

Welcome Remarks at The Values of Play International Conference 2021

20 November 2021

President Luiz Oosterbeek, Prof. Wang Jie, Mr. Derek Yue, Prof. Zhao Li, Prof. PC Hsiung, Distinguished Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the *2021 The Values of Play International Conference*, co-organized by the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (CIPSH), Jing Hengyi School of Education of Hangzhou Normal University (HZNU), the CIPSH Chair Collaborative Office in Hangzhou Normal University, and the Humanities Division of Zhejiang University. The Forum is also organized in collaboration with Tencent Social Research Center and Global Humanities Initiative (GHI) of The Hang Seng University of Hong (HSUHK). Before we get started, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all participants from different time zones for joining us today.

The HUSHK Global Humanities Initiative (GHI) was established in 2017 as part of our commitment as a new liberal-arts-oriented university. The university is now offering more than 30 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from 5 Schools. The GHI has been one of the University's major initiatives that actively promote interdisciplinary research and studies. Our Prof. PC Hsiung and Prof. Gilbert Fong have put in much effort to make it a sustainable programme at HSUHK over the years.

The GHI helps connect HSUHK to the world, having collaborations with CIPSH under UNESCO on innovative research projects, examining humanities issues from different and innovative perspectives. We do hope that our staff and students from different disciplines will gain access to new ideas and perspectives on global humanities issues.

Following the GHI colloquium at HSUHK in late October earlier, I am glad to attend another scholarly event of CIPSH today. This Conference adopts a timely theme, "The Values of Play: A Cultural and Educational Analysis". Why "play" is important to humankind and why this subject deserves such scholarly attention?

First of all, “play” in itself must be something fun and interesting. It is human nature to want to play, regardless of age and time. In the older time, games like cricket fights and board games were developed. Nowadays, with technological advancement, we have even more types of games to choose from. We also have different types of games to play with at different stages of our life—children are playing kids’ toys, teenagers are playing video games, the elderly perhaps are playing mahjong and chess. Games could be for leisure, yet also for friendship and interpersonal skills. For instance, teenagers nowadays enjoy playing video shooting games as a team, or as opponents with friends. It is great fun playing games with old and new friends; and apart from fun, multi-player games also require and enhance cooperation and communication among teammates.

Second, play is also closely linked with human learning and development at different ages and in different contexts. In kindergartens and schools, teachers would play games with students to help them learn new knowledge. For many players, they can gain certain knowledge too while playing video games. For example, Ubisoft, a French video game company hires historians to design games, thus, its famous Assassin’s Creed games always excelled at historical accuracy. The games vividly depict the historical backgrounds and the ancient social life. Many famous historical figures like Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, Napoléon Bonaparte, Queen Victoria appeared in the games in the right historical context. In Asia, a Japanese game product, Dynasty Warriors, is also very famous. The game is inspired by a 14th-century historical novel in China. The historical wars and the game’s storyline are well-mixed. As we can see, play is important to us, as part of human nature and also as a tool to help with our learning and development.

Third, play and games are closely linked to everyday life in social, cultural and economic aspects. Games are now not only for play, but there is also a whole industrial chain behind it. Games are now linked to other products like novels, television shows and merchandise. Looking at Asia, Tencent is forging a business model like this as well. For instance, an internet novel namely, Joy of Life has been transformed to a popular TV show recently. The show garnered high viewership and mostly positive reviews. Tencent is also developing a mobile game based on the novel and the show.

Examples like Assassin’s Creed, Dynasty Warriors and Joy of Life all enjoy huge fandom. Fans, especially die-hard fans, would not hesitate to show their support to the brand by buying related products, leading to a very profitable business. Game is a part of the whole business chain, linked to the success of other related products, creating cultural brands which are generating economic benefits and keep appearing in our

daily life. Game design and production by an economy can also showcase its soft cultural power to the world.

As mentioned earlier, HSUHK's GHI, with the support from CIPSH, organized the colloquium "Shall We Play? Cultural References for the Current Debate" on 28 October. Our speakers, Prof. PC Hsiung and Prof. Luiz Oosterbeek shared with us their studies respectively on cricket fight in old China and the roles of play on human intellectual development. Our discussants, Dr. Siu Sai Yau and Dr. Christine Choy also discussed how technological advancements could be used in historical research on play and the relationship between play and sustainability. I think the impact of online gaming to society and human development should not be underestimated. It might be an issue to be further examined. I am sure that today's conference, with your scholarship and expertise, will contribute tremendously to the subject of "play" on many aspects.

My remarks close here. I hope that you will enjoy today's conference. Thank you.