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# HISTORICAL REFLECTION OF THE GAME PRINCIPLE AGON AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE CURRENT CREATION OF MEDIA REALITY

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## **Abstract**

In the submitted study, the authors deal with the issue of historical reflection of one of the game's principles of Roger Caillois called *agon*, with emphasis on its application in the current media, respectively, digital creation. Within the contribution the authors clarify the concepts of media reality, game, game principles, *agon* principle. The main aim of the authors is the explanation of issues such as game principles of *Agony*, mentioning his relationship with the current media art, especially with the plane of digital games. Theoretical reflection on the issue points out that the presently investigated *agon* game principles already existed in ancient Greece. His presence in the social games is the irreversible reality and manifest. Reflecting on the *agon* principle in the dimension of digital games remains a matter of discourse analysis. The primary objective of the authors is therefore an effort to explain the phenomenon. The secondary objective of the study is to point to the presence of the principle of *agon* in the on-going development of digital games. To achieve the goals the author uses typical logical and conceptual practices.

*Keywords:* action games, ancient Greece, digital games, game principles, media reality

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## **1. Introduction**

The need for self-realisation, respect and recognition ranks among the basic physiological needs of every human being. The terms could also be expressed by the umbrella expression 'desire for victory' – stimulus for winning is the pursuit of self-realisation, and by doing so achieving a feeling of respect and recognition by the fellow human beings. Fulfilling of these desires and wishes, determined this way, takes place in all areas of a given culture. The submitted study focuses primarily on game environment which is understood as a newly constructed version of media reality. A game has been gradually becoming the most accessible means for fulfilling of all dreams and it represents an ideal space for achieving the desired victory. Competition, in game environment known as *agon*, constitutes one of the primary game principles of

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French theorist R. Caillois. The motivation to realise oneself in game activity and subsequently succeeding in it is simulated here by a contest of at least two equal opponents. The value of the victory is indisputable and clearly defined. Tradition of the discussed principle *agon* was already founded during ancient Greece and in a slightly altered form is applied also in present-day cyberspace of digital media, namely in the domain of computer games.

The main aim of the contribution is reflecting the principle *agon* with emphasis on its application in historical as well as postmodern game environment. A substantial part of the study is definition of relevant terminological axis with a subsequent application of the researched phenomenon in the area of computer games. To enlighten the subject matter in detail, relevant methods of logical text analyses were used. The combination of suitably chosen methods allows a more precise specification of relevant game category. For the purpose of this analysis, the essential sources are the monographs of R. Caillois [1], J. Huizinga [2, 3], M. Eliade [4] and D. Prokop [5]. Among other fundamental sources we included electronic sources *Ako sa žilo minojským Krétanom (How Minoan Cretans Lived)* and *Olympijské hry v starovekom Grécku (Olympic Games in Ancient Greece)*. The first chapter defines terms media reality, game, game principles and *agon* principle. In the second part of this contribution, the authors concentrate on occurrence of the examined phenomenon from the time of Minoan Greek culture up to the Hellenic Greece. The final part of the study identifies agonal principle in the contemporary production of digital games.

## **2. Primary terminological axis – the terms ‘media reality’, ‘game’, ‘game principles’ and ‘agon principle’**

The subject matter of a game can be understood in a broader context as a problem of media reality. Media reality is a certain type of space, in this case cyberspace, in which the game itself takes place. A game is a phenomenon, which does not happen spontaneously but is based on certain rules – game principles. The centre of the authors’ attention is the game principle *agon*, which is defined by means of the terms ‘media reality’, ‘game’ and ‘game principles’. By terminologically defining these phenomena, the authors emphasise their mutual interdependence.

Studying **medial reality** we discover that it is a kind of reality constructed by all types of media (through writing, press, television and the Internet). The existence of media reality is based on the content produced by these media. According to H. Pravdová [6] media reality is actually a statement of values, preferences, attitudes and beliefs of the media owners and producers. This world of media does not initiate a real movement; it is possible only to observe media reality and subsequently to obtain information about reality. It is the inability of media to capture the reality objectively that we consider one of the primary imperfections of this world. The objective reality ‘enriched’ by subjective elements causes media reality to become a distorted image of the true reality

[*Mediálna realita*, <http://fpv.uniza.sk/orgpoz/realita/REALITAmiedialna.pdf>, accessed 25.03.2016]. Media reality thus represents a kind of ‘escape way’ from everyday life to the environment of simulated media construct.

Media partake in shaping our everyday life and not only to fill our free time, but also to offer models for acting and social roles [7]. J. Bystřický [8] considers media reality to be a purely relational reality. This means that we speak about operational environment functioning mostly in a mediation mode. Media reality represents for him a specific world of mediation and information, in which forming of adequate ratio between thinking and acting belongs to the primary procedures of thinking; because here takes place the self-evaluation of the subject, understood in relation to technologies. S. Brečka [9] expresses his opinion clearly. He states that the idea of media reflecting, interpreting and representing reality was rooted in theories for a long time. They produce an objective reality independent of the observer’s consciousness. To illustrate the contrast, the author describes the opinions of P. Berger, T. Luckmann (the vision of social construction of reality) and J. Searle (the construction of social reality). P. Berger, T. Luckmann and J. Searle came up with an idea that media are co-creators of reality and not its reflection.

W. Lippman [10] continued in examining the subject by elaborating the idea about impossibility of complex capturing of the environment in which we live, because this environment is characterised by certain dynamics and unsteadiness. Due to being ungraspable, human beings create fictions, a kind of ‘pseudo environment’ upon which they act. The most complex definition of media reality can be considered the fact that it is a simulation of true daily experienced reality. Media reality is therefore compared to the sign world of simulacra.

According to J. Baudrillard simulacra come into being without disposition of referents, without labelling, they only mutually influence each other. He recognises four stages of development of simulacra. On the first level, simulacra are connected to pre-modern era, in which they are regarded as forgery of true reality or a kind of an illusion. Simulacra of the second rank are understood as the result of industrial society. It was impossible to distinguish an image from its reproduction – copy from the original, owing to the industrial production. Simulacra of the third rank, called hyper-reality, came along with postmodern society, or more precisely with the arrival of the new media, mainly television. In this model, according to J. Baudrillard, the borderline between reality and simulation is gradually wiped away. His ‘reality’ of the fourth rank is a pure simulation. A Sign acts in it as a simulacrum and does not dispose of any relationship to the reality itself [R. Brázda, *Jean Baudrillard – reálný únik z hyperreality*, 2007, 1-3, [http://aluze.cz/2007\\_01/08\\_Studie\\_-\\_predmluva\\_-\\_Brazda.php](http://aluze.cz/2007_01/08_Studie_-_predmluva_-_Brazda.php), accessed 25.03.2016]. We encounter simulacra of the fourth rank, and thus with complete deformation of imaginary ‘barrier’ between the true reality and virtual reality, especially in the environment of games.

It can be stated that a **game** has a significant place in the process of creating media reality. It is an area of human life, in which we experience extraordinary creativity, happiness of creating. It can be anything, every simulation is open [11]. In other words, we have a free will – in the sphere of virtual reality (e.g. computer games), but also in the area of ‘physical reality’. Hence, the reality we live in is also a game. This difficult relationship is explained by J. Huizinga, one of the best known game theorists.

J. Huizinga, one of the best known theorists, tried to define the term ‘game’ even more accurately. He claims that [2] a game is a voluntary activity or occupation, which a human being engages in within certain precisely given time and space boundaries, according to voluntarily accepted but at the same time unconditionally binding rules. A game is a goal in itself and is accompanied by a feeling of suspense, joy and awareness of ‘being different’ from ‘an ordinary life’. J. Huizinga confirms what has been already mentioned, namely that a game has a substantial influence on constructing of media reality. We also mention the words of F. Jost [12], for whom a game is an unsubstantiated physical or intellectual activity not being forced by anyone. We engage in a game for entertainment with the aim of feeling the so called ‘joy of the game’. It can be seen that a game has an unusually wide terminological field in modern European languages. In Romanic as well as in Germanic languages, the term has widened its use to include different conceptual groups of movement or acting, which have very little to do with a game [2, p. 245].

Even if the history of digital games is not a long one, the games themselves have been a part of humanity since the very beginning. To mention just ‘dice’ or different board of martial games is enough to illustrate this. A game gradually became a part of the cultural heritage and of the lifestyle of every single one and of us as well [13]. With the development of new technologies the phenomenon of a game has modified into an enhanced form of digital games.

Digital or computer games often demand choosing between true and false; the bad and the good appears there as well and it is often the player who decides. A player is allowed to lie in the game, is able to play different roles, change disguises, simply can ‘enjoy playing’ and all this is made possible by means of different types of media [12, p. 35]. J. Švelch’s contribution is based on J. Juul’s idea and he states that a game is a ‘transmedia phenomenon’ meaning that it does not depend on a concrete type of media [14]. A computer game is thus a specific application of a game as a transmedia phenomenon, the same way for example a film is an application of transmedia phenomenon of a narrative. Its application in a computer environment has become a distinctive manifestation of the so called game principles.

**Game principles** are defined as essential rules making up the game environment. They are universally constituted norms equally valid for games in social as well as in media (digital) reality. The French sociologist R. Caillois in his work *Games and people* [1] recognises four fundamental game variants applicable in a concrete game environment. He mentions the principle *agon* as

the first and defines it as orderliness, which means respecting strictly specified rules of a certain game or a contest. It is excelling and achieving in a particular game area. The variation *alea* is based on fatalistic approach of a player, who is characterised by passivity and leaves the ‘fate’ of winning in the ‘hands’ of the game. *Agon* as well as *alea* is characterised by the presence of strict game rules. *Mimicry* is a principle with a dominant attribute of simulation of reality, transformation of environment or creating of heterogeneous identities. *Mimicry* is often based on a platform of so called imaginary stories, in which players tend to take roles of different simulated versions of their ‘selves’. The fourth game variant is called *ilinx* or *vertigo*. It a concept based on adrenalin experience and thus a feeling evoking amazement or an emotion often bordering with fright. Caillois’s typology of game principles can be still considered highly valid and universal at the same time. It is applied in various cultural and social activities (such as theatre plays, social games) as well as in the sphere of digital or computer games. The authors have chosen the game principle *agon*, often considered to be one of the most compositionally used game principles of present digital game industry, as the primary object of their study.

The group of games called *agon* manifests itself as a contest in the form of a combat. The contestants meet under universal conditions (artificially created chances for opponents), which ensure unquestionable and exact value of the victory. Rivalry is always focused on one particular attribute of the given game (speed, endurance, strength, memory, etc.). There is no outside help; everything depends on the skilfulness of the player [1, p. 35]. Theorists J. Dovey and H.W. Kennedy [15] completed the definition by comparing *agon* to so called ‘competition game’, which is based on the principle of clear victory or defeat. The stimulus in the game is simply the desire to excel in a particular area and prove this way the player’s ability. It is also the reason why agonal games require focused concentration, appropriate training, great endeavour and a will to win. Players must rely on their own abilities.

The principle *agon* is mainly connected to sport competitions between two individuals (ping pong, box, tennis) or teams (football, water polo), or an unspecified number of contestants (running races, golf). These competitions also include games, at the beginning of which the opponents dispose of completely the same number of game elements of identical value (draughts, chess) [1, p. 35]. All above mentioned games involve meeting of two or more players with a clear aim – accomplish a victory under the same conditions with the use of their own talents and skills, a victory that is valid and not questioned by anyone (e.g. in football finals, check mate in a game of chess, tearing of finishing tape in running competition, etc.).

The spirit of *agon* can be found in various cultural phenomena, which follow the same code. Whether we speak about agonal digital games (e.g. most products from the production of company *EA Sports* – *FIFA*, *Need for Speed*, *NBA*, *NHL* and others) or about combats, tournaments organised in the spirit of so called ‘chivalrous combat’. However, R. Caillois emphasises that [1, p. 36] *agon* is not applicable in combats between a man and trained animals, led

according to the rules defined by people and not the game itself (e.g. horse races or cock fights). Several game categories are concurrent at present, which causes unambiguous understanding of the particular game genre [15, p. 25]. Irrespective of this fact, *agon* is considered to be one of the most compositionally used and most importantly the oldest game principles ever. Combats and tournaments have, according to J. Huizinga [3], roots in ancient Greece. The Olympic Games were a series of agonistic activities that had an impact in the life of every Greek. It is therefore not a coincidence that the term ‘*agon*’ is derived from the English word *Ancient Game of Nations*. Medial reality connected to the game *agon* was thus clearly formed already during the time of its birth, at the time of ancient Greece.

### 3. Historical reflection of the game principle *agon*

The beginning of the ancient Greek culture is dated back to the period of the end of the beginning of the first millennium B.C. According to several relevant sources, this period can be divided into the time of Mycenaean, Cycladic and Minoan civilisations [4], but for the study of the game principle *agon* it is the **Minoan culture** that becomes the centre of our attention. Minoan culture was the first to emphasise sacredness of a game and also accentuated the significance of various initiative rituals. The aim of these activities was to test the competence of Minoans. Jumping through the horns of a bull using a somersault over its back or the very demanding ritual dance with the characteristic elements of present gymnastics are some of the known examples. What is more, *Minoan Cretans* knew box in relatively the same form we practise it today. It can be observed that the majority of physically demanding ritual performances blend with sport entertainment during the ancient times. Some of the distinguished present historians (D. Hulínek, D. Prokop and others) believe that the Greek idea of the Olympics has its origin in the Minoan Crete. The origins of the game principle *agon* (sport competition between two or more opponents) are thus connected to the Minoan culture. However, it is important to note that after its decline during the second half of the second millennium B.C., a period of so called ‘dark ages’ of Greek culture began [D. Hulínek, *Jako sa žilo minojským Krétanom*, 2013, <http://www.egyptan.sk/clanky/archeologia/stredomorie/minojska-kultura/ako-sa-zilo-minojskym-kretanom.html>, accessed 31.03.2016]. That is the reason why the development of the category *agon* stopped for several centuries.

The ‘dark ages’ in Greek culture lasted approximately until the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., when monetary economy, internal trading, democracy and various festive games were developed. **Pre-classical period of ancient Greece** (in other words – the era of ‘festive Greek games’) begins in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and lasted until 500–450 B.C. [4]. The theorist M. Eliade includes popular religious ceremonies called *Dionysia* among the most widely known games of the pre-classical period [3]. Dionysus, the god of fertility and grape harvest, by his epiphanies and disappearances reveals the sacredness of the bond between

life and death. Revelation has a religious character because it happens during the presence of the god himself. *Dionysia* organised in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., in reality served mainly for tyrants to win sympathy and favour of the rest of the population and directed people against the aristocracy at the same time. Therefore, they tried to keep their attention by entertainment in the spirit of the festive Greek games [4]. *Dionysia* were divided into [3, p. 302; 4; <http://www.psychologia.sk/portal/?pojmem=Dion%C3%BDzie>]:

1. *The rural Dionysia* – took place in December, singing crowd was carrying a phallus of large dimensions in precession (note: procreative organ of the god Dionysus). Other parts of the rituals were competitions (e.g. game based on balancing on an oiled beam), races or procession of masks or of people dressed as animals.
2. *The Lenaia* – were celebrated in the middle of the winter and were less known.
3. *The Anthesteria* – took place approximately at the beginning of February and the end of March, the most popular activity of the festivities was a drinking competition.
4. *The City Dionys* – were celebrated always at the beginning of April and lasted a complete six days. It was the biggest event in Athens, which was started in 560 B.C. by Athenian politician Peisistratus. During the ritual, ceremonial procession carried a picture of Dionysus from his temple to the amphitheatre. The last day of the *City Dionys* was ended by a performance of singers dressed in goat leather accompanied by dancers.

Games connected to Dionysus constitute ‘fertile soil’ for the development of the game principle *agon* (competition in drinking, the game based on balancing on an oiled beam, etc.), but they also imply shift to the so called ‘golden age of Greece’ – otherwise called **classical period** – the beginning of which dates back to the period of 500–450 B.C. [16]. This period is characterised by introducing a strict Spartan and Attic education of girls and boys. A special clerk – *pajdonomos* - was in charge of education of boys from the age of seven to twenty. The greatest emphasis was on physical education and intellectual formation. Education of girls was in compliance with the state’s needs. Girls had to pursue various types of sports. An ideal Spartan woman was expected above all to give birth to a healthy and physically sound child. The aim of the Spartan educational model was the effort to develop a so called ‘sense of society’ (civics) including the desire to make a human being obedient. A proper Spartan had to be devoted to his state, obey the laws and all adults [17, 18]. This kind of lifestyle was founded on rules determined ahead in time. The desire to excel in a particular area and confirm physical qualities became a prominent feature. We are thus witnesses of certain causality in the functioning of the game principle *agon* – the desire to excel, win and confirm that way their game skills.

Athens was the first to abandon the model, in which education served exclusively military purposes. Access to education and very popular sport was initially the privilege of the elite, later wider strata of the population gained access as well. Spartan education was dominated by individual form of

education (respecting rules for successful distinguishing of an individual in society), however, the Attic model was characterised by group education. In this context it is sport (running, discus and javelin throwing, long jump and wrestling) and music education as well. The Greeks promoted sport to become a noble part of their lives and created the ideal of *kalokagathia*, in which ‘the good and the beautiful’ were united. Obligatory military preparation was shortened in Athens to two years – from 18 to 20 [18, p. 21]. In ‘Attic games’ the players met with a clear aim – to accomplish victory using their own talents and skills under the same conditions and it was *agon*, understood to be a game that was considered to be the most optimal way of achieving the desired *kalokagathia*.

‘Attractions’ of the classical Greek period included also theatre contests, which were an opportunity to perform new plays – tragedies, satyr dramas and comedies. Theatre became the first mass and democratic media but despite its mass character, it remained a stable part of religious ceremonies [4, p. 15]. Although the game became a global matter, a certain continuity with religious thinking of pre-classical of ‘Dionysus’ period can be perceived.

A variety of children games (e.g. ball games, king games, tug of war, dice) and numerous contests in sacred knowledge are typical for Greek classical period. The game principle *agon*, which always includes fighting or playing ‘for something’, is gaining importance. The first and the last of a game is the victory. A lasting consequence of a victory is honour, esteem and prestige. A game includes a deposit, chance to win a golden cup, jewellery, king’s daughter and often threatens the player’s life or the wellbeing of the whole tribe [2, p. 255].

Category *agon* did not lose any of its attractiveness in the following period of development of Greek culture called ‘Hellenic’ or **postclassical** (338–146 B.C.). The period of ‘Hellenism’ was characterised by a union of the ‘historical world’, which took place at the beginning through a mass migration of Hellenic people into eastern areas and also through spreading of Greek language and Hellenic culture [18]. In the thus created ‘Hellenic society’, agonistics very quickly gained an immensely wide space and subsequently people ceased to perceive its game nature. Competing at every opportunity became for Greeks such an intensive cultural function that it was perceived as something ‘ordinary’ and full-valued not as a game. Competitive customs and the meaning attributed to them prove in what depth of human life and also coexistence playful agonal attitude is rooted. It can be perceived in different cultural phenomena (e.g. question of law, war) or in various knowledge, contests, etc. A game gradually started to be created on the platform of philosophical thinking, which was connected to certain rules of grammatical, poetic and ritual nature [2, p. 242, 292-295]. The most common subject for a ritual became asking about the fundamentals of the world and life as such, while the ‘asking’ itself took a form of puzzles (people ask questions, guess what the base and premise of their existence was).

Expansion of the idea of the Olympics, dating back to year 776 B.C., into the consciousness of almost every Greek citizen, repeatedly restored the lost esteem of *agon*. All competitions on the official sport programme were initially



classified as classical agonal Olympic disciplines. They included *dromos*, *stadion*, *stadiodromos* (run), *diaulos* (double run), *dolichos*, *dolichodromos* (long run), *hoplitodromos* (run of hoplites), *pale* (wrestling), *pygme*, *pyx* (box), *pankration* (free fighting), *pentathlon*, *halma* (long jump), *diskos* (discus) and *akontion* (javelin). New disciplines were gradually added bringing along also animal participants. Abiding by the rules of all contestants was overseen by judges and breaking the rules was punished by a cane [19]. We can therefore again state that the presence of rules directly predicated the game itself.

The importance of competing in Greece later supported the establishment of so called Pan-Hellenic games (games involving the whole Greece typical for the Hellenic period), among which were included the four greatest Greek sport events – Olympic, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian Games. The person who managed to win all four games was honoured by the title *periodonik*. The *kalokagathia* ideal, which grew in importance already during classical Greek period, reached its highest position during the Hellenic times. Sport races, competitions and Olympic Games conformed to this ideal. After the Romans conquered Greece in 146 B.C., not only the Olympic Games, but also the human ideal of harmony between the physical and mental experienced declined. The Greek heritage *Ktêma es aei* (possession for eternity) was forgotten for ages until the present day, when people brought it ‘into the daylight’ [*Olympijské hry v starovekom Grécku*, <http://www.egyptan.sk/clanky/prispevky/zaujimave-prispevky/olympijske-hry-v-starovekom-grecku.html>, accessed 09.04.2016]. The idea of agonal competing ‘come back to life’ and the Olympic Games once again reached the peak of mass popularity. In our hypermodern time, competing in the spirit of the game principle *agon* even projected itself into virtual reality, namely into the area of digital games.

#### **4. Application of R. Caillois’s agonism in present media environment**

The French game theorist R. Caillois defined the fundamental game principles, including the discussed category *agon*. On the bases of his analysis of this term, we single out several analytical categories which we then subsequently identify in individual games under the brand name *Electronic Arts Sports* (in short *EA Sports*) – sport games. R. Caillois attributes *agon* the following characteristics [1, p. 35-37].

The essential sign of agonal principle is its **competitive nature**. Within the scope of production company *EA Sports* there are the following games: *FIFA* – football simulator, *NHL* – hockey simulator, *NBA* – basketball simulator, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* – golf simulator, *Madden NFL* – American football simulator and many others. The whole group of these games is represented by **artificially created equal chances for opponents**, who thus meet under ideal conditions ensuring unquestionable and precise value of the winner’s victory. The analytical category in question has become the cornerstone of these contests. The creators of these games are well aware of this and create typical slogans and advertising ‘headlines’, such as *Play beautiful (FIFA)*, *Rise together (NBA Live)*

or *Play together - Win together (NHL)*. Compete 'beautiful' respecting predetermined rules, evolve together, play and win, all these determine completely the examined principle *agon*.

The rules are strictly predetermined, but rivalry is always focused on only **one particular attribute**. Speed, endurance, strength, skilfulness and resourcefulness can be observed in all selected sport games. The category *agon* called 'memory', however, is not present in the *EA Sports* group in the traditional meaning of the word (as understood in chess, draughts, mill, etc.), but is applied in the possibility of 'free choosing' of your team and a distinctive sport strategy.

Another attribute of every match is also the **existence of certain defined limits** – players compete without any outside help with the aim of presenting themselves the best at certain performance. The discussed sport contests take place by the means of similar rules. Players rely only on their own abilities, victory accomplished thanks to their own talents and dexterity. Cooperation with other game participants is absent in *agon*. This feature is, however, a fundamental element of other significant genres of computer games (e.g. *MMO RPG* – role digital games based on multiple player participation).

*Agon* of a game has **two opponents** (*Tiger Woods PGA Tour, UFC box*) or **two teams** (*FIFA, NHL, NBA, NFL*) facing each other, or it can be an **undefined number of opponents** (*Need for Speed, FIFA Street*) competing to win. The aspect of equality of initial chances is such a demonstrative principle that if unequal opponents are to meet, a secondary inequality within the initial equality develops. The unavoidable imbalance is eliminated or reduced by the initial toss, subsequent obligatory changing of the sides or simply by choosing the level of the game before it starts. Simply said, in all agonal games certain number of players meet having a clear aim – to achieve a **definitively valid and unquestioned** victory under the same conditions by means of their own talents and skills (e.g. final score in *UFC box, FIFA, NHL*, etc.).

The aim of meeting opponents is **not to cause a serious harm to others, but to show your superiority**. People only add calculation and more exact rules to it. *Agon* thus easily finds various forms of realisations transformed into competitive games and sports. Harming a player does not belong into the aims of agonal games. Football, hockey, golf and other contests follow rules, which do not allow any kind of violent acts against another person. If the defined rules are broken, '**the player is punished**' in the form of a red card in a match (*FIFA*), penalty minutes (*NHL*) or penalty shots (*NBA*). *UFC box* is the only sport game produced by *EA Sports*, in which the strategy is based on '**harming the opponent**' with the aim to achieve a victory. However, this combat also follows predetermined rules, breaking of which, just like in the previous games, is 'punished' (e.g. by disqualifying the boxer). *Agon* in this final form corresponds to the definition of a game in which it is defined as a competition of two or more equal players.

Practicing of agonal games assumes in general **concentrated attention, appropriate training, great effort** and a **will to win**. Agonal games thus present personal achievements in their pure form and allow participants to demonstrate them. In digital environment, the analytic categories of concentration, training, endeavour and will are understood from a different point of view – while in ancient Greece they represented an important and crucial platform for achieving victory (e.g. Spartan and Attic education of girls and boys). In the sphere of cyber-environment media reality simulation of sport contests are supported by pre-defined production mechanisms and also by various users' habits (there is no need for any special level of concentration, because the game can be paused at any moment, the training part can be simply skipped and the effort is determined by choosing the level of the game, etc.). In late modern period, a period of rapid technological progress, the lost esteem of *agon* is at least partially restored. The makers of digital games stress the importance of contest as such by struggling to create the most authentic simulation of real combat without the possibility of 'circumventing the rules' and thus the possibility of experiencing the genuine joy of a victory. In this case the agonal principle is not presented in its pure form, it is characterised by a certain **inter-genre quality**, in which more game principles are integrated. An ideal example of similar genre hybridization is the samples analysed by the authors. *FIFA*, *NHL*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* and others are prototypes of interconnection of the principle *agon* (respecting predetermined, strictly specified rules) and the game category *mimicry* (simulation of reality, playing roles and changing identity). Sport disciplines existing in reality are thus transformed into the form of a computer game, viewed as football, hockey or golf simulators. We can notice a similarly evident syncretism in the game principles *agon* and *ilinx* or *vertigo* (gaming adrenaline experience, a feeling evoking astonishment). In the examined game groups (*FIFA*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour*) this adrenaline rules have an essential function. Users and fans of these simulators identify with roles of various sportsmen by means of the game principle *mimicry* and this identification creates a feeling of astonishment in the player, which is labelled as manifestation of the *vertigo*. For the participant the whole 'digital entertainment' is a kind of adrenaline experience. This fact rightfully declares mutual interconnection between *agon*, *mimicry* and *vertigo*.

These facts allow us to state that the principle *agon* is a supertemporal and inseparable part of game environment. Its form typical for ancient Greek games has been transformed in almost the same form in the character of the present-day digital games. The games under the brand name *Electronic Arts Sports* confirm this thesis. The discussed sport simulators include all characteristics of *agonal competition* (competitive form, artificially created equal chances for opponents, attributes such as speed, endurance or strength, presence of predetermined boundaries of 'combat' of two individuals, teams or unspecified number of opponents, conclusive and unquestionable rules, competing without any harm, concentration and effort to achieve victory at all costs). The authors specify the discussed principle from the point of blending with other game categories. Its

representation in other genres of the digital game dimension is the object of a deeper analysis.

## 5. Conclusions

Media reality is an area of continuous research. It constitutes the ‘reality’ which includes all types of media – from the press to the Internet. It is the ‘unreal’ environment of the Internet that became an object of a deeper theoretical analysis of this study. The authors in their contribution clarify the fundamental term ‘a game’ understood in the context of media reality. They emphasise that every game takes place according to certain regulations – rules, which are known to the players beforehand and are clearly defined. This normative quality has been present in society from immemorial times. The renowned French theorist R. Caillois, who categorised four fundamental game principles, examined the ‘game’ in the cyberspace environment of media reality. The primary object the authors studied was one of them – the principle called *agon*.

The fundamental signs of agonal principle are present not only in ancient Greece, but it is possible to observe them in very popular present-day digital games. *Agon* can be, in the broader sense of the word, classified in every single game genre including action and adventure games, RPG games and also strategy games. It is sport simulations where its distinctive presence can be observed. The analysed game principle constitutes a typical contest, in which the players meet under identical conditions and rules. Their role is obvious – to be faster, stronger, more dexterous, to have the greatest endurance, etc. They show their advantages in a combat of two opponents or groups of opponents or they face numerous opponents. The game rules are invariable for all participants and the players should make an effort to respect them. It is necessary to point out that ‘*agon* of a game’ is not ‘life-or-death play’. The rule ‘value your life and the lives of others’ does apply in these games. A valuable victory can be achieved only by respecting the predetermined criteria.

The study ‘relies’ on theorists J. Bystřický, F. Jost, J. Švelch, R. Brázdy, J. Huizinga, E. Fink, M. Eliade, J. Grexa and D. Hulínek in defying the key notions – media reality, a game, game principles, principle *agon*, and historical reflection of the analysed phenomenon and its application in the present-day media environment. The authors’ primary focus is on R. Caillois’s monograph entitled *Hry a lidé (Games and people)*.

The acquired theoretical knowledge and the subsequent application of theoretical bases on the group of present-day digital games brought the authors to a conclusion that validity of the game principle *agon* in the sphere of ‘new media reality’ of digital games is characteristic and undisputable by anyone. To conclude, we can state that all questions raised at the introductory part of this contribution have been answered. The first partial goal was achieved by a theoretical reflection of the principle *agon* with the emphasis on its presence in the historical and post-modern game environment. The authors consider the

secondary, but not at all less important intention of the study, to be achieved as well, since the examined phenomenon was applied concretely in the area of computer games. The study also emphasized the evident mutual causality between several game principles. In the genre 'sport simulators' there are also principles *mimicry* and *vertigo* besides *agon*. To answer the question regarding the degree of connection between individual game principles and genres is an object of a deeper discursive analysis.

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