The top limit of *Tetris*' game space is a good example for this. On the other hand, during the game the play space emerges primarily between an entity that is threatened by the possible contact with a harmful entity as well as the limits of the game space.

Further Examples

This play space also exists in first-person-shooter games such as *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* (DICE 2010) or platform games like *Super Mario Bros.* (Nintendo 1985). In these games, the play space is maintained either by eliminating or by evading opponents. In a first-person-shooter game based on a unicursal labyrinth the diameter of the play space contracts when facing an opponent who herself or whose projectiles come closer. After eliminating the opponent, the play space expands until another opponent appears. Thus, the characteristic movement of the play space is an oscillation of contraction and expansion.

The essence of the given agonistic games is to negotiate the play space. In order to guarantee the continuation of a game at play (its existence) the play space should not collapse. Depending on the lifes a game at play has left a collapse of the play space can in the worst-case lead to a game over. However already a play over (e.g. losing one life but still having at least one life left which is much more common in contemporary single-player action games) results in an interruption of the game which equals a game over if the game is not continued.

In the Snowblind-level of *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* the player and an object in the game space requires protection from the opponents: The mission of the group of soldiers the player-controlled entity belongs to is to save a crashed satellite from being destroyed by the opponents. In this case, the play space emerges between the opponents, the player character, and the satellite. In Heidegger's (2008, 181) terms this is a case of 'fearing-for'. So we have a player-controlled-object and a game-space-object that are not to be eliminated by the opponents. If either the player character or the satellite is destroyed the level cannot be completed. I have shown how the play space is understood in this paper. To define the play space further I propose two concepts by Heidegger and proxemics.

Striking Distance: Heidegger's 'Nearness', the Far and the Near Play Space

Heidegger's idea of nearness does not necessarily signify an object that is located at the smallest distance from our body, but rather an object or entity which we have to cope with every day in the process of living our lives. Thus, nearness has different characteristics, which are actually not meant to be distances in a Cartesian space. By using a telephone to call somebody, the telephone is physically near. Heidegger would say it is ontically near. However, ontologically nearer to us is actually the person we are talking to via the telephone. In fact, we first realize the telephone's existence when its service is disrupted while trying to make a call. It changes from readiness-to-hand into presence-at-hand and comes into the

nearness of the Dasein's attention. Hubert Dreyfus (2007) identifies at least four modes of nearness in *Being and Time*: 'accessibility nearness', 'mattering nearness', 'attention nearness', and 'availability nearness'.

When applying this nearness to the play space in computer games, I find that the most harmful entities are the ones nearest to the player character or another threatened object. Mostly, they go along with those at the shortest distance from the entity that must not be hit. However, this must not necessarily be the case. For example, in *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* those opponents, pointing bazooka at the player avatar are the nearest, and because of their high destructiveness they are the most dangerous threat. However, there are other opponents who are closer to the player-character but who are less dangerous. This is an example for the difference of attention and mattering nearness as opposed to a small distance in a Cartesian sense.

As I have shown when discussing fear, only those entities that are in an effective distance from the threatened entity are considered to be near and can therefore be fearsome. Thus, the play space can be differentiated into the near and the far. Far means that a harmful entity is not at an approachable distance and near describes the opposite. The near is thus a *striking distance*.

Proxemics

With the help of proxemics the play space can be further defined: Edward T. Hall the founder of intercultural communication as an academic discipline developed a system, which allows the description of distance behaviour of different cultures in different contexts. Inspired by the Swiss zoologist Heini Hediger, Hall (1990, 8) distinguishes four distances: intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance. In the following, I will compare these distances to game situations starting with the farthest distance. Although these are distances derived from Cartesian space, they coincide with different degrees of a mattering nearness as outlined by Heidegger.

Public Distance: Public distance starts from twelve feet away from a person's skin and is unlimited in its expansion. According to Hall "public distance […] is well outside the circle of involvement" (ibid., 123). For sports like football, this would be beyond the limits of the playing field, which literally is the place for the spectators in a football stadium. Public distance is far away from the place of action. Considering football, it literally does not even belong to the game space since it actually describes the distance of the audience, the public. Thus, it could be considered the outside or the excluding boarder either of the game space or the play space as the space of game play action.

Using football as an example the goalkeeper of the attacking team is situated in the public space, as long as he is not attacking. In this moment he does not take part in the current play situation, he becomes a spectator. For videogames this counts for all entities that do not affect the game play at all and those that are not involved in a particular game play situation. In *Tetris* this is true of the lowest bricks that can neither be deleted, nor can they receive another brick or will be able to do so in the next moves. In *Super Mario Bros.* this can apply to opponents that are outside the visible screen but will be coming in soon.

Social Distance: Social distance is in the range of four to twelve feet and is normally used in situations of business communication (ibid., 121). I consider this the including border of the play space. To give another example from my apparent favourite game football, the following situation can be considered to be at a social distance. A defender from the opposing team starts an attacking scene in his own half. From the moment where the player with the ball reaches a distance – maybe around the centre circle – from where he could possibly shoot, he is in the social zone. Therefore, the ball-guiding player in relation to the opposing goal defines the social zone. In *Super Mario Bros.*, this would be the opponent who has just arrived on screen while the game world is moving. However, if this opponent arrives on screen, there can be other opponents who are already within personal distance. The player can already act in relation to it.

Personal Distance: Personal distance is stretched between 18 inches and approximately four feet (ibid., 119). It is applied when couples from western cultures stand in public. If somebody else gets this close to our partner, either we know him and his intentions or we would like to get to know him because we may have been suspicious of his intentions. During personal conversation, we keep this distance, which is about an arm's length. The metaphor of arm's length distance applies well to boxing where the aim is to keep the opponent at such a distance.

The personal zone in *Tetris* comes into play if there is still enough distance at the top that one can try to play a certain tactic, for example only deleting four lines at once with the so called 'I-brick' which looks similar to the capital letter 'I.' This means waiting for it to come and meanwhile risking touching the upper limit of the game space.

Intimate Distance: In everyday life, intimate distance emerges between our skin surface and around 18 inches from one's body (ibid., 116). We only allow people, with whom we are intimate with, to get this close to us. Otherwise, we feel highly threatened and may try to expand the distance. Transferred to a videogame, this would be the zone where a threatening object hits or is close to hitting the threatened object. There is nearly no possibility to escape, to shoot it or jump on it. In the example of *Tetris* this would be the distance of about one empty line of blocks to the upper limit. In *Super Mario Bros.*, it is comparable to the shortest possible distance between an opponent or a projectile and the threatened object

before touching each other. In this case, immediate action is needed to avoid losing a life or ending a game. In most cases, it is already too late.

Hall also calls the intimate zone "the distance of love-making and wrestling, comforting and protecting" (ibid., 117). The wrestling example reminds me of 'beat'em up' games like the *Tekken* series (Namco 1994) or *Street Fighter 2* (Capcom 1991). Here the game would not take place or at least not allow a decision to be made if the harmful and threatened entities did not get in touch with each other in the intimate zone.

By adopting the concept of proxemics, the play space is distinguishable into different zones of threat. Hall's premise is that all cultures do have a certain distance behaviour, which is to some degree "rooted in biology and physiology" (Hall 1990, 3). Consequently, distance behaviour can be considered an anthropological constant. However, the distances are experienced differently in different cultures. Hall (ibid., 116) empirically observed these distances originally among "non-contact, middle-class, healthy adults, mainly natives of the north-eastern seaboard of the United States." Therefore, absolute distances expressed in feet and inches are only valid for this specific culture.

Considering games as specific cultures, one can thus also assume that the absolute distances vary among different games whereas the experienced distances stay similar. If one compares boxing and football it obvious that the striking distance in both games varies in absolute measures. Whereas in boxing I always have to be less than an arm length away from the opponent in order to be in striking distance the absolute striking distance in the association football simulation *FIFA 13* (EA Canada 2012) can already start outside of the penalty area whose border is simulated 18 yards away from the goal. However, in the example of real association football, for instance, the absolute striking distance can itself vary in different cultures. Culture can here already mean that different teams in the same league follow a different philosophy or culture of playing football.

Imagine there is a team that more often than other teams shoots from outside of the penalty area whereas another team usually tries to score a goal from within the six yards box in the penalty area. The absolute striking distance of the former team is thus farther away from the goal line than the one of the latter team. Given these teams belong to Hall's sample from the USA, the striking distance of the former team matches the public distance of the culture the team is a part of and the latter team's striking distance matches the social distance of the cultural average. Nevertheless, within the game one can say that the intimate, the personal, the social, as well as the public distance are being recoded according to the norms of the game and the specific play philosophy or culture.

Play Space as Space of Necessity

Comparing the distances described by Hall and the striking distance derived from Heidegger, harmful objects seem to arrive more and more at a mattering nearness the more they move from social distance to intimate distance. – Compared to the play space the concept of the space of possibility seems to be very similar. I will now discuss the concepts of the space of possibility by Salen and Zimmerman as well as Nitsche and relate them to my notion of play space.

According to Salen and Zimmerman (2004, 67) "[c]reating a game means designing a structure that will play out in complex and unpredictable ways, a space of possible action that players explore as they take part in [a] game". The space of possibility emerges from the designed game structure and contains all possible actions of a game even if they were not intended. Discussing the space of possibility Salen and Zimmerman think of the game as a whole and not of the game at play in a particular situation. Thus, they regard the entire game space as a space of possibility where particular intended or unintended game actions are possible. Of course, possible actions depend on the respective context. Not all game actions are possible at each place in the game space.

Describing the spatial patterns rails/tracks, labyrinths/mazes, and arenas Nitsche (2008, 188) concentrates primarily on the architectural game space as a "structural force of interactive events" and its capacity "to channel interaction." He discusses the example of a bridge which is an architectural structure influencing a games possibility space with respect to the particular abilities of the player-character. Nevertheless, it remains a space of possibility in which the player can choose what actions to commit when and where next.

However, due to their perspectives Nitsche as well as Salen and Zimmerman (2004, 67) do not take into account that the play space, emerging between threatening objects and threatened objects, in many action videogames is transformed from "a space of possible action" into a *space of necessary action*, the latest at intimate distance if the player intends to play on. If a threatening object is incoming the player will have less choices to make since the priority is to guarantee the continuity of the game: Firstly, the fearsome situation is drawing the attention of the game onto the relation of an incoming threatening object and the threatened object. Thus, the *space of necessity* coincides with the mattering nearness of the play space. The player has to make an adequate choice to avoid the fearsome to happen. In the worst case, it could disrupt or end the game. Choosing to collect coins as a kind of displacement activity from animal behaviour would definitely not be adequate. Secondly, the player does not have the possibility to do nothing given that she wants to play on. Therefore, the player's possibilities are limited by the situation of an incoming threat. This situation of fear and threat requires the

choice to defend herself by fighting or avoiding the threatening object. Thus, the space of possibility has turned into a space of necessity.

Defining the Play Space

As I have shown the play space as proposed in this paper is a space, which describes the striking distance between a threatening object and a threatened object and therefore coincides with the Heideggerian structure of fear. This space has to be ensured as a necessity in order to play a game. The play space as a distance can be limited by spatial constraints of the game space, the abilities of action of the player-controlled objects as well as the player's own mastery of the controls or the game. It is furthermore a space that is directed towards the most threatening object in a certain situation of the game at play. The play space can be distinguished into four distances that differentiate game play situations according to their character of nearness and threat. It is therefore to be considered as a dynamic space, which constantly changes its dimension as it expands and contracts. A threatening object at intimate distance from a threatened object turns the space of possibility into a space of necessity.

Furthermore, the play space can be thought of in terms of a cognitive space as the distance between the current state of the game and a possibly harmful event or game state. As such also games of a purely cognitive nature as well as games in which the harmful is rather metaphorically close than literally would be included in this model. For instance, in *SimCity* (Maxis 1989) the wellbeing of the game depends on keeping an eye on the budget and avoiding running out of cash. Consequently, there can be situations in which the possibility to run out of cash is much more likely to happen and therefore closer than in others. For instance, a sudden catastrophe like the zombie invasion can decimate the city's population significantly. If this city is already run on a tight budget the sudden lack of taxpayers lets the possibility of insolvency appear much closer (Leino 2010, 127).

Finally, with Gadamer one can see the fear structured play space from the perspective of the game and as such as its method to keep itself in play. As is known Gadamer (2004, 106) advocated for a primacy of the game over the player in that the game plays the player and not the other way around: "The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game masters the player. […] The real subject of the game (this is shown in precisely those experiences where there is only a single player) is not the player but instead the game itself."

Especially agonistic single player games such as *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* and *Tetris* can be considered as pieces of software, which constantly threaten to stop running as soon as they have been started, in that they constantly contract

the play space that the player through her actions tries to expand again. With Gadamer (2004, 107) one can consider this a sneaky strategy of the game with the purpose to keep being played since "the purpose of the game is not really solving the task, but ordering and shaping the movement of the game."

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