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석사학위논문

# What is Playing?

(논다는 것, 번역논문)

제주대학교 통역번역대학원

한영과

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논다는 것

What is Playing?

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1. You're so Weird. Why Aren't You Playing?

Chapter 2. What's the Real Meaning of 'Playing?'

Chapter 3. Who's the World 'Playing' Champion?

Chapter 4. Is Playing a Waste of Time?

Chapter 5. Stop Playing! I Wanna Play More!

Chapter 6. Now Let's Go Out and Play!

Chapter 7. The World, My Playground

## Chapter 1. You're so weird. Why aren't you playing?

Guys, why are you staring at me like that? Do I look that strange? You said that a while ago, right? "wow! "That woman has a beard." Hey, I'm not a woman. You can tell it by the sound of my voice. Just a cool uncle with long curly hair and a beard. What? Why are you laughing? Not cool at all? That's because you guys don't know what it means to be truly cool.

You guys said, "He's a weird person." Right? But I find you guys much weirder. As soon as school ends, you rush to the private educational institute(hakwon) hurriedly, right? Is there anything left to study more after studying all day long at school? Tut tut, I wouldn't do that. If I were you, I would have fun kicking the ball around in the playground and singing songs out loud with my friends.

What did you just say? You have to study? And if you kill time with a strange person like me, you won't be able to go to a decent college and you'll starve to death?

Really? That's strange. You know, is there any adult like me around you? Like, an uncle who is a bit strange. A person who doesn't have a regular job like everyone else does, fools around all the time, laughs and dances on the street, and yet manages to live well without starving to death.

No! really? Oh, your life must be so boring. I would be so bored that I wouldn't even be able to eat. Okay, now. I can't help it. Now I have

to show you who I really am. Look carefully from now on. I am that kind of uncle. This is something to show off to you guys. I am a person who makes a living by playing all the time. If I find something that I think might be fun to play, I just play with it. Reading comics is fun, traveling is awesome, and drawing maps is also great. Then, I write a post bragging about how much fun I had playing. People read that and say, "That seems really fun, I should play like that too." And wait for the most awesome part. I can really make a living just by playing really well.

What? You can't believe it?

Okay. Now let me tell you about what is 'playing.' Why on earth are kids so anxious to play? Also, why don't adults let us play like that? How can you have fun and become much smarter than kids who only read books all the time? And sometimes your parents and teachers might ask annoyingly, "What will you grow up to be if you just play all the time?" Then, I will let you know how to respond. You'll answer, "Ahem, actually, you have to play well to really live well."

## Chapter 2. What's the real meaning of 'playing?'

When I was as young as you guys and my mom saw me doing nothing and slacking off, she once said, "You lazy boy. Go outside and break a pot instead of slacking off like that!" I answered, sticking my head above the threshold. "What does that mean, mom? Break a pot?"

My mom grabbed the broom and screamed. "What does that mean? Pick up a book and study, or clean your room, or if you don't want to do that, play in the backyard and crack a pot. Why are you just lying down in the corner of your room? Because you have nothing to do?" Mom swung the broom, and I ran out of the room and screamed. "Alright, I'm really going to break it."

Come to think of it, my house didn't have a yard. To break a pot, I had to go to the rooftop, so I trudged up the narrow stairs. When I opened the rooftop door, it was late spring with the sunlight shining through. As I passed the sunflower flower bed, I saw a warm pot giving off the smell of stinking fermented soybean paste. I leaned next to the pot and gave a big sigh. When I got the chance to break the pot, I didn't have the guts to actually break it. If I break it, I will have to clean up that smelly thing, and I won't be able to eat soybean paste stew.

At that time, a grasshopper flew in and sat on the lid of the jar. Normally, I would have thought about holding on to its wings and not letting it go, but I wasn't in the mood that day. So I talked to the grasshopper.

"Hey come on. Grasshopper! Come here quickly." The grasshopper just

moved its antennae diligently without answering.

"Hey. Mr. Grasshopper. I'm just so curious. And I'm bored to death right now. My mom says I'm playing because I'm not doing anything, but actually, this isn't really playing. I'm suffering because I have nothing to play with right now."

The grasshopper didn't care a bit.

"Hey grasshopper, you are a one good player when it comes to playing. So tell me."

The grasshopper purred as if it was bothered and flew away. Urgh, even the grasshopper ignored me... I lied down on the floor of the rooftop and blocked out the flickering sunlight with one hand and lost myself in thought. Then I got really curious.

"What does it really mean to play? It's not working, it's not studying, and it's not even sleeping."

## **What do you mean by playing?**

When I'm curious about something but can't think of its answer, I play the opposite game. If you wonder what a 'human' is, think of the opposite. animal! Next, let's look for the characteristics of a human that distinguish them from an animal. This is how you learn what a human is.

Let's play the opposite game again. What is the opposite of playing?  
1) Work. 2) Study. 3) Sleep. 4) Get bored to death. Hmm, it's not easy to choose one.

First of all, this one thing is certain. 'Playing' is, above all, the opposite of 'work.' And it seems like the opposite of 'study.' When dads are tired at work, they say "I guess I'll have to take some time off and

have some fun this time.” You guys also think like this while doing boring homework. “I wanna finish this quickly and go out to play.” But playing doesn’t mean just being blank or sleeping. Even when we are bored and just slacking off, we ask ourselves “Oh, is there anything to play?”

Playing is not doing nothing. It’s doing ‘something.’ But it doesn't produce any particular results. It's not studying to improve your grades, farming to grow rice, or making money. So what does playing mean?

Okay, let's do it this way. Just say out loud something you think is “playing” is at me.

“Like kicking a ball?”

That was a good guess. Nice pass. It's really fun to finish your homework and kick a ball with your friends on the playground.

But there is something strange about it. If you guys and I are kicking a ball in the playground, it's playing. But what about the professional soccer players who sweat and practice on the soccer practice field beyond the wire fence on the other side? The tall goalkeeper throws his body to the left to the goalpost with all his might to block the ball, then falls back to the right to block the ball. His gym clothes are covered in dirt and he is panting loudly from exhaustion. Moreover, the coach blows the whistle to hurry him to get up quickly and block the ball.

Okay, this isn’t playing with a ball. This is work for both the coach and the goalkeeper. Even if they feel like they’re about to collapse, they have to practice blocking the ball to play a great game. Then they would be able to buy some food like fried chicken for the kids at home

and pay the electricity bill to play computer games. Life must be really difficult for the adults. Don't you think?

“Then is everything adults do is work, and everything children do is play?” Oh my. Are you playing the game of opposites and questioning again? Good. Now, let's only feature adults as the main characters. If your dad decides to make a study room for you guys, he would call a carpenter to make a bookshelf. The carpenter's job is to make a bookshelf for your house. That's working.

But in the next spring, the bookshelf is now full of the books you've read. It's now time to get another bookshelf. But this time, dad changes his mind. He decides to make a bookshelf himself. He sweats profusely as he carries wood and gets sawdust on his clothes to make a bookshelf. Mom scolds your dad. “Why are you making things more difficult by doing it yourself? It would be much cheaper to just buy one” But dad just smiles and says. “Do you think I'm doing it for the money? I'm doing it because it's fun. This is playing.”

Would you say that dad's making a bookshelf is something between work and play? It is somewhat working since it produces a practical result called a bookshelf. However, it is also a game because he took the initiative and had fun cutting the woods even when no one told him to do so. Playing is, above all else, a voluntary action and something that creates joy in itself. It's nice that your dad made a bookshelf, but he enjoyed making it himself.

“So then, is something that's serious and gives you a headache is work, and something you do for fun is play?”

That's one way to think about it. Some people consider 'seriousness' to distinguish between play and work. But I don't think this is the case. Let's think about it. Sometimes you forget to eat and play games. And if you make a small mistake and lose the game, you can't even sleep at night. In fact, in many cases, people are more focused and immersed in play than work.

"Then can we sum it up like this? Playing is the act of spending time doing something, even if it doesn't result in anything productive, and which creates enjoyment in itself."

Hey, you're smart. By the way, are you by any chance underlining and highlighting the definitions of playing and working? Are you playing like you're studying?

### **Do only humans play?**

I have another question. Why do people play? Who gave humans the ability to play? Just for fun? At that moment, I thought of the cat I had at home. I have a long hair, so I sometimes tie it up with a rubber band. But when I look for the rubber band, I can't find it. I obviously left it in front of the mirror. At times like that, I can feel the sparkling eyes looking at me from the other corner. My cat is holding that rubber band in her mouth and staring at me with her burning eyes as if to say something like this.

"Play with me! play with me!"

My cat goes crazy when she sees a rubber band. She bites it, spits it out and hits it with her feet, having fun like catching rats. Playing is not



a privilege that only humans enjoy. When you go to the park, you see dogs running around like crazy with dirty tennis balls in their mouths, and even chimpanzees at the zoo giggle and point their butts at visitors.

At first, I thought, since these guys live together with people, they must be imitating what humans do. Or maybe the owner taught them to do it for training, and they are doing it out of habit. But my thoughts changed after watching a nature documentary program on TV. It was featuring a polar bear and he was playing with a tree branch in his mouth, spinning it around and throwing it into the sky. Then, when the bear got tired, he carefully hid the branch he was playing with. It was obviously his toy. Surprisingly, wild animals also play and have fun!

I got curious, so I searched books and the internet. Oh my. Every little creature was having a really good time. Young desert foxes have a routine of biting, tearing, and wrestling with each other, and young mountain goats have fun jumping around as if they are betting on who can jump higher than the other. It is said that even insects such as flies and fish in the river play games with each other to have fun.

Now that I think about it, one particular memory came to my mind. It was when I went to the bee farm in one Autumn day. The apiary man told me to take a look at the bees as they ‘play during the day.’ Huh? Do bees play? Bees are like the model example of busy and diligent work, always searching for flowers to collect honey and protecting their homes from wasps.

In fact, the bees really were whizzing around the hive at a full speed. Each bee was trying to catch up with others, but without colliding with

one another. It was like they were car racing. Actually, if the bees are just carrying honey, they don't need to move as fast as they do. Also, it didn't seem like they were fighting. The bees were really playing and having fun.

Playing really is an amazing thing. How on earth did this strange act of doing come into existence?

### **Why are humans made to play?**

Now let's change our thoughts for a bit. Let's imagine that I am the Creator of this world. That is, I am a programmer who created a simulation game called "The Earth" and the animals and plants on the Earth are units that I control. These creatures have artificial intelligence, so they are programmed to move in a pre-designed way. The goal of this game is for these creatures to grow healthy, give birth, and create a green and sustainable Earth.

First, I made the humans and animals work all day long. 24 hours a day, day and night. But oh my god. They didn't last long and collapsed after a few days. I guessed that they needed a way to replenish their energy. So I added an option to eat when they are hungry and sleep when they are tired. I thought this would be enough, but it didn't work either. These guys had no motivation to live. It seemed like they had plenty of energy, but they did not work hard, fighting with one another for no reason.

While I was having such a hard time, my friend came to visit. "So this is the reason you didn't come to the star picking meeting last time!"

And then my friend started meddling with my “Earth game.” Oh my god. Beep, beep, then something went wrong. I got angry and looked into the game again and saw that the game characters were just sitting around doing nothing. Some people seemed to have malfunctioned and were making strange body movements that looked like dancing. I thought the game broke down and had to start all over again. Then just when I was about to press the power button, these guys started working again, much more energetically than before. Then after some time passed, they rested or played again on their own. How cool is that? I shouted hurray.

Why are humans designed to play? I think you guys could say some thing like this. “well, I just play because it’s fun.” Then let’s ask ourselves again. Why is it so fun to play? Don’t you think there is a reason for that? Do you know why fruits are sweet? There is a reason for it. Hopefully, the animals will eat the sweet fruit and scatter the seeds on the ground. The reason animals enjoy eating food is because they have the desire to eat food and continue their lives. Likewise, humans and animals play because they need to do so.

So why are we made to play? Let’s figure out the answers to it one by one.

### **1. Rest : You can’t just continue working without resting**

The photo below is a scene from the movie 『Modern Times』 . Charlie Chaplin, a scrawny man with a mustache, worked at a factory to earn a living, but the harsh boss made him work all day. The boss said it’s a waste of time to eat, so he used a machine that puts lunch in the workers’ mouths while they were working. So were they able to produce

more products in less time? No way. Mr. Chaplain tightened the screws too much that he ended up tightening them even in his spare time, and eventually made a mistake and broke the factory machine.

Even a car needs to rest for a while after running for several hours. Of course a human being cannot just keep working. You need some proper rest. But resting still isn't enough. Strangely enough, when your body or mind is tired, you can relieve the fatigue much more easily by doing something different. It's the same reason why we want to have fun playing a game after studying for a while.

## **2. Surplus energy : The body must move and use up the leftover energy**

When I was young, my mother would scream at me when I lied down right after eating. “Go outside and run. You have to empty your stomach after eating. You’ll turn into a cow if you just lie down after eating.”

Yes, once your energy is charged by eating, you have to circulate it through work or play. Our body is not like a cell phone battery, and it does not stay charged just because it is plugged in. If you don't use up the energy left in your body, it will just add up fat in your belly. It's no wonder that your body will become stronger and taller after exercising or moving your body.

It's helpful to do gymnastics in the physical education class. But wouldn't it be better to train your body while having fun running around on the playground? You can also sleep well at night if you move your body during the day and use up your surplus energy.

### 3. Repetition and imitation : We repeat what our ancestors have done

My cat loves little balls of fur. If she finds them somewhere, she will play with them all day, biting and throwing them as if she were hunting a mouse. Sometimes I hide the fur balls and show them again to tease my cat, and then hide them again and show them again. Every time my cat can't catch it, she gets very frustrated. I can really see that playing is an act of instinct when I see my cat shaking her butts and jumping all over.

Some people say that the things our ancestors have done before are hidden inside our bodies as well. So when we run away or chase after each other, hide behind trees and find them, touch or shake each other off, the blood in our bodies start to rush. Your eyes become brighter, your nose becomes more alert, and your body becomes agile when hidden instincts are awakened. And then you realize, 'This is what it's really like to be alive.'

Perhaps sitting at a desk all day long doesn't suit our genetic nature. That's why sometimes you need to play a heart-pounding game, like hide and seek or a treasure hunt, to feel at ease.

Have you ever played with younger siblings or babies? You look at their faces and shake your head and clap your hands to play with them. Then the baby imitates you and follow along. This is how people learn about the world, by imitating other people and get pleasure from doing so. Children imitate what adults do, comedians make people laugh by imitating the words and actions of celebrities, and then we try to imitate what the comedians are doing.

#### 4. Preparation for living and social relationships : We can prepare for the future with easy and fun playing

Have you guys ever played a pony toy ride? How did that play come about? In the past, there were no cars, so you had to ride a horse. But trust me, riding a horse is not easy. It is especially dangerous for children to ride big horses right away. So children or people learning to ride horses for the first time would ride small ponies first. But riding small ponies can also be difficult. There's many reasons. You may be too young to ride a pony, or it's hard to get a pony, or you have to ride indoors... This is why a toy pony was made. When it was first made, it looked like a horse's head attached to a stick, but later it was made like a rocking chair so you could move it back and forth.

Do you know what's most important when riding a toy pony? “You have to hold your horse tight. Balancing yourself is very important.” Yes, that's important too, but personally, I think it's important to make the noise like a horse with your voice. Hee haw, you become the horse yourself. It feels more realistic and fun that way. Riding a toy pony not only satisfies our instinct for desiring to ride a horse, but it also prepares us to ride a horse when we become adults. It's like riding a tricycle when you're young and training to ride a two-wheeled bicycle later.

There are many games that allow children to try out various things they will experience as adults, such as playing house or playing the game called the 『Game of Life』 . And when people play together, they naturally learn how to make friends and maintain relationships. You can

also learn the universal ethics through play, such as what you should or should not do when you're playing with others.

#### **5. Self-expression and purification of the mind : You can express yourself and satisfy bad desires vicariously**

Guys, don't you feel like your mind is completely liberated when you take a break from studying and go out to play? Play can also let us wash away the resentment that weigh us down. Especially when a desire to do something negative arises in your mind, you can relieve it through playing.

It is said that when a younger sibling is born, the older brother or sister feel distressed. They feel like all the love they received from mom and dad has moved onto their younger siblings. It is natural to have a desire to bully your younger sibling, but you know from your heart that you really shouldn't do that. But then you see a doll next to you and hit it imagining it is your younger sibling. Finally, you feel a little relieved. And at the same time, you feel a bit sorry, too. Surely, your younger brother or sister must have some grudges of being the younger sibling as well. Imagine you are a younger sibling this time. Big brother or sister always ignores me because I'm the youngest, and doesn't let me play together... Then I make one of the dolls my own younger sibling. I scold it for various things, imitating my older sibling.

Playing also serves to relieve tension in your mind. If there is something that could cause a big problem when you do it for real, you can satisfy your desires by playing games with similar actions. The same goes for defeating monsters while playing computer games. That

monster could be a powerful and vicious enemy, but it could also be a nitpicking teacher, an older brother who bullies you with wrestling, or a never-ending homework assignment.

However, playing is more than just releasing negative emotions. Sometimes, it can become a means to showcase one's talent, such as the desire to sing, draw, dance, or create. It's not just something for the future artists. Only when children and teenagers naturally try these things and find fun through play can they enjoy much richer hobbies and cultures when they become adults.

#### **6. Deviation, or fulfillment of wishes – We can nurture dreams by playing around and escaping**

When I am so immersed in playing, there are times I wonder if I can keep on playing like this. When I'm playing, I tend to become more mischievous than usual, and don't hesitate to do dangerous things... Some people say that playing is living in another world away from everyday life. When I am playing, I usually don't hesitate to do things I shouldn't. And when it's not safe to do it, I want to try it even more. It's amazing to see how these kinds of deviations and pranks give us more fun. We burst out laughing when something is so fun. In fact, we laugh when we encounter something different from usual. If you secretly imitate and make fun of the teacher when that teacher is not around, the whole classroom will explode with laughter. If that teacher is scary and fearful, this is going to happen even more so.

It's as if playing gives us a ticket to escape limitations. We board on an spaceship called 'Playing' and fly to places we can't normally reach.



Even though we don't have a driver's license, we can drive sports cars, shoot laser beams like we're invincible superheroes, and act like we're K-pop idols. How else can you reach the dreams that cannot be achieved in reality if not through play?

'Playing' may seem like a bug planted incorrectly by the Creator. But if it's a bug that does such cool things, shouldn't we just leave it as it is? It's good for all of us – the Creator, humans, and animals!

### **Is it said that if you don't play, you're not human?**

There was one Dutch historian named Johan Huizinga. When this scholar was young, he studied clowns in Indian plays and later defined humans as 'Homo Ludens — playing humans.' Therefore, 'playing' is a decisive factor that differentiates humans from other animals. It can be said that human brain activity itself is a high level of playing, and that humans are beings who express their view of life and the world through playing. Is it too difficult? To put it simply, "If you don't play, you're not human."

I really think people are born to play. Other animals only play when they are full and not anxious. But when human children start playing, they forget about being cold and getting hungry. Doesn't that happen to you when you go to your grandmother's house in the countryside with your family? Running around the mountains and fields with cousins, climbing pine trees, catching rabbits, making dolls out of pine cones... When you've lost track of time playing, your mom will come and yell at

you. “You guys come right now! There’s no dinner for you if you don’t come right away!” But you guys seem to have more fun running away from her.

The reason Huizinga called humans ‘playing animals’ is not just because we are creatures that cannot stop playing. In order for us humans to live like humans, we must go beyond survival and live by cultivating culture, and one of the things that created this culture is playing.

In a trial system, lawyers and prosecutors argue with each other and then finally a judge makes a decision. Where do you think this came from? They say it came from an European debate game similar to the mock trial that college students do these days. There is a role in the game called the ‘devil’s advocate.’ Devil’s advocate is a person who deliberately takes the side of a bad idea in order to turn the argument into a game.

For example, let’s say there’s a debate battle on the topic ‘Can students sleep during class?’ Then, this devil’s advocate deliberately takes the position that ‘Students can sleep during class.’ The devil’s advocate actually may have a different opinion on this. However, since it is a game, she or he will insist that it is right and exploit the other person’s weaknesses. This is because people thought that no matter how right an idea was, it would only become truly correct if it fought and won against opposing opinions. The system of trial was made from this type of playing.

Now, don’t you want to tell your mom and dad? “In order to become

a prosecutor or a lawyer, playing games is as important as memorizing legal provisions.” But you also need to know that your mom and dad are not easy to win over on these types of arguments. You need to prepare well in advance before talking to them.

Huizinga also said that playing is like a ‘magic circle.’ Just as Dorothy in 『The Wizard of Oz』 is caught in a whirlwind and flies to Wonderland, just as 『Alice in Wonderland』 follows a rabbit down a hole and falls down the hole, and just as the main characters in 『The Chronicles of Narnia』 pass through a closet and go to the land of snow, we escape this world for a while and then come back through playing.

This is what you say to kids who play too hard. “Look at his eyes. He’s completely at another world.” Think about the times when you read a comic book, play a computer game, or dance happily while watching a TV music program. You completely forget what your homework is for today or what you need to bring to school tomorrow. You may also forget the fact that you had a fight with the friend you were playing with as if you'd never see each other again just 10 minutes ago. At times like that, it feels like the whole world is yours and revolves around you. We sometimes go to another world and come back when we play. I guess humans are beings who can't live without playing like that.

What do you think? How much time did you play properly today? Less than 30 minutes? Don't you feel like you haven't lived your life fully?

## Amazing World of Toys

Do you think that toys are only for children to play with? Think again. Toys are the best invention that humans have created to enjoy cultural life.

### Dolls and robots

A doll is literally a small object made in the shape of a person. Flat wooden dolls were discovered in Egyptian tombs dating back 2,000 B.C., and similar dolls are still made in Africa. East Asia, including Korea, boasts a formidable history of dolls, and dolls made of paper or cloth are truly exquisite and beautiful. Dolls were originally made for ancestral rites to replace people, but gradually they became crafts to decorate the house or toys for children to play with.

It was not until the 15th century in Germany that people started playing with mass-produced dolls like we do today. The children fell in love with the fun of changing the doll's clothes and making the doll's house and furniture. In the 1970s, as animations such as Mazinger Z became popular in Japan, and the era of robot dolls began.

### So much fun to make it and then break it, building blocks of Lego

Have you ever made a house or built a castle out of small blocks made of wood or stone when you were really young? It's really fun. But then you think, can't I attach and detach these blocks? Then I would be able to make all kinds of things I imagine.

Danish carpenter Christiansen made dolls and small furniture from pieces of wood left over from making furniture. But the kids in the neighborhood really liked this. This is how the building block toy called Lego was born. It was first made of wood, but later changed to plastic, and the principle is quite simple. Lego consists of various shapes of interlocking plastic bricks that can be assembled and connected to in many ways. With just those small blocks, we can create villages and cities, outer space and pilots, trains and cars, Vikings and cowboys, the Taj Mahal and Jurassic Park in our rooms.

### **The toy I made is moving! Science toy, Meccano**

Frank Hornby, born in Liverpool, first started building miniature railways. He built a small railway and made it possible for the toy train to run on it. Then, he created trains, railroads, bridges, and cars with all kinds of accessories, and created Meccano, a battery-powered assembly toy. It's an amazing toy that makes learning science fun for kids and adults alike. The British broadcaster BBC even aired a program about building a life-size bridge over the Liverpool Canal using only Meccano materials.

### Chapter 3. Who's the world 'playing' champion?

“It was the birthday of a Tiger, the wise and brave tiger in the mountain, and a dance party was held at the animal park. The rabbit danced and the fox played the violin. And then one of the animals started to show off and was fussing around.”

This song is so funny, don't you think? Various animals gather together and compete to see who can play better, like the audition program called “Superstar K.” If this competition really happens, who will be the winner? The chimpanzee, a master of dancing? The dog, a master at catching its own tail? A swallowtail butterfly fluttering around all day? Guess what? There's no need for scoring, text voting, or anything. Of course, the first place is human! When I'm tired, I play because I'm tired, and when I'm depressed, I play because I'm depressed, and when I'm sad, I even play because I'm sad. The bear in Dangun mythology may have been eating garlic for 100 days because it wanted to play like a human.

Humans enjoy so many games that other animals can't even emulate, so let's go meet the wonderful people who invented these exciting games for us. To do that, you have to go back to a long time ago. All the way back to long, long ago when my bearded dad chased wild boars and my mop-haired mom picked acorns. It started from a time when humans were hunter-gatherers.

It was a time when I was hungry because there weren't enough food to eat, but I didn't work day and night. Not even if I wanted to. I just couldn't work. On days when it was pouring down with rain or extremely

cold, I had to stay in a cave and spend a long day around a campfire.

I was very bored since there's no TV or game console, comic books or story books. The only people I see every day are my relatives... Then someone drew a picture on the wall. It looked like his tribe was hunting a large animal. That's the Altamira mural. Why on earth did they draw this? There are many opinions on it. Some people think they drew it to boast that they caught the animal. And some others say they drew it to plan a strategy to hunt better next time or to soothe my stuffy feelings since I couldn't really hunt on the long winter nights. But I think they just drew it because they were bored.

Then one day, the weather finally got warm. The only thing I ate were the acorns I had picked up, which made me poop like a goat, and my face turned yellow and I was on the verge of fainting. Hurray! Everyone jumped out and desperately chased the wild boar. And I caught a big one. Awesome! Let's have a meat party for today's dinner. We made a bonfire and grilled meat. And to thank God for helping me catch it, I started circling around the bonfire while praying. Someone imitated hunting during the day. Some other jumped on all fours, imitating a fleeing animal. People were giggling. Then someone started knocking on wood. There must have been people tapping their feet in excitement. People started twitching their buttocks, dancing and singing. This is how play began.

But something strange happened. A tribal kid ate a piece of meat and danced while imitating the adults, then he kicked something on the floor. That's it.

What is this? The caveman kid didn't know. But we know. Yeah,

doesn't it look like a dice? The stuff we throw when we play games.

How on earth did it get here? How can dice exist at that time of the era? Did someone drop it while traveling through time?

### **The world of game created by dice**

It goes back as far as Egypt in the 10th century B.C. More specifically, it can be found in Mesopotamia and Kiev in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It is said that this item is commonly found in tombs of ancient people discovered in various parts of the world. It looks like a small, light bone about the size of a finger, and the edges are polished. When you throw it, the flat side stands upright, making it look like a perfect dice.

Okay, let's say someone genius invented dice. How did people in a place thousands of kilometers away, where they had to cross mountains, seas, and deserts, have the same gaming tools? Something similar has even been found in the prehistoric graves of American Indians. Did aliens travel around and sell them?

Archaeologists examined the bones' composition. It turned out that it was a bone called the knucklebone, which is located between the joints of animals with hooves, such as sheep and horses. Then I opened the biology atlas and checked the shape of the bone. "This is it." It was only then that I realized that this bone was originally shaped like this.

Perhaps primitive people ate sheep or horse meat and threw the remaining bones out of their burrows. Passing ants would have sucked



up the remaining flesh, and after being washed in the rain and dried in the sun, the bones would have been scattered and rolled around the soil. Then a caveman kid discovered this. The kid thought this was awesome and started playing with it. This bone has a strange characteristic. Although the edges are round and soft, it has a surface so it can roll and then come to a standstill.

One day, a boy was playing with this stone. It's raining so he can't go outside and he's bored to death. And he wonders this girl whom he has a crush on has the same feelings for him. 'What the heck, should I tell her today? What should I do if I get rejected?' His heart is burning. He'd rather have someone make the decision for him. Then he saw the bone in his hand. Okay, let's throw this and if one side comes up, go and tell her, but if the other side comes out, don't.

"The dice is cast." This is what the famous Roman Emperor Julius Caesar said when he crossed the Rubicon River and advanced to Rome. Dice was initially used for fortune telling. Should I go east or west to hunt, should I build a hut here or not, should I fight the wild boar on the hill or should I run away... There are many decisions to make in life, but you can't just worry about this or that and do nothing. You have to make a decision and take action. So that's when we throw the dice.

Then we gradually started to use dice as a gaming tool. Simply put, you write a number from 1 to 6 on each side of a cubic dice, and the person with the higher number wins. In the ruins of a city in Iran around 3,000 B.C., dice was found along with a game set called 'backgammon,' and it is said that at this time, more complex games were being played using the sum of the numbers obtained by throwing two dices.

Humans have enjoyed playing using their bodies and simple tools since the anthropoid period. And these days, we play a 'game' where we decide who wins or loses according to certain rules. The more advanced the civilization becomes, the more diverse and complex games the tribe enjoyed.

Our ancestors were never behind when it came to having fun. There is a pond called Anapji in Gyeongju, the capital of the Unified Shilla period. A dice was found near here, and it had a really strange shape that was hard to find anywhere else in the world. It had 14 sides instead of 6 like a normal dice. It's a 14-sided dice with 6 square sides and 8 hexagonal sides! What's even weirder is that there aren't numbers on it, but letters. Here's what's written on the dice.

'Multiple people hitting you on the nose.' 'Dancing without making a sound.' 'Drinking three shots at once.'

We can assume that people during the Shilla Dynasty would have gathered near the pond and played. And then, I guess someone thought there might be something more fun to play with, by following rules and setting a penalty. How should they determine a penalty? They must have followed the penalty given by rolling the dice, just like when we go on a picnic and play games.

### **There's only so many ways to play**

Whether it's a party just for fun or a game based on elaborate rules, humankind has developed and enjoyed countless games. Strangely

enough, the games we are most familiar with are enjoyed in many places regardless of the borders and countries. Things like rolling dice, jumping rope, playing ball, and clapping hands. This kind of cultural exchange has been happening for thousands of years before there was even the Internet or telephone. This means that people tend to imitate things when they see something interesting, right?

I personally like to travel abroad, but I don't spend much money when I'm traveling since I'm so poor. So, I often stay in very cheap tourist accommodations rather than in hotels. In these types of accommodations, four or more beds are placed in a small room, so you only sleep in the room and have to get out of the room when you wake up. Instead, there is a traveler's lounge where I can use the Internet and chat with strangers who are travelers like me.

One day, I went to a city in Eastern Europe, and the weather was cold and rainy that day, so no one wanted to go outside. I was also killing time sitting on the floor in the lounge when I found a few pebbles in my bag. It was the pebbles I picked up the day before at a nearby beach because I thought they were pretty. I took the pebbles and gathered other Korean travelers together and started playing Gonggi, Korean traditional pebble game. But a friend from England and a friend from Argentina snuck up next to me and said they know how to do it too.

It turns out that Gonggi is a game that has been played all over the world even before the dice. English speaking friends called it 'Jacks' or 'Five-stones.' You can use anything the size of a small stone, seashell, checkerboard, acorn, etc., to play the game. There were many regions

where the knucklebone bones that were used to make dice were used for ball games. Children in Mongolia and Nepal still play with those bones. But from what I've seen, it seems like Korean women are the best at playing Gonggi. Everyone applauded and went crazy as they used their right and left hands at the same time to throw and catch five stones at once.

Let's not leave out 'Gawi, Bawi, Bo' as the simplest yet most international game played around the world. It is a game that has been played in China since the Han Dynasty around 200 B.C., and in English-speaking countries it is called 'Rock, Paper, Scissors.'

Also, hide and seek is a game that has been played since ancient Greece with many variations of the game played around the world. Similar 'catch me' type of playing appears in Shakespeare's theatre plays as well, including the 『Hamlet』 .

Some of the more active games involved combating or training for hunting. It is said that children in ancient Egypt played wrestling, throwing stones, and swimming in the Nile River. In many countries around the world, the game of throwing sticks was played to practice hunting, and the Australian aborigines developed this game and created a boomerang that returns when thrown, around 8,000 B.C. In Korea, where people were skilled at archery, they played a game called 'Tuho' where you throw arrows into a barrel. Games such as kite flying, dominoes, and yoyo were created in China and the East and spread throughout the world.

African people always loved dancing and singing. They especially liked

to maintain such exciting atmosphere while working. During farming or hard work, the leader would sing first. Then, people working together would sing along, and by building on to this, we can create a game that exchanges words, songs, and movements. Games like 'Self-Introduction' movement game are of this type.

Doesn't the world of play really seem endless? Playing with bare hands, playing with tools, playing with puzzles, playing with conversation, playing with exploration... Where does the playing you enjoy fit into?

- Playing with bare hands: dancing, imitating
  
- Playing with words: puns, word chains game
  
- Playing with objects with hands: ball game, dice game
  
- Playing in nature: making reed boats, naming trees, building sand castle
  
  
- Playing outdoors with tools: Jachigi, swing, seesaw, jumping rope
  
- Play using natural principles: kite flying, bubble play, shadow play
  
- Play with models: toy trains, building Lego blocks
  
- Playing with others: Hide and seek, Green light red light(무궁화 꽃이 피었습니다) , Pile driving(말뚝박기)
  
- Play with your head: Yunnori, mafia game, card game

## **If there's no tool to play with, play with imagination!**

When I was young, I would argue with my friends about something like this. “What is the most fun game in the world?” One of my friends said it was the card game. His brain just isn't working when he's studying, but when he's playing card game, he's the smartest kid on earth. Other friends said that playing soccer is the most fun. It's fun when you kick the ball into the goal post, but it's even more fun when you dribble past your opponent. Some other friends said that the most fun thing to do is to collect robot toys and show them off to other friends.

Actually, deciding which game is the best is not a matter of ranking by voting. Just as much as ‘what’ you play, ‘who’ you play with makes a big difference when you play. Friends who have good motor skills probably like playing outside. Friends who are dexterous and patient enjoy things like crafting model airplanes and flying kites, while friends with good memory will be excited to play card games. That's why it's important for everyone to find a game that suits them and find friends to have fun with.

But do you know what makes playing really fun? It's not a game tool, but it's actually your imagination. You have to figure out ‘how’ to play, not ‘what’ to play with. Then you can find ways to have fun even without any special gaming tools. If you have something like a lightsaber or a laser gun from a sci-fi animation, it would be cool to play with them. You can also brag to your friends about it. But with things that have such a precise purpose and form, there is no choice but to play a certain game accordingly.

But imagine that my family went to visit our grandma's house in the countryside. We rushed to her place in a hurry and couldn't bring any games. That's when I found a bunch of trees in the backyard. Let's use our imagination here. Pieces of wood can become toy trains, bricks to build special places, and even turn into currency.

I know someone who makes dolls out of clothes that children can no longer wear because they became too small for them. She only makes the doll's body and gives it to the kid. Then, the kid draws a picture on the doll. To be honest, it's not as pretty as the dolls you buy at the department store. Still, the kid seems to really like that doll. Then I ask mischievously. "Hey, why is one eye bigger than the other?" The kid thinks deeply and then speaks. "A bad wizard made it like this." "Then what is this button on its stomach?" "Don't press the button. A laser beam comes out from it. Look at this. Pshh!" Then the kid gets fascinated on what he just said and starts laughing and playing. When we are in a situation where something is lacking, we naturally use 'stories.' Games which we can change a lot are more exciting than games which are perfect and have no room for change.

Let me show you an amazing magic trick. Gather your friends and family here right now. Make fists with each hand and stack them on top of each other as high as possible. How many floors did you build? Since there are 3 people, it ends on the 6th floor? Haha, try this. Pull out the fist at the very bottom and raise it to the very top. It got higher, right? Take out the very bottom fist and raise it to the top again. If you keep on doing this, you can build a tower all the way to the moon. That doesn't make sense? Yes, playing is making nonsense happen.

There is a similar story like this in the novel, 『The Adventures of Baron Bluff』. In the story, Baron Bluff was chased to the end of the moon and had nowhere else to run. In the end, he tried to come down to Earth on a rope, but the rope was too short. How did he do it then? He cut the upper string and attached it at the end of the rope, and when he reached the end again, he cut the upper string and attached it below. That doesn't make sense? But it's funny. It shakes up the laws of physics that we know. This is what we call a story and that's playing.

Let's say I give you a whole day to play as much as you want. But you cannot use devices that use electricity, such as computers, TVs, game consoles, cell phones, or board games. Then you will scream. "How can I play? This is a torture." But even if you struggle to find something to play, one of you will come up with something to play with in just half an hour. And other friends will also come up with ideas for the game before you know it.

Basically, humans are animals that show great creativity when it comes to play. Even among the buildings destroyed by bombs during the war, children would pick up things like tin cans and bomb casings to play with. If you don't have tools, you can have fun with your hands, feet, voice, and clapping. That's the difference between animals and humans. Animals don't play when they're hungry and anxious. They get so nervous that they crouch down and growl. But people try to have fun no matter how difficult the situation is. This is why playing is a proof of being alive and having hope for the future.



## Use your brain to play : playing that makes you think

Have you ever wondered if playing can make you smarter? It sounds so dreamy, but is it really possible? In fact, there are some games that you can never enjoy if you don't use your brain. They are the games made to develop your brains and to compete who is smarter.

### Riddles and Puzzles

You guys know the story of the Sphinx, right? Sphinx was a monster in front of the pyramids of ancient Egypt, and it gave riddles to passers-by and ate them if they couldn't guess right. You may think it is ridiculous to risk your life for a riddle, but people like to come up with interesting yet challenging problems and answer them correctly. The 'crossword puzzle' we commonly see in newspapers and magazines are similar to this. It first appeared in Italy in the 19th century, and now people all over the world are learning vocabulary and common sense through it while having fun.

A 'jigsaw puzzle' involves dividing a photo or picture into small pieces and then putting them together one by one. Although they are now made of solid paper, they were originally made by sawing wood into simple square shapes. That's why it's called jigsaw puzzle. The 'Rubik's Cube' was created by Erno Rubik, a Hungarian sculptor and professor of architecture in 1974. It is a three-dimensional puzzle to assemble multi-colored cubes and there are even world competitions to see who can assemble the fastest.

## The game of Go or Chess

Maybe there is no better way to figure out who is smarter than to compete with one another. Whether it be Eastern or Western culture, brain games played between two or more people have been enjoyed throughout the world. In the East, it's the game of Baduk. In Baduk, black stones and white stones are placed alternately on a wooden board with 19 horizontal and vertical rows, each trying to occupy as many houses as possible. The principles of Baduk are simple, but the probabilities of the movement of stones are endless. It has already been played for more than 2,000 years and Korea, China, and Japan are competing tightly as the Three Kingdoms of Baduk.

Western people like to play the game of chess, which is similar to Janggi, or Korean chess. In Baduk, each stone has the same ability, but in chess, abilities vary depending on the piece, such as the queen, knight, or lord. The players move the pieces and capture the opponent's pieces, and the one who catches the king first wins. In some ways, chess seems more complicated, but the moves are much simpler than those of Baduk. People who develop computer programs sometimes make the computers play games with humans to test their performance. Some supercomputers can beat world chess champions, but it's hard to play against masters at Baduk.

## Modern board games

A board game is a game in which the winner is decided using set tools and rules on a board. Baduk and chess can also be considered

board games in a broad sense. These classic games are fun, but how about playing some of the more recently developed board games with unique themes?

『Catan』 is a game where the goal is to grow quickly with the resources given on an island made up of hexagonal tiles. The game 『Carcassonne』 is set in a medieval walled city, where several people create the terrain by placing tiles one by one. If you complete a castle or road in the process, you get points. You have to be lucky to win a game like this, but how you utilize the luck you have is also very important. And since you get to talk a lot with the other person while playing the game, it's a great tool for making friends with strangers.

## Chapter 4. Is playing a waste of time?

When I tell people about how much I have fun playing, I hear complaints from all over the place.

“Who in the world doesn’t like to play? Do you think I don’t play because I don’t know how to? People, especially my parents and teachers, don't let me play.”

Well, it’s true that for as long as humans have existed on Earth, playing has rarely been welcomed. Humans have always enjoyed playing, but on the other hand, there have been times when such playing has been looked down upon and suppressed.

There is an old saying in Korea that goes, “If you play baduk all day long, you won’t even notice the handle of ax rotting.” If someone is playing carefree, people would sarcastically say, “Why, aren’t you enjoying yourself in the scenic heaven?” The situation was not much different in the West. John Locke, a 17<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher, said that playing is dull, a waste of time, and even a sin. This idea haven’t changed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Have you read Charles Dickens’ novel 『Christmas Carol』? In the novel, Scrooge, a miser who works to death, is shocked to see his nephew's children playing games happily.

However, how people think about playing has changed a lot after the 20<sup>th</sup> century. People started to realize that forcing children sit on the desk all day long won't make them grow up properly. Also, the period of adolescence, the intermediate stage between children and adults, became longer as people became more affluent than before. So people

had more time to prepare for life through studying and self-development. But strangely enough, it seems like the time we spend playing is decreasing. Why is that so? That may be because there is still a widespread belief that playing is a waste of time.

Michael Ende's fantasy novel 『Momo』 features a time savings bank. The salesperson at this bank comes to people and tells them to save their time to succeed, make money, and be happy. But do you really think the time we have spent playing was just wasted and thrown out on the street?

### **Learning while playing**

Here's a song I used to sing when I was young. It goes like this. "It's the same whether you're studying or playing. No. It's actually better to play." But now I want to change the lyrics and sing it like this. "It's the same whether you're studying or playing. No. You actually learn while playing."

How do tiny little kids learn to use their bodies? They learn from watching their mother. Cou, cou, clap, clap! It may seem childish, but no human being can grow up properly without playing this kind of game. You don't think a clapping game is a big deal, right? But if you don't do this when you're young, you won't be able to know how to work together as an adult. Imagine that everyone has to work together to pull a rope. One, two, three, pull! But if you can't get the timing right for 'three!', you won't be able to use your strength properly. You can learn this ability in a fun way by clapping and singing.

In order to strengthen useful muscles in the body, it is important to train the functions of the entire body through repeated practice, but it is too difficult to just repeat the same movements endlessly. But if you make it into playing, you won't get tired even if you play for a long time.

Playing is also said to greatly help develop memory, judgment, concentration, and self-discipline. These days, even children as young as five or six turn on the computer and press the button to play the game they want. Even though they don't know much about Korean letters, let alone English, they still manage to remember it. People show much greater interest in memorizing and learning the method because playing the game is fun.

There are many different types of memory. The memories we learn through books come from an outside source and can be memorized only after repeating them several times. However, what you have actually experienced is a memory created internally, so you can remember it much more vividly. In many cases, playing forces us to experience things first-hand and make our own judgments so they can remain in your body much more clearly. Think about riding a bike or vaulting over a horse. It's difficult to learn, but once you get used to it, it's easy to do it next time.

We can also feel the richness of nature through play. Playing with bubbles, we learn about the flow of air that defies gravity, and while building sand castles on the beach, we realize how difficult it is to build a solid house. We naturally learn many things, including seasons, time,

insects, animals, plants, soil, water, air, and wind, through playing.

Also, playing various games allows us to try out things we need to do or want to do when we grow up. People consider playing with dolls as childish, but it can be very helpful in building social skills required as an adult. We pretend to be mothers, fathers, and things we can't yet do in real life, such as putting on makeup or wearing a nice dress. What's especially interesting is that even children who act foolishly in real life sometimes correct or repent their mistakes in an adult manner when they are playing with dolls.

Many board games not only improve your understanding of numbers and probability, but also help you study geography or history. 「Catan」 is a game about developing a civilization on a virtual island made up of land cubes, and it teaches you how to expand your power with limited resources and opportunities. 「Puerto Rico」 is a game based on the theme of the process of producing and trading coffee and dyes using slaves in the American continent. It allows you to understand what kinds of materials were exchanged and through which processes at the time. Sometimes, unnecessary materials were thrown into the sea, which is reflecting what actually happened in the real trade.

### **How I acquired these amazing feelings**

In fact, there is more we can learn than just knowledge or skills from playing. What's more important is playing together and learning how to live together. By dividing into teams and solving various missions in a game, we train to overcome the problems we face in our lives in the future. You can learn leadership skills to lead your colleagues and

develop a sense of cooperation that is faithful to each other's roles. You can also develop the ability to prioritize what to do first in a limited amount of time and develop the flexibility to quickly find a breakthrough when something unexpected happens.

Victory is such an important issue when it comes to playing. If you clear the mission after working hard, all the difficulties you've had so far melt away in an instant. Then you can also gain the courage to do bigger things. On the other hand, what do you do when you lose even after trying very hard?

When I was young, I went to my grandma's house to hang out with my friends. They jumped over a ditch, which was a distance that was easily over my height, to go catch frogs in the mountains. I had to jump over it to join the group of kids. It was winter, and there was dirty water in the ditch which was even slightly frozen. I wouldn't die even if I fell, but I could break my leg, and I was sure I'd get scolded if I went home looking like I'd fallen into the gutter. Still, I had to jump. I didn't want to back down cowardly. I eventually did jump. Do you know what happened after that?

My toes reached the other side, but I slipped and managed to hang on to the grass roots. I thought I lost. But the kids were watching me. My feet haven't landed in the stream yet. They said that if I climb up on my own, I can succeed. Then I barely managed to climb up. I went up the mountain with the kids, but I thought I had lost. It seemed like they stretched the rules because they felt sorry for me. I was so upset.

Time has passed and I became an adult. But whenever I have to



compete in real life, I remember that moment. I say to myself, don't worry. I've failed like that before. Even if I am unlucky this time and lose, I will be able to overcome.

What is more important than winning or losing a game is the 'emotion' we feel from it. You can't always win, whether in games or in real life. And there are many feelings you learn by not winning. Loneliness, anger, frustration, fear, disgust, horror... It is natural to feel these emotions as we live our daily lives. Don't you just hate it, right? I wonder why the Creator hid something like these inside us.

However, as mankind have evolved, these emotions were kept in our body because they were essential to life. Imagine that your body gets hurt or gets sick, but you can't feel the pain. If it doesn't hurt, we wouldn't seek for any treatment and we will eventually die. Likewise, imagine that a thief steals the food you've worked so hard to get and you don't feel angry. You can't fight back.

But these feelings can actually make people immobile. Say a cockroach appears in the room, and you just scream and do nothing. It wouldn't make the situation any better. But we often encounter these emotions while playing games, especially games where winning or losing is at stake. That is how we gradually develop our 'defensive strength.' You develop the tolerance to overcome fear as you get excited about what kind of penalty the next card will bring,

Soyeon, a middle school student, decided to present a dance performance at the school festival. Soyeon and her friends danced to the songs of famous K-pop girl groups and tried to imitate their hair

styles and outfits as similar as possible. However, she got upset when she competed with her friend over who would take the center position. After being distressed about it for a while, they decided to change the choreography and take turns standing in the middle. Even some friends who were too shy to stand in the middle at first found the courage to take on that role.

Finally, it was the day they performed on stage. Performing on the stage for real was quite different from when they were practicing and they made some mistakes too. However, when the audience applauded them, all their difficulties seemed to wash away. But the strange thing is, when Soyeon looked back on the happiest moment of this experience, it wasn't when she was on stage and received applause from the crowd. She somehow remembered more clearly the time she held her friends' sweaty hands and walked to the school gate after practice.

This is the reason playing is so awesome. It allows you to enjoy the process, not the result. By losing our minds together and jumping into the game, we become 'just friends' into 'real friends.'

## **Learning the rules shall set you free**

Isn't there really so much to learn through playing? You can continue to encounter great wisdom created by humans as you are playing. There is one thing that cannot be left out among them. It's the 'rule.' Laws and rules seem really tricky and annoying to follow, but they actually

allow us to have more fun and play freely.

This is what we say when we play a little too harshly.

“Oh, this is not a joke.”

It's a very important thing. Playing must always be accompanied by rules or consensus, and the first thing we need to confirm with each other is the consensus that 'this is playing.'

Even when the animals are playing, they make it clear that they are playing. That way, even if the animals bite and hit each other, one animal will not harm the other animal within the rules. Imagine that one tiger cub punches another cub in the head. If the other cub considers it as an attack, it will strongly object, and soon the two will fight like 'it's no joke.' This is why it is difficult to let animals of different species live together in one same cage. While the monkey thinks they're playing and tease other animals, bear may get so angry at the monkey. The truth is, we are no better than animals. People get into fights because sometimes they can't distinguish between a joke and a reality.

Each game has different rules, not to mention the flexibility of the rules. In the case of sports games and board games, the rules are very strict. If you start to deviate from the rules, the games become less fun and the meaning of playing the game itself disappears. However, the rules for games played on the street or during our leisure time are flexible. Rules vary depending on time and place, and can be changed on the fly.

Do you know the '3-6-9 Game'? 3-6-9, 3-6-9, you and your friends take turn and say out loud the numbers in order, and whenever your number includes 3, 6, or 9 you clap instead of saying the number. I

used to be really good at playing this game, but I was completely embarrassed while playing it with you guys not so long ago. You guys tapped my back so hard as a penalty, and I felt like my back was burning! I got older and became a little slow, but the rules were different from when I used to play. But there are no internationally recognized rules of this game, so I had no choice but to follow them. This reminded me of the famous saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” I think someone probably realized it while playing a game in Rome.

I mentioned earlier that the rules of play can be flexible, but you still need to make sure that those who are playing together know the rules clearly. If we have different rules or change the rules depending on the situation, we end up fighting. It's like playing a soccer game with a blindfold on the referee.

Another reason why the rules should be clear is because it's more fun. Only when there is a clear fence can you develop the game itself to a higher level, using various strategies and techniques within that fence. The games we do for fun can be more difficult and more exciting than any of the questions on the final exam. But at that moment, a very troublesome guy appeared on the scene. That guy's name is...

## **Lying!**

We occasionally lie when we're playing games. Or, we use 'deception' or 'cheating.' What do you think about this? At first, it seems like something that is absolutely unacceptable. But some games cannot exist

without lies. Let's say I'm playing rock, paper, scissors with you. I ask, "What are you going to give?" Then you would say "I can't tell you that!" "So you won't tell me? I'm going to give the scissors." After saying this, I give a rock. If I've done this, are you going to say that I committed foul play? That wasn't a foul play, but more like a subtle attempt to trick your mind.

In rock, paper, scissors, if you tell in advance what you will give, the game itself will not work. In card games, hiding your cards or making your opponent mistake them for other cards is a major way to win the game. Even though you have a very unfavorable card, you may try to pretend as if you have a good card with a calm posture and a smile. On the contrary, you may have a good card in your hands and have the opportunity to end the game anytime, but you may pretend to have a bad one and frown. This is also part of the game. When playing basketball, pretending to shoot and then passing to other side is part of a strategy.

But what about this case? Everyone starts the game with five cards, but someone is hiding a card. Or, while playing a game like Starcraft, someone uses tricks to secretly look into the opponent's map.

In every game, there are tricks that are okay to use and tricks that are not. When several people are playing a game, two people should not secretly take sides and leave one person in a corner. But in some cases, like Mafia Game, the goal of the game is to form a team to work together and trick others.

Games often create lies like this. That's why some people think it's

not educational. But it also tells us that our lives have such qualities like those. Sometimes you need to hide something from others, and sometimes you can try to trick others. The world is not a Utopia without such things. So that is why it is important to realize and learn through games the extent of lies and trick that is acceptable.

Okay, now the game is over. What should we do now? You need to organize your gaming tools and toys? How considerate of you! But there is something to do before that. There should be a penalty for the loser. We can make different penalties for the same game to make it feel new and fun. Rock, paper, scissors is a very simple game, but if you create a penalty of scribbling on the loser's face, everyone is now so eager to win.

Hmm let's see, but what punishment should we give to someone who doesn't play fair and ruins the game itself?

“Don't play with that person.”

Really powerful, right? Even kids who are too young to go to kindergarten know this punishment. Surprisingly, the kids just naturally know it without adults having to teach them. It's the punishment we have feared most since we were cavemen long time ago. “You! Get out of here!”

## **Playing is living!**

Whenever I go to an unfamiliar city, I like to look around and search for things like game tools and toys. This one time when I went to Hong

Kong, I was surprised to find a wooden ‘Snake and Ladder’ game. It was very similar to the paper games sold at stationery stores when I was young. Then when I went to Granada in Spain, I came across a snake and a ladder that could fit a token into a hole.

Although they looked slightly different, these games have something in common. You start from the bottom left corner of the box and throw a dice and move the token forward according to that number. And when a ladder appears in the box where your token is in, you pass through the middle and go up. Conversely, when you encounter the snake's mouth, it slips and falls down. The game I used to play when I was young was called ‘Snake and Dice,’ and it had arrows drawn instead of ladders. So, if you climb high enough, you can reach to the top and become a scientist, but if you eat too much junk food, you will slide down and end up in a hospital. The first person to reach the finish line wins.

The Snake and Ladder game is similar to the ‘Seongbuldo game’ created by the Great Master Seosan during the Joseon Dynasty. Similar to Yunnori game, you can experience the Buddhist reincarnation by moving the pieces. The long twists and turns of life are placed on a small board, and you walk on it and live several different lives. At first your piece may be a dog or a pig, but as you do good deeds and gain virtue, you can become a human and maybe a heavenly being eventually. There are traps such as poisonous snakes and scorpions on the board, and if you do something wrong, you can fall into hell or become an animal again.

There are many aspects in games that makes them similar to real life. A board game, 『The Game of Life』 is one of them. It was first created in 1860 by a lithograph manufacturer named Milton Bradley. And the

game gained great popularity 100 years later in 1960, when an improved version was released. The whole family can get together, roll the dice, and live a virtual life through this game. You can experience things like going to college or having a child. Or you can even climb Mount Everest or receive stock options.

Like many games, these games that resemble life have two important elements.

The first is the coincidental event of rolling a dice. As we live our lives, we always find ourselves in some unexpected situations. You might get a stomachache on a very important test day, or you might run into a friend who you have a crush on while running an annoying errand. As we roll the dice and live the life vicariously on the board, we learn that our lives do not always proceed according to a set order and that they can change due to good or bad luck.

The second is the choices we make. We are forced to make choices even several times a day. Let's imagine that I missed a bus to school and the school will start in a few minutes. Should I run and ask for the bus driver to stop? Also, imagine I'm taking an exam and there's not much time left. Should I review the parts that I know for sure or skim through the parts I didn't see at all? Should I stop by the PC room on the way home and play, or should I hurry up and do my homework first?

You can practice making choices like this in games as well. Even though the same word 'geol' appears when we play Yunnori, we can use it in many different ways. Will you send the piece that is already on the board further ahead, or will you use a new piece to catch the



opponent's piece first?

The reason this choice-making is important is not only so that we can use our brains to win the game. In some ways, the decision to make a choice itself is more important than the outcome of the choice. Oftentimes we just give up because we can't simply make a decision. It's because we become so anxious and unsure of the choices we make... But the worst thing is to make no choice at all. We also worry about various things when we're playing a game, but we make choices and accept the results. That is really important. Why? It's because if you don't make a choice, the game won't work.

It's not just the 『The Game of Life』. Playing allows us to live different kinds of lives. Sometimes things don't go so well and the same team makes a series of mistakes and become a mess. We need to experience them all. Sometimes, it is more interesting to live a life where you are lacking something but have the space to work things out one by one, than a life where you have everything you need.

In 『Anne of Green Gables』, Anne says the following.

“I guess there are many Annes in me. Sometimes I wonder why I am such a troublesome being. It would be a lot easier if I were a steadfast Anne, but that would only be half the fun.”

### **People who play professionally, a Joker vs a Clown**

There was a time when people were busy working and playing was looked down upon. Hundreds of years ago, there were people who ‘played professionally.’ They are similar to comedians and entertainers in

a modern society. It's called Clown in Korea and Joker in Europe! How did they play so professionally back then?

### **Joker in Europe — Jester, Fool**

Jokers were professional entertainers employed by European royal or noble families. They often wore eye catching, primary-colored clothes and unique hats and sometimes attached bells to their hats and shoes, wore decorations such as donkey ears, or masks. They attracted attention by giggling and telling riddles or showing off their personal skills such as juggling, and they even put on a surprise show where they got inside a large pie and then popped out.

The Joker had the privilege of freely making sarcastic comments about the king and his guests, but if his sarcastic jokes went too far, he could be beaten with a whip. Their activities were prominent in England during the times when Shakespeare lived, so when you look at his plays, you always see characters playing these roles.

Shakespeare once introduced a clown and said, "He was smart enough to play the fool." Only if you have such outstanding talent can you mock the world by imitating a fool, right? In France and Italy, there were clown groups that travelled around like circuses or puppet troupes.

### **Clown in Korea — Entertainer, Acrobat**

Clowns were professional entertainers who entertained people by performing mask plays, puppet shows, and tightrope walking during the

Goryeo And Joseon Dynasty. They were sometimes hired by the royal family and showed their talents during palace events or when foreign envoys visited the country, but clowns usually formed groups such as the Namsadangpae and Sotdaejaengi troupe and traveled around the country to play games. There is a proverb that goes, “The clown’s string fell off,” which refers to a state in which a clown is unable to do anything as if the string on his mask has fell down while he was acting.

Clowns who took off their masks were looked down on as they were considered the most humble group of people during the Joseon Dynasty. There were many noblemen who were against the clown gang entering the village. So the clowns tried all sorts of tricks to get permission to open a playground at the top of a hill that was easily visible from the village. When the permission was given by saying “Gombaengi is here”, they would go into the village and play Pungmul. Then they would set up a fun playground in the village after eating dinner and lighting a bonfire.

## Chapter 5. Stop playing! I wanna play more!

I have been missing in action these days, so one of my friends called and said,

“What are you doing these days? I thought you starved to death.”

“What are you talking about? You have no idea how hard I’m working these days. All my hair is falling out because of this research.”

“Research? What kind of crap research?”

“Oh, don’t be surprised. I’m digging into the most important issue in human history: playing.”

My friend laughed out loud for a while and I was furious. “Hey, what’s so funny?” my friend said “Who are you kidding? What a surplus man you are. You’ve become a very great preacher of surplus, haven’t you?” Then he just hung up the phone.

I was stung. As you know, the word surplus originally meant the number remaining after division. However, these days, it is also used to criticize people who is not helpful to society at all, or those who waste time in vain. In fact, I was looking intently at the surplus games popular on the Internet last night. Like a game checking how many pieces of snacks a shrimp snack really contains and even post a photo to prove it. Then when my friend branded me a ‘surplus man’, I really felt like a sinner.

No matter how much I take pride myself on having fun, I couldn't help but feel a little guilty at this point. Then I decided to completely change my mind and see from the other side of the fence. Playing really could be a bad thing. If it's really that good, isn't the person who just plays

his or her whole life living the best life of all? Why doesn't our society consider people who do nothing to be great?

### **I admit. Playing is bad.**

From then on, I started digging into the bad aspects of playing. I began to act as the 'devil's advocate' that I mentioned earlier. By the way, it was quite fun to make a conscious effort to point out the weaknesses of something. Also, everything that normally looks good feels crooked when I look at it from the opposite perspective. That's how I discovered the really bad thing about playing. Shall we disclose it step by step from now on?

Above all, playing is dangerous. It's easy to get hurt because you get distracted when you are playing. We don't hesitate to do things we wouldn't normally do, even dangerous things. Lion cubs get so caught up in playing that they leave scars on each other's faces, and children climb tall trees to go on an adventure, but fall and injure their legs. It started out as fun at first, but then as things escalate, people are like "Oh, this isn't a joke!" and even end up fighting with each other. When I was young, I tried riding a bike that was too big for me. I eventually fell and got hurt. I hit the metal handle of the rear car and bled while running with my friends. I still have a scar on my forehead from that time.

When you are playing, there are some chances that you end up doing bad things. Boys like extreme gun shooting and sword fighting. They go "Die! Die!" and sometimes treat their friends as if they were real

enemies. You may develop violent tendencies without knowing if you keep doing this. When girls play with dolls, they always make them kiss. How embarrassing! I can understand your parents being worried when children lock the door to play.

Some games start out for fun, but end up hurting feelings. There are games where you have to decide the winner and many friends go crazy while playing these kinds of games. Some friends are obsessed to win just one game of baduk, basketball, or Starcraft. And when the opponent uses a strange trick, they swear and call him a coward. When their team loses, they scold their friends for making a mistake. Then the friend thinks to himself, 'Why is it always on me? They didn't pass properly. Why so selfish? It's a good thing they lost.' Some games encourage too much competition. Plus, I can't go to sleep when I lose a game. I eventually have to get up again, turn on the computer, find an easy opponent, and beat him to relieve my anger.

If you play without thinking, you may develop strange habits or prejudices. Girls always play with pretty dolls dressed in pink, thinking that they have to be that pretty to be the main character. They even develop the habit of bullying kids who are short or have ugly faces. A claw game or a dice game also encourages gambling. Children's eyes turn red and they rush in to win the prize, just like adults who are addicted to gambling. Also, you become more and more attracted to newer and more expensive toys when you play with them, and eventually end up begging your mom to get your pocket money by lying.

Computer games are particularly more of a problem. At first, you may only do it for a short while to kill time, but you will gradually fall in love

with it, and eventually, you just continue to play regardless of whether it is fun or not. You used to enjoy the process of reaching a goal through the game, but you become so obsessed with the goal and winning the game. You want to win so badly that you start buying game items, and even use cheating and other fouls in an attempt to get ahead of your opponent. The problem is that even if you win like that, you don't feel refreshed. The game characters keep spinning around in your head, and you become completely addicted.

When people get distracted by playing, the entire country can sometimes go down. In ancient Rome, there was a bathhouse that could accommodate up to 3,000 people at once, and it is said that all kinds of decadent games were played there. If they get too full during a party, they vomit, empty their stomach, and then come back and eat new food. This kind of pleasure cannot be satisfied no matter how much they try to fill it. Particularly, Emperor Nero did not know the limit. There was even a rumor that even when a huge fire burnt down the city of Rome, people were singing and playing musical instruments.

So what do you think? Playing is the devil's temptation. It's like an unstoppable express train that makes you unable to study, makes you not listen to your parents, doesn't let you sleep, and eventually corrupts you and drags you into the dark hell. Now are you still going to keep on playing?

### **Letting yourself go makes playing more fun**

What do you think? Playing definitely has dangerous aspects to it.

Candies boiled in sweet sugar water are so delicious when you suck on them, but later on, you won't be able to sleep and will be in pain when they make your teeth rot. You must have experienced several times of being so absorbed in the game that you lost track of time and then feel regretful.

Playing is like entering a magic circle. But there is something strange and sticky inside that magic circle, and once it grabs us, it won't let us go easily. And sometimes, while going back and forth between reality and play, we get caught in a rope and fall down. But why do we keep taking risks and try to enter the magic circle? What if we just don't enter that magic circle? We can still live, right?

“I absolutely hate that idea. It’s frustrating to only study or work.”

Frustrating. Maybe that's the most important reason. Things like studying, etiquettes, and rules that we are told we must do sometimes strangle us. It's like wearing a turtle neck sweater I wore a few winters back and putting it back on.

Parents and teachers tell us to only take the safe paths, but I feel like I'll go crazy if I go down that narrow path. But what do you do to keep yourself from going crazy? The answer lies in playing. If you really don't want to go crazy, just go a little crazy and then come back.

Playing makes us crazy. A perfectly normal child suddenly shakes his legs and imitates a monkey, and a child who can sing well deliberately misses the pitch and sings a song weirdly, a boy dresses up as a girl, or a girl imitates having a beard like her father...This is all act of craziness.



Sometimes, not just one or two people get crazy, but an entire neighborhood or country goes crazy. We call this a festival. At certain times of the year, at certain places, everyone forgets their status and duties and becomes a 'wacko' and has fun.

In Europe, there is a tradition called 'Carnival' that has been passed down for a very long time. It is said that it started out as a way to drive away evil spirits, but it soon became a festival where people of all classes can freely play with each other. People hide their faces with masks during the Carnival; nobles transform into commoners, commoners imitate kings, children become adults, and adults disguise into birds and beasts.

And then they were free to do things that they couldn't do in their original status. The commoners imitated the arrogant behaviors of the nobles who oppressed them, and the nobles could freely do things they would not normally do to save their face. Dancing, singing, hugging strangers, setting fire to fake dolls... But after the carnival ended, they had to return to who they really were. They would get beaten by people if they continued to act like that until the next morning.

Do you think the king and nobles were so stupid that they tolerated this situation? Nope. They were afraid that if they didn't let the commoners play like this, their stress would build up and explode. And the king and nobles also enjoyed this crazy festival, too. The way you imitate your teacher during school festivals and giggle while having 'informal talk time' between seniors and juniors is very similar to this principle. Everyone needs to release their suppressed feelings in this way.

This crazy festival is still going on today. In Spain, there is a festival where bulls are set loose in a village and people run through narrow alleys to avoid the rampaging bulls, or they throw tomatoes at each other, turning the whole city bright red. In Japan, there is a festival where people make palanquins and run them around, and even though shops get damaged and people get hurt trying to get around narrow alleys, the tradition continues. In Boryeong, Korea, there is a mud festival where people take a bath in mud, and even foreigners go crazy, dirtying their bodies and laughing in joy. Normally, this would be considered foolish. Your mother would scold you for dirtying your clothes, and the police would come and tie you up and put you in a jail or send you to a mental hospital. But in certain places and times where we are allowed, we enjoy these circumstances briefly but intensely.

Did you know that there are many scary stories among the fairy tales that children read? Like trying to kill a princess with a poisoned apple, or a witch fattening up children with cookies so she can eat them... And yet, children have great fun exploring these nightmarish stories. Playing is similar to that. In a way, it's like dreaming a forbidden dream.

Your parents may think how you're playing is dangerous. That's why they try to prevent you from getting absorbed in playing and to get you out of playing quickly. But the more your parents do this, the more you try to get into it. The important thing is that just as you decided when to go in there, you should be able to decide when to come out as well. When will I stop playing? Is it someone else or I myself who decides to stop playing? Deciding this is also like a game.

## Why is computer game such a tough 'sticky trap?'

There are a lot of sweet sticky traps in the world and their shapes are varied and colorful. They are even more noticeable when you have a lot of homework and don't have much time, or when there's an exam the day after tomorrow. Among them, there is one that is easiest to meet and the stickiest to escape from. No matter how much you try to get rid of it, this giant sticky plant blooms as if nothing happened.

It's the computer game!

I didn't realize how sticky it was when I first pressed the button. 'I'll just play one game. I just need to cool my head for a moment.' But after playing one or two games, you suddenly change your mind. No, you just don't think at all. 'After I break this, after I get this item, I'll stop then. Actually, no. I'll conquer this game tonight. And starting tomorrow, I'll stop playing and study all day long.' You sneakily turn off the lights and start playing games through the night. So after all this, are you done with playing computer game? Definitely not.

This isn't actually someone else's story. At one time, I almost became a junkie because of computer games like the 『Romance of the Three Kingdom』, 『Age of Empires』, 『Final Fantasy』, and 『Starcraft』. After installing a new game, I got excited and played it for hours, then deleted it, thinking I shouldn't be doing this. Then I woke up the next day and downloaded it again, then broke the game CD with a hammer to get it over with. But when I found a PC cafe on the street, I ran inside to play the game. I even thought eating a meal was a waste of

time, so I bought breads and energy drinks to gobble and went in. And when there were no empty seats because it coincided the time when students were coming out of school, I scolded them and sent them home... There were many times I returned home in a completely dreadful state.

So why are we so addicted to computer games? Why is it so hard to get out once you fall in?

Computer games definitely have characteristics that are different from other games. When we are playing games with friends in everyday life, certain conditions must be met. If you want to play soccer, you need a playground, and for board games, you need friends to play with. But computer games are much easier to play. You can go in there whenever you have a moment. Since you can play games not only on PCs, but also on portable game consoles and mobile phones, they can be played at any time, including during recess or when going to and from school.

Computer games also react very quickly. When you play a card game with friends, it takes quite a bit of time to shuffle or deal out the cards. But in computer games, there is very little time needed to finish one game and move on to the next. If you feel like you're not playing well, you can stop in the middle and start again. You can chat with your friends while playing the computer game, but as you get more into the game, that also gradually disappears.

I play the game in a hurry, as if I had been sucked into the computer. The more you do it, the more you look for something faster and more stimulating. Your eyes start to hurt and your neck becomes stiff. I just wanted to play games to relieve my fatigue and stress, but after

finishing the game, I become more tired, and yet I still want to play them whenever I have time.

When the first computer games were made, we would never have thought something like this would happen. At that time, computers were so unfamiliar that people weren't even used to using a keyboard or a mouse. So people thought that playing fun games on computer would help them get used to computers. The game 『Minesweeper』 was created to help people learn the skill of clicking a mouse. But now, we actually buy computer to play games and upgrade them to latest specifications to play faster.

When we play games, a substance called 'dopamine' is generated in our brains, which makes us feel happy. However, trouble occurs when our brain becomes addicted to this substance. Once you experience a strong and stimulating pleasure, you will then seek for something that is stronger.

In the 1950s, scientists named James Olds and Peter Milner conducted a famous yet terrifying rat experiment. When a rat was made to feel pleasure by stimulating its brain nerves by pressing an electric switch, it pressed the switch 700 times in an hour just for the pleasure. In the end, the rat even gave up eating and mating, hit the switch endlessly, and died. This is why computer game addiction is treated similarly to drug and gambling addiction.

Simpler games like 『Tetris』, 『Minesweeper』, and 『Bejeweled』 are actually known to be more addictive. This is because those games stimulate only certain part of your brain by repeating it over and over

again without giving you much room to think. Women also like these games, and one of my friends even threw up after playing a game on her cell phone for too long. It would be nice if this game helped you to relieve stress for a moment over lunch, but if it keeps spinning in your head, that's a problem, right?

There is another characteristics of dopamine. It tends to generate better when you encounter something new. Dopamine comes into bloom when we solve a problem with curiosity and imagination. It is said that no matter how much you play as an adult, it is difficult to have as much fun as you did when you were a teenager. That's because we've already experienced so much that there's less room for new things.

In some ways, I think the reason we fall in love with computer games is because we don't have enough time to encounter new things. Another big reason is that you don't have enough time to play freely. And the more stressed we are, the more we want to play a game that has a strong stimulation. Since we experience a lot of stress in our lives, maybe we are addicted to such simple and stimulating games more easily.

Another characteristic of dopamine is that it arises more not when a certain goal is achieved, but when one feels that one is on the way to achieving it. The game is more fun when you think you are winning, not when you actually win. Playing is not the 'goal' to win, but the joy of the 'process' of moving towards victory. Humans are programmed to enjoy the process itself. We get excited as we advance to new levels while playing games. That's why it gets boring when an opponent with a similar style or level appears every time. And we get excited the most

when we face the final match, the 'King of the Kings'...

Strange. Once you defeat the king, you kind of feel void. Is this the end? Did I miss something in the middle? Or did I miss anything during the mission?

Okay, it's true that we left something out. The most important item you really need to get from the game.

### **Victory for me, Joy for everyone**

I won't say that some games are good and some games are bad. When I was young, arcade video games were very popular. My parents and teachers told me that I was wasting time and money on something useless, but looking back now, it remains as one of the happiest memories of my childhood. If I hadn't played those games, how would I have relieved the stress from studying and gotten along with my friends? That's why I can't tell you not to play the computer games that you are so obsessed with, just because it's so addictive. But I want to tell you there are so many games in the world, and computer games are not all there is.

I rarely play computer games these days. Instead, I enjoy playing board games that allow me to chat with friends, even if it takes a bit more time to play. I can't always play games easily, but I don't feel bad or tired when the game is over. The excitement of the game itself, with its thrills of winning and losing, is great, but it's even more fun to exchange jokes, challenge each other, and make fun of friends while

playing games. Of course, I have no intention of forcing you to think that this is the right way.

However, we need to think deeply about which items we really need to obtain through playing games. Is winning itself important, or is the fun you get while playing the game more important? It sounds a bit strange. Is there a greater joy than winning?

I said earlier that I enjoy playing board games, but that doesn't mean I don't care about winning or losing. The tension is 'no joke' especially when men get together and play games. 『Illuminati』 is a game based on the hypothesis that this world is run by a secret conspiracy organization. Game players belong to organizations such as Swiss banks, Roman wizards, and computer network secret societies, and on each turn, they can use their special abilities to reach their goals or hinder their opponents. But when I play games with my friends, we end up interfering with each other whenever we get the chance. At first, I did it for fun, but the more I did it, the more my feelings got hurt and eventually I said, "Okay now, it's fine if I don't win. But I'm going to make sure you're going down with me!" making childish arguments with a specific opponent. In the end, we played the game all day long and no one won a single game.

Smart guys figure out the rules of the game quickly. They know how to get to victory in the shortest route. They quickly learn how to survive in a world of 'survival of the fittest' and quickly reach the finish line. In a way, it is similar to the logic that tells you that you should only focus on studying and going to good colleges. But this is what I think. A really smart friend would think about 'how can we enjoy this game



together?’ as much as ‘how can I win this game?’ Imagine that someone very skilled always wins and takes first place. Will other friends want to continue playing that game? Who will you play with if you don't have an opponent?

## Luck and Skill, Sports and Play

Shall we go back to the ‘dice’ story? I think that dice played a very important role in helping mankind invent and enjoy games. Both dice and Gonggi stones are made with sheep bones, but what is there in the dice that is not in Gonggi?

Luck.

Gonggi is actually closer to a sport. My youngest older sister was the genius of Gonggi, and she never made a mistake even with her left hand, let alone her right hand. If she played 100 rounds, she would win 100 times over and over again. Of course I didn't stand a chance to win a single game. However, games played with dice like ‘Snake and Ladder’ were different. Even though I was younger, shorter and clumsier than my sister, I was able to win because the number on the dice is determined by ‘luck.’

Why do people add luck to games? Isn't it more fair to let the person with greater skill and ability win? How come someone who has practiced hard lose to someone who is playing the game for the first time? This is so unfair.

Have you ever heard of the phrase ‘a little bit of skill and a lot of luck?’ This is from a book called 『Yojaejii』 that I like very much. It's a

book that collects strange stories from all around the world by a man named Bao Songling from the Qing Dynasty. In one story, there was a scholar who studied really hard and took the civil service exam every year, but he failed every time. In the end, he gave up and tried to hang himself with a rope, but thought it was so unfair. So he went to argue with the Great Jade Emperor. Why did he keep on failing the exam while people who were not as good as him pass the exam?

The Great Jade Emperor summoned the God of Justice and the God of Fate. And the two of them decided to have a drinking match to determine whether this scholar was truly being wronged or not. If the God of Justice drinks more, he is right, and if the God of Fate drinks more, he's got nothing to be unfair about. A match took place, and the results were like this. The God of Fate ended up drinking seven cups, and the God of Justice drank three cups. The Jade Emperor said, "Things in the world do not happen according to justice and ability, but are governed by an unreasonable fate that no one can predict. But you should also know that skill accounts for three times out of ten."

It seems that the reason people included dice luck in games was because of this principle of life. But it's not always 'a little bit of skill and a lot of luck.' Some games involve more luck, while others involve more skill. It could be 'same amount of luck, same amount of skill', or 'a little bit of luck and a lot of skill.'

The games we call sports involve a very high level of skill. No matter how lucky I am, I can't beat Usain Bolt in the 100-meter race. Not even if I ran 50 meters. In ball sports such as baseball or soccer, luck is more involved. But again, skill is overwhelmingly important when playing

sports.

This is more so in the games that requires much thinking and involves advanced strategies like Baduk. Luck plays a greater role in the game of billiards and 『Starcraft』, but the chances of winning and losing between those who are skilled and those who are not is very clear.

On the contrary, games that were made for the purpose of playing freely, luck is much more important. 『Snake and Ladder』 and 『The Game of Life』 are mostly about luck with the dice. Why did they make it like that? First of all, adding randomness makes the game more interesting. This is to prevent the same results coming out everytime. It also makes it possible for even less skilled people to win, so that everyone can enjoy the game. Usually, in games where professionals compete, skill plays a much bigger part, and in family games that even children play, luck plays a much bigger part. Yunnori, which we enjoy on holidays, is a good example.

The reason we enjoy playing a game is because we have the hope of winning the game. A game that many people play together should ultimately give more people a chance to win. Of course, it is true that in such cases, the tension of the game may decrease. Nevertheless, we find other joys in it. We learn to enjoy ourselves as part of a community by feeling different emotions as a winner, loser, or a cheerer of the game.

A card game called the 『Great Dalmuti』 is a game that recreates the Western Middle Ages, with game players taking turns on the roles of king, priest, merchant, and servant. It's like playing a Carnival game. Then, you carry out various strategies to win the game, by using the

roles you get on your turn. Of course, I feel great satisfaction when I win this game. But there is more fun than that, and that is acting appropriately according to the role you play in your turn. If you become the king, you can exercise all kinds of power. Even your older brother, who used to look down on you, has to serve you and flatter you when he takes on the role of a merchant or a servant... But if your status changes again, the tide turns. The more naturally you act, the more fun the game becomes. And then I realize, the luck of life can make someone a king or a beggar, but it can turn over again at any time.

### **Can we study and work as if we're playing?**

Since I only talk about playing and having fun, you may think I'm so lucky and live so easily. But talking about playing isn't easy. You can only study what is written in the textbook, but I have to read all kinds of books and search on the internet to make sure that what I've written in the book is really true. I try playing various games to know more about playing, but doing it for work also makes me feel tired.

I used to like comics and wrote a lot about them. It was good at first since I could make money by watching my favorite cartoons. But when comics turned into work, watching cartoons, which used to be fun, started to become a burden. I had to remember the story thoroughly and had to memorize the names of main characters, and I even had to read comic book I didn't like... Then a thought occurred to me: Playing like this can become work, but on the other hand, couldn't we make work or study like playing?

Does this sound like nonsense? But the cartoon 『Frog Sergeant Keroro』 taught me the secret. This alien frog comes to invade Earth, but is captured by a brother and sister and comes to live in their house. Hanbyeol, the strict older sister, orders Keroro to do various household chores, telling him to ‘earn his keep for the food.’ The frog sergeant suddenly became a housekeeper! But this guy’s ability to adapt was amazing. When he was washing dishes, he went into the sink naked and washed the dishes while taking a bath. Seeing him humming a song while doing house chores made me think that it would be much more fun if work was like playing.

And somehow I ended up doing the exact same thing. One winter, the water tap or the boiler broke down, so there was no hot water in the sink. I couldn’t wash the dishes for a day or two, and it finally got to the point where I didn’t even have a single cup to drink. Then a thought occurred to me that the hot water is still running in the bathroom. So, like Keroro, I got naked in the shower and washed the dishes. This was kind of fun. But an emergency suddenly occurred when the hot water didn’t come out even in the bathroom. I had to wipe my shaking body and dishes covered in shampoo and detergent with a paper towel.

I am not saying studying can become like playing or annoying housework can become like a game if you just change your mind set, But changing the perspective of your thoughts is very important. I talked about various things you can learn through games by saying that ‘you learn through playing.’ Now, I think we can think of ways to turn studying itself into playing.

One of the members of my comic book club was a middle school

teacher. Every summer, the teacher would set up a tent at the school and conduct a boot camp training and he wanted us to help him. He was planning to give the kids a team mission to get through a dark classroom and he needed people to frighten them along the way. Club members were excited. I dressed up as if I was a cartoon character and went into hiding at school. This big guy with the shaved head dressed up as Frankenstein, and the long-haired girl dressed to look like a ghost. We were so excited to surprise the kids! The kids loved it too. They said they wish there were classes like this all the time.

If you trace your memory back, you will remember. When you were in kindergarten or the lower grades of elementary school, there were many classes that involved hands-on experience and games. Unfortunately, as the grades go up, more and more studies require sitting at a desk and digging through books. I personally think that the teachers don't like such rigid classes as much as you don't. I think the teachers would like to make the class a fun game, just as you love to play by dressing up as ghosts. But I guess there is so much knowledge we need to study at school that it seems difficult to make every single one of them into playing.

Still, there are signs of change. These days, the term 'multiple intelligence' is discussed a lot in the field of education. This means that we need to find out children's abilities in a different way than measuring intelligence quotient with a simple IQ. Intelligence comes in many different forms, including physical movement, interpersonal relationships, space, music, language, self-understanding, affinity for nature, logic and mathematics, and it cannot be measured by simply having people memorize textbooks and answer questions on exams.

A child who is excellent in English may have a poor ability to understand various principles of nature, and a child who is outstanding in arithmetic may be poor at expressing his or her thoughts. You can't really figure out these shortcomings just by looking at your school grades alone. Rather, you can understand it better by playing games. You find out what you are lacking while having fun playing, and you study to fill that deficiency in order to get greater pleasure from playing. Is this really impossible?

### **From video arcade to 'Angry Birds'**

These days, we rarely play with hands & feet, wood & stones, or paper & dice. Instead, we enjoy playing all kinds of games with electronic devices such as computers and cell phones. Let's look into the history of these electronic games.

Video games, which your mom and dad called 'electronic games', first appeared in the United States in the 1970s. At that time, there were no personal computers at home, so a separate computer was made just for playing games. 『Pong』, which came out in 1974, was a game where two people had to bounce a white ball like they were playing table tennis, with white bars on the left and right on a black background. Looking at it now, it seems extremely simple, but at the time it was at its peak of popularity. In Korea, 『Brick Breaker』, a variation of Pong, was played a lot. Monitors at that time were only black and white, so colored cellophane tape was attached only to the brick part of the game

machine monitor to give the impression that it was in color.

In the 1980s, arcades filled with gaming computers became widespread. Games such as 『Galaxy』, which involves destroying alien spaceships with a loud bang, as well as 『Farting Truck』, 『King Kong』, and 『Raccoon』 were greatly loved. Then, game consoles that were connected to home TVs gradually become popular, and there were many games like 『Pac Man』, where a round face moves around and eats items. The famous 『Super Mario』, a big-nosed man going on adventures, is still very popular today.

As personal computers became widely available in the early 1990s, games that used to be played only in the arcades could now be played at home. At this time, a strange game arrived from Moscow. It was called 『Tetris』, and although it's a very simple game where you fit blocks of different shapes together, its addictiveness was unmatched. 『Minesweeper』, which was installed by default on Microsoft computers, also gained considerable popularity.

As the Internet came into wider use in the late 1990s, PC rooms appeared here and there, and the real-time strategy simulation game 『Starcraft』 became popular nationwide. It was a game that required complex abilities, including sophisticated unit control skills, strategies to interpret the game map, and psychological warfare to catch the opponent off guard. The fact that you were not simply fighting against a computer's artificial intelligence but also people from all over the world connected to the Internet gave you another level of excitement. Because of this, a new profession called professional game player was created.



Games are going through another phase of change again as anyone can now enjoy games on cell phones or tablet PCs they carry in their hands. Recently, there are many games that are simple in structure but have excellent graphics and sound. 『Angry Birds』 is a very simple game where you shoot birds with a slingshot to destroy the pigs' property. People say that you'll never get bored of this game because you can keep changing the characters and fun background themes. But maybe someday it will give way to a new game.

## Chapter 6. Now let's go out and play!

Hello readers! I am speaking to you from Korea and I'm standing at the main gate of a school that is full of lively teenagers. So far, I have come across many different ideas about 'playing.' So I think I need to experience playing first hand from now on. That's why I came here to play with the you, friends.

Ding dong ding dong! Ding dong ding dong!

As I speak, the school bell is ringing to wrap up today's class. A group of friends are rushing out like a bullet. Let's meet one of the students.

"Hello, where are you going? What are you going to play today?"

"I've got no time for playing! I have to go to the hakwon to study."

"Hey, why study so hard? But you're still going to play computer games, right?"

"I play it on my phone on my way to hakwons and before I sleep at night... But why are you asking? Don't bother me."

Oh dear, hakwon buses are coming to take our friends away. I guess the big problem is that even if they want to play, they don't have the time to play. So, if they have a few hours of free time in between, what do they do with it?

"I just kill time on the Internet or visit K-pop fan club websites and have some fun."

"I go to karaoke room. I can scream as much as I want when I go there and it's great."

"Boys go to PC cafes and play games before the high school guys come."

“On the weekends, I go to a mall or a movie theater. If I’m lucky, I get to go to amusement parks or things like that. It's better for us to go on our own than with our parents... But you know it costs a lot of money if go by yourself.”

The most popular places for teenagers to visit after school are karaoke rooms and PC cafes. Now, I’m going to disguise myself as middle school students and join them to investigate what’s going on in those places. Oh my, I got caught so quickly. Duh, there are no middle school students with beards. Then, I’ll pretend to be a part-time worker at a karaoke room and PC cafe and watch them.

A group of girls are now entering the karaoke room.

“There is a youth discount here, right? Can we get our drinks with this coupon?”

As soon as the female students enter the room, they take their seats and take out microphones and tambourines. Oh, they’ve memorized most of their favorite song numbers! No time to waste when you don’t have enough time to play.

It seems like they are slowly depleting their energy while imitating popular singers' dances and songs, watching friend's belly-popping dance, climbing on the table, taking off their school uniform jacket and twirling it around, and headbanging with their hair bands. They’re probably consuming more energy here than playing in the school playground. They’re now eating hamburgers and cokes.

But I'm curious. Why do they come to karaoke to have fun? Wouldn't it be easier If they just went to some friend's house and hang out? It

won't cost them at all.

“Elementary school students go to their friends’ houses to hang out. It’s convenient and moms give snacks, too... But when we go to middle school, moms don’t like us coming. They don’t let us make noises when we play and even the man downstairs rings the doorbell and makes a fuss when we laugh a little loudly while playing. It’s better to just hang out at a karaoke room.”

Aren’t karaoke rooms a bit dark and scary to hang out? It's a place where adults also come to have fun.

“Nowadays, there are quite a few places for the youths. I also like places where we can take our shoes off like I’m at home, even if it’s a bit more expensive. People say we drink and smoke in dark and dirty karaoke rooms, but it’s actually from the adults who came first didn't clean it up. We have nothing to hide because we pay money and play safe, but adults try to find fault with us and criticize us... Wouldn’t karaoke owners want us more as a guest? We keep the room clean at least...”

Now let’s go to the PC cafe where boys enjoy going to. Actually, it's a place I enjoy going too, so it's not unfamiliar to me. As expected, most of the visitors are teenagers in the afternoon.

“I just come here for a moment after class and before the after-school study session begins. I can't stay here for long. I hate the smell of cigarettes getting in my school uniform when I come here, but there's nowhere to go. You can’t find any place to have fun in such a short period of time at such a low price other than PC cafes. And if I don’t play games, I can't hang out with my friends... Ah, I sometimes

wish I could become a professional game player.”

### **Where is the playground for the youth?**

“I don’t have time to play. Even when I have a break in between, I have nowhere to play.”

As I was returning home, those students’ words kept ringing in my ears. Perhaps because of this, I began to look closely at the streets that I normally just overlooked. Where do people hang out in this stuffy city? It seems like there are quite a few playgrounds for the adults. Bars, restaurants, cafes, golf driving ranges... But I noticed that there is no playground for the teenagers. There are many places where their entry is completely prohibited, and even if they get in, people glare at them just by entering, and above all, those places cost a lot of money. I guess convenience stores or fast food restaurants are the places where I could meet students of your age.

Don’t you feel like it should be reversed? Who plays better, adults or children? Who do you think needs more opportunities to play? In fact, biologically speaking, adults are not that good at playing. Adults are less interested in new things, and the ability to immerse themselves in playing also weakens. When I was in middle school and high school, I played soccer and basketball all day long, even under the scorching summer sun, but now I just idly move around a bit, show my best performance for about 5 minutes, and then collapse. It's easier to just eat, drink, and look around than to run around and play. But these lazy adults are pestering teenagers to study. So that’s why you hide into small PC cafes or karaoke rooms, and when you go out to somewhere like the park to play, adults start scolding you for not studying. It seems

like you are making yourself a virtual playground, since there is no real playground.

I sometimes think like this. Just seeing someone having fun and smiling happily makes me feel good, too. So, if there are more spaces where children and teenagers can play freely in the neighborhood where I live, adults who see them will also become happier.

There is a saying, “The playground of today is the republic of tomorrow.” The playgrounds we now see in our apartment complexes and kindergartens first appeared in Germany. In addition, starting in the late 19th century, the United States also began a movement to create outdoor playgrounds that anyone could enjoy for free. Children of various races and classes coming together to play to understand each other ultimately leads to democracy.

When I was young, the pine trees in the mountains became a good playground for me. If you climb a persimmon tree, it breaks easily and the fruit falls off, and you get scolded for climbing it, but the pine tree was easy to climb on because of its curved branches. Well, the smell won't go away for a few days though, if you get resin on your clothes. But as the world gradually turned into a city, it became difficult for children to play freely on streets filled with cars and bicycles. A small backyard or rooftop alone is not enough to handle the lively energy of children as well.

Usually, playgrounds are made for young children. But it is difficult to find an outdoor space to run around freely, even for the upper grader of elementary school. This situation is not different in other places around

the world, but these days, new types of spaces for playing are being created. In Tokyo, there is an amazing park called 'Nishirokugou'. The floor is sand, and the slides, seesaws, and swings on top are made from 3,000 recycled tires. In addition, there are robots, rockets, and dinosaurs that look like they came out of an animation, not to mention the Godzilla monster 20 meters tall from its head to tail. Children, teenagers, and adults alike can play here as much as they like.

I truly hope there are more safe playing spaces for the teenagers. Actually, your age is the time when you have the most energy in your life. As people reach their mid to late teens, they tend to enjoy more and more dangerous things, so there should be a space where people can enjoy extreme sports like skateboarding and stunt bikes. We don't need that many parking lots in our neighborhood. And rather than artificial equipment, it would be better to have something like a natural playground where people can play using the original terrain and various native plants.

In a small city called Charlotte, USA, there is a cultural space and amusement facility for children and teenagers called 'ImaginOn'. There is a small theater and a library, and on the upper floor there is a space where only teenagers aged 12 to 18 can go and play. You can borrow and read comics or magazines, play board games, or put on costumes and perform.

I too thought of something similar like that before. Just as grandparents have a senior center, why not create a youth center for teenagers? We can make a small room next to the community center and play board games and watch cartoons there. We can also make a

small theater and sing and dance. Is that really impossible?

## **Watching TV, being a fangirl & fanboy, texting, and SNS... Are these playing as well?**

Finding joy can sometimes be tiring. Going to karaoke room or PC cafe can also make me nervous sometimes. I have to split my pocket money, and worry about my relationships with friends, and time I spend playing, coming and going to meet friends feels like a waste of time. Couldn't we just play lightly with less effort than that?

“I just want to lie on my bed and kill time watching TV.”

Okay, then shall we turn on the TV?

It's time for the weekend variety show. The members of a pretty K-pop girl group go to a fishing village, catch fishes in mudflats, and dance in ugly work pants. Everyone on the show was laughing their butts off, and I also roll around on the living room floor laughing. Someone shows up as a surprise guest. He appears on a motorcycle and takes off his helmet...Ah, this is G oppa from the K-pop idol group. I haven't seen him for a while, when did he come back? I turn on the internet and search for G's fan club. Everyone is fussing about his come back. There was a scene in that program earlier where he held pollack like a microphone and sang. That photo has already been uploaded. Wow! I think he's smiling at me. I'll officially be G's fangirl from now on.

In fact, playing often takes this kind of form. Instead of meeting and playing with friends in person, we watch someone else having fun on



TV. Maybe it's like how athletes participate in sports and spectators watch them play. Some people say you are able to burn a certain number of calories just by watching other people run, so I guess you could get a similar level of enjoyment from watching other people play as if you were playing.

Enjoying your free time in the form of viewing did not suddenly appear recently. Watching movies and plays used to be the most important way to have fun, and reading books also has a long history as a way to enjoy leisurely time. In the past, it was a great pleasure for the farmers to just listen to the stories of the procession of Chinese envoys to Hanyang told by a wandering peddler while twisting a straw rope in a dark room.

Especially for women, there is no game as easy and enjoyable as chatting. But these days, that chatting game has changed a lot, too. Now you can chat as much as you like without having to meet your friends in person. This can be done through cell phone text and internet chat. And even multiple people can chat at once through mobile messengers such as KakaoTalk. They chat things like what the new student teacher is like at school, which idol group is popular these days, having to give up your dream of becoming a model because you gained too much weight, and that it was a vain dream in the first place... When you talk, time passes like an arrow.

It is true that even when free time is available, many people choose to passively rest rather than actively play. But, no matter how short a time it may be, shouldn't you be actively participating and having fun? Lying on the floor and killing time can be relaxing, but you have to turn

move your body once in a while. Otherwise, you might get a bedsore on your back!

## **The art of playing**

In New York, there is a road called the Museum Mile. It is a street lined with wonderful art museums such as the Metropolitan and the Guggenheim museum. Every year on the second Tuesday of June, a festival is held to open the art museums for free. I'm a person who can chew on rubber bands if it's given for free, so when I heard this news while traveling, I immediately went over. But when I actually got there, there was a long line of people like me who had come to see the museum for free at every art museum. Oh my, how long do I have to wait? There are so many paintings I want to see.

As I was complaining like this, I heard excited singing and laughter coming from the street. It turns out that this festival not only opens art museums for free, but the long road in front was closed to cars and turned into a huge playground. Various bands were playing music, and a clown was putting on a puppet show... The coolest thing about it was that the entire road was turned into a huge canvas. What I mean is, people gave out colored chalk and crayons and let us draw as much as we wanted on the asphalt floor.

The children were the first to get excited and drew rabbits and dogs, but the adults didn't just watch either. Some people drew the scenery around them with great care, while others showed off by drawing doodles worse than those of children. One guy drew a picture of a fish

with chalk and added a great quote to it. Then he rushed forward and drew another picture. It turned out that he was a famous street artist, and his job was to go around drawing pictures of people in the neighborhood. After an hour or two, the entire road became a painting filled with wonderful imaginations. Then, as night fell, cars started driving on the road and the drawing turned into chalk dust and disappeared into a hazy fog. But I won't ever forget the wonderful feeling I experienced from that memory.

Perhaps the thing that most resembles playing is the art. A French man named Gauguin worked at a securities company and later decided to become a painter. He knew that it was impossible to have fun in the stuffy city. So he went to Tahiti in the South Pacific, where everyone plays with a primitive mind. Mozart, a genius musician, was so mischievous that it was said that he was most calm when playing the piano. But for him, playing piano and jumping between notes was probably the most fun thing to do. Playing makes people a little crazy, and art is also created from that madness. Playing makes you lose yourself in it and forget everything, and the same goes for art. Both of them are great at making people not want to eat or sleep.

People say that the human brain is most active when it is playing, that is, in a state where tension is thrown away and released into a free and cheerful state. It's difficult to create something new if you only have rigid thoughts like, "This is work, this is studying." In some ways, we may call art something that is created while just being distracted and having fun. Surplus play became not just surplus but art.

If we're really having fun, that's when we all become artists. And when

everyone is playing together, the game becomes a festival. And these experiences accumulate and gather to create a culture. French sociologist Roger Cayua said in the book 'Man, Play, Games', that playing is based on challenge, expression, and improvisation, which is the basis of culture as well as modern law, science, and art. Primitive tribes dancing and playing in masks created performing arts, riddles and word play created poetry, and arguments for pleasure gave birth to a sentencing system with lawyers and prosecutors.

### **A community that plays together and works together**

How did the asphalt floor of Museum Mile become a huge work of art and a venue for festivals and culture? This is because people who love art and like playing gathered together as one family and had fun together.

Playing has existed with a community for a very long time. In ancient primitive societies, it was absolutely impossible to live alone, so everyone worked, ate, and rested together. People get tired from working, they argue when living together, and they fear the mighty mother nature... To overcome these things, they made games and enjoyed festivals. Now, let's look back on our traditional games. Yunnori on New Year's Day, Jwibulnori on Daeboreum, swing riding on Dano, Ganggangsullae on Chuseok... We created many games to enjoy during the holidays. This means that playing served to bring a community to have fun together.

The world has changed a lot since then. The number of people who

make a living out of farming is decreasing. Many people live in the city with their own jobs, and live in small families rather than in large clans. People lock themselves in their rooms after coming home from work or school, and find it difficult to even see each other. Playing has become something that can be solved alone through a computer or a game console. Then this thought occurred to me.

“The world is so boring. Can’t I just stay alone and play alone for the rest of my life?”

I once traveled to Vienna in Austria, where the world's largest Christmas market is held in front of the its city hall. In that large square, there were various dishes and intriguing crafts that delighted my senses. It was fun to look around, but the weather was so shivering cold, I went inside a building. Various parties for children were taking place in the building. Children were making their own Christmas ornaments and cookies and I felt jealous of them. I wanted to try it too, but they said I couldn't because I'm an adult. Then I felt an abrupt stomachache, so I went to the bathroom and went to the sink to wash my hands... And oh my, on my way there was a man wearing stained work clothes struggling to wash the dishes. He was washing the bowls that the kids were playing with a little while ago. I suddenly burst into tears.

This is how playing works. When someone plays with a toy train or has a birthday party at a fast food restaurant, there is always someone who prepares it and someone who cleans it up after it's over. It seems obvious that anyone would rather be the customer than the worker. But the game of life can never work that way. When someone plays, someone else has to work. However, we shouldn't let some people to work for the rest of their lives, and others play for the rest of their lives.

The world spins round and round like a clock that alternates between day and night. Our timetable also goes back and forth. When I spend my time to study, eat, sleep, play, and rest, other people's time is running too. Because the timetables work differently among us, someone can play while someone else is working. In this way, the world is able to dance seamlessly, forming a cycle of work and play.

### **Let's play organically!**

"Ding-dong, ding-dong!" The doorbell rings loudly. "Who is it?"

"Delivery!"

"What? I don't think I ordered any. What kind of delivery is this?"

"Didn't you order 'playing' here?"

There's nothing that can't be delivered these days, right? We can order not only pizza and chicken, but also steamed buns sold at a local market and freshly caught shrimp from the west coast, neatly packaged and brought to me at home. But this is what I also think. Don't you think we deliver 'playing' as well? Comedy programs on TV, online games on the Internet, toys from a department store... Are we opening the lid of what is already made and saying, "Hey, this is fun,"?

Of course, we save time and don't waste money in this way, but the world feels somewhat dull and untrustworthy.

These days, our parents are so worried about unhealthy agricultural products, right? There are so many imported products with long distribution process, and harmful substances because of mass production. That's why we often visit organic markets, or have a garden

of our own so we can prepare meals with things we can trust. It's not easy, but it's still trustworthy, and sometimes the process itself is enjoyable.

I think I can also make 'playing' organically, too. 'Playing' that is not a game stuffed into a computer, but enjoyed face-to-face with friends and family. These are games that do not have fixed rules, but allow people to understand their weaknesses, challenge each other together, and try various things through that process. Playing this way is healthier and more nutritious. In the process of creating such a game, you may be able to learn more than what you learn in any other classes. You may even discover creative talents you didn't know you had or weaknesses that weren't readily apparent.

I think a lot of adults have fallen into a trap. Adults think that they can achieve 'happiness' in the game of life just by working hard, studying hard, accumulating achievements, and improving their qualifications. Of course, they can get a high status and a lot of money that way, but there are many cases where they don't know what to do with those accomplishments they got. When they have a chance to play, they just shy away since they've never been able to play well in the past. Eventually, they just feel self-sufficient by spending money on expensive games.

Children and teenagers fall into different kinds of traps. They are blinded by the fun and joy of playing that is right in front of them. It's like when you're playing a game like the 『World of Warcraft』 and are only focused on the beginner's mission of catching a wild boar and filling up your bag needlessly. In fact, things that are much more

valuable and shining than the items we get in games are the items we get in real life. If you accumulate knowledge through study, wisdom through many experiences, and achieve great things in your job, that's the same as turning life itself into playing.

Playing 'surplus man' game is fun for a little while, but you can't be happy if you remain as one for the rest of your life. You won't be able to get the sense of accomplishment that the work itself gives you, not to mention the self-esteem from people around you. You won't even be able to secure the resources to build your own life.



## Chapter 7. The world, my playground

Now this book is coming to an end. I went out for a walk for the first time in a long while to return the books I borrowed from the library. I guess I've been cooped up in my room for too long. I can't believe I've been neglecting playing because I was writing a book about playing. It's funny, right? Anyway, I felt like a mold has grown all over my body so I ran down the street to get rid of it in the sun and wind. Then the traffic light turned red and I ended up standing in front of the crosswalk.

It's amazing how you feel after sitting at your desk at home for such a long time, that everything in the world seems so interesting when you go outside. A woman chopping vegetables in front of a supermarket, a young man on a motorcycle delivering food, a police officer directing traffic on the road... Everything looks so exciting. Ah, I feel alive! But except one thing, It's the cars packed on the road.

I personally don't like cars very much. Cars puff out smoke, scream 'honk honk', and rush towards you as if it's going to hit you... But then I hear a voice filled with excitement right next to me. A child turns his head left and right with his sparkling eyes and is saying something while looking at the cars. Oh my. He's guessing the names of passing cars one by one. Suddenly, this brought me back to my old memories. When I was young. I used to walk down the mountain path and sang,

“Don't scream too much Screaming Pine, Don't drink too much Drunken Cypress” I used to guess the names of trees by singing songs. As I was singing this song, a man passing by said, “Are you going to become a tree doctor when you grow up?” I didn't grow up to be a

tree doctor, but this kid might become a car designer who designs really cool cars, or an engineer at an automobile company that makes cars like these.

The world seems like a huge playground when you look at the world through these eyes. Study, memorize, create, pour your passion into what you like. You may fall down but you get back on track... It's such an exciting game! Maybe the board games and computer games we played were just practice games. If we make real cars instead of toy cars, travel around the real world instead of on the board game maps, and build real buildings instead of plastic blocks... These things will be much harder to do, but they will make our hearts pound that much more.

Some people look at everything around them with curiosity and overcome difficulties with their dreams. To that people, the whole world is a playground. If I am given a difficult task, or lack certain abilities, it just means that this game's mission is a bit more difficult. So don't get scared and close the game board. Rather, you can anticipate that the greater the difficulty, the greater joy that can be achieved later.

We are all scared when we go out to the playground for the first time. Will there be anything that I can enjoy playing? Won't friends just hang out with themselves and leave me out? What If I get hurt and my mom scolds me? But after 5 minutes of playing, you forget about all those worries.

So let's open the door now and take a deep breath. Be prepared to fall down a few times, and run out to have some fun!