REDEFINING THE BOUNDARIES OF GAMING: AN ONTOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE STATUS OF E-SPORTS AS SPORTS ACTIVITIES

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Introduction

Although the concept of "sport" is widely spread in today's culture, its definition is anything but simple. Historically, it has been associated with characteristics such as significant physical exertion, the organization of structured events, as well as a shared regulatory framework. However, the emergence of new forms of competitive confrontation, such as e-sports, is progressively undermining this vision, raising questions about the need to review traditional parameters.

Although they take place entirely in digital environments, these forms of competition show a high structural complexity, requiring well-defined technical skills, such as decision-making speed, synergy between perception and movement, tactical skills and mental toughness. Their existence raises an essential question: is it still essential to conceive of the bodily element, understood in the traditional sense, as an essential requirement for classifying an activity as sporting?

The aim of this contribution is to develop an ontological reflection on the nature of e-sports, evaluating whether they can be recognized as authentic sports practices. The intent is to examine the theme not only by outlining the characteristics and organization of these competitions, but also by critically addressing it through different theoretical-philosophical perspectives, in order to clarify its substance.

To achieve this goal, the work will start by tracing the fundamental characteristics that, in the tradition, define what is commonly recognized as a sporting activity, and then introduce e-sports as a problematic and debated example. Subsequently, the main theoretical currents in the philosophical field that have dealt with establishing what a sport is, in

particular the formalist, conventionalist and interpretivist approaches, will be analyzed, with the aim of applying them to the context of electronic sports, so as to highlight both the possible affinities and the elements of friction.

In conclusion, a basic analysis will be conducted on the ontological level, examining both the reasons that support and those that oppose the inclusion of e-sports within the list of sports practices. The theoretical, symbolic and organizational consequences that such a framework would entail will also be explored.

1. The concept of "sport": traditional criteria and the challenge of e-sports

Finding a clear definition for what we commonly call "sport" is particularly difficult, despite the fact that it is deeply rooted in modern life. This complexity does not derive only from a linguistic issue, but from the multifaceted character of the phenomenon itself, influenced by sociocultural and economic dynamics. Although it may seem simple and immediate to recognize what falls within the concept of sport, its theoretical essence turns out to be articulated. Traditionally, reference has been made to elements such as the presence of organized competitions, shared norms and the use of physical or tactical skills. Yet, today there is a debate about whether physical exercise should necessarily be the fulcrum, especially in light of the spread of practices that enhance fine motor activity, ingenuity and psychological resilience.

1.1. Constituent elements of traditional sporting activity

The noun "sport" has its origins in Old French, where it was used to describe forms of entertainment[1]. In ancient times, structured motor practices were already associated with educational purposes and ethical ideals, while in the perspective of contemporary social

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[1] Roversi, A., *Sport*, in https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sport_(Enciclopedia-delle-scienze-sociali)/

sciences, such practices represent a "total social fact", according to the interpretation of the French sociologist Marcel Mauss, acting as a lens through which to observe cultural changes and collective dynamics.

Since the 1960s, the sociological investigation of the phenomenon has adopted a more analytical vision, focused on aspects related to mass entertainment and the economic dimension. The evolution of sport from a recreational activity to an articulated global system is the result of a broader process of commodification of social relationships. In this context, it continues to constitute a symbolic space in which shared values are redefined[2].

Today, in competitive practices, an organizational structure emerges based on officially recognized competitions, coordinated by formal bodies of a national and supranational nature, including associations and governing bodies that plan calendars and events, supervise the careers of sportsmen and manage regulatory and financial resources, often following a hierarchical logic. Approval by central institutions, such as CONI or the IOC, is essential to obtain validation, financial contributions and admission to major tournaments. They play the role of guarantors of the competitive system, deciding whether to authorize events and contributing to the definition of regulations and organizational structures, also according to strategic dynamics and interests of a political-commercial nature[3].

In addition, establishing precise rules is a fundamental step in distinguishing a simple recreational activity from a structured sports discipline. These provisions outline the characteristics of the activity (objectives, spaces, operating methods, evaluation criteria), ensure conditions of impartiality among the participants, allow the recording of the results and their comparison, as well as identifying the functions of each person involved.

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[2] Roversi, A., Triani, G., *Sociologia dello sport*, Napoli, ESI, 1995.
[3] For further information see. Bastianon, S., *The federations and the market of the organization of sporting events: a look at the past to try to understand the present*, in «Rivista di Diritto Sportivo», 1, 2016, pp. 64-85.

The origin of these provisions follows a vertical structure, which starts from international founding documents and is articulated through national regulatory texts and sectoral regulations, giving rise to an autonomous legal system but linked to the State system. In parallel with the official rules, there is also a set of non-codified moral principles (*Fair Play*) such as fairness, respect for the opponent or rejection of doping, which embody the ethics of sporting behavior. Furthermore, regulatory provisions are not static, but undergo adaptations and modifications to respond to cultural, technological and social changes[4].

The skills required in sports practice then manifest themselves in different forms. Physical skills (such as mastery of the gesture, muscle power or motor synchrony), cognitive and tactical attitudes (such as choosing actions, planning the game or predicting opponents' moves) and psychological resources (such as enthusiasm, emotional control and the ability to react to difficulties) can be identified.

In most disciplines, these dimensions are intertwined, although with varying relevance depending on the context. In fact, an increasing awareness of the decisive role played by psychological and tactical skills is emerging, even in areas where physical performance prevails: the recognition of these faculties is transforming the image of the athlete and raises questions about the very concept of sport, undermining models that attribute value exclusively to physical abilities.

One of the most relevant debates today concerns whether these skills should be considered an essential requirement to classify a discipline as "sporting". Activities such as chess and so-called "e-sports" challenge this paradigm: chess, although it involves minimal physical involvement, has been accepted as a sports discipline by the International Olympic Committee, thanks to its competitive

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[4] For further information see. Coco, D., *The concept of rule in its recreational-educational and didactic-sports declinations*, in «Formazione & Insegna», 3, 2013, pp. 121–127.

structure, codified rules, high tactical component and the demand for prolonged concentration both mental and physical.

E-sports are based on virtual dynamics but include official tournaments, rigorous training programs, speed of movement, coordination, planning and emotional resilience, so some studies identify these practices as a bodily element linked to athletic preparation. The Olympic Committee has begun a discussion on these issues, declaring that these activities can fall within the field of sport if they share the Olympic values and comply with rules aimed at combating doping substances.

This discussion represents a collective redefinition of the meaning attributed to the different forms of abilities, bodily, intellectual and digital, and is influenced by both media success and economic logic. Furthermore, it reveals the effort of institutional organizations to integrate new competitive expressions within existing schemes[5].

1.2. E-sports as a controversial case

E-sports represent a very distinct reality from recreational *gaming*, having reached a planetary diffusion and a great impact both in the socio-cultural and economic spheres. The main crux of the debate concerns the relationship between the structural peculiarities of these practices (virtual interaction, specific skills, particular form of physical involvement) and conventional conceptions of sporting activity, opening a broader reflection on the very meaning of the term "sport" in the technological age.

Contrary to the idea that it can be a phenomenon without structure, the e-sports landscape represents an articulated and well-organized system, within which different subjects operate: the companies that create digital games and control their mechanics,

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[5] For further information see. Maietta, A., *E-sports: current status and perspectives of regulatory framework*, in
https://rivistadirittosportivo.coni.it/images/rivistadirittosportivo/ultime_novita/2022/Gli_e-sports_stato_attuale_e_prospettive_di_inquadramento_normativo.pdf

establishing the official parameters and, often, promoting the main events; bodies specialized in the realization of championships and competitive events on a global scale; organizations that deal with the selection, preparation and management of digital athletes, often equipped with technical staff (coaches and psychologists); the participants, both professional and amateur, engaged in the various competitions; an international audience of supporters who follow the events through streaming platforms (such as YouTube or Twitch) or live in dedicated facilities.

This articulated set of players gives rise to leagues both on a local and international scale, and to world-class events with prizes that can reach high figures, often characterized by sophisticated and multi-level competition mechanisms. This structure represents a key element in giving credibility and institutional value to e-sports, clearly differentiating them from occasional gaming experiences and strengthening their image among spectators, media and investors[6].

A distinctive aspect concerns the way in which the rules are managed: in e-sports, the dynamics of the game are incorporated directly into the software and applied automatically by the system itself. This involves a form of neutrality, in contrast to human arbitrage, typical of physical disciplines, which can be subject to subjective evaluations or inaccuracies, despite the introduction of technological tools. However, the rules of e-sports are not static: they can be updated by the developers through changes, which affect the strategic balance of the game and impose on the participants a continuous ability to adapt.

The figure of the human referee, while not disappearing, takes on a different role: he deals with the technical management of events, the supervision of the behavior of the participants, the application of the regulations and the fight against unfair practices, such as the use of unauthorized programs, illegal agreements between players or the abuse of system errors. It is precisely this last point that raises moral questions: does exploiting a flaw in the game represent ingenuity or

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[6] For further information see. Tang, W., *Understanding Esports from the Perspective of Team Dynamics*, in https://thesportjournal.org/article/understanding-esports-from-the-perspective-of-team-dynamics/

impropriety? The debate thus shifts from the athletic gesture to interaction with a programmed digital environment[7].

Despite this, although it is often not perceived as such, the competitive level of e-sports imposes very specific body requirements such as fine motor skills, such as rapid, accurate and repeated movements of hands, fingers and wrists, subjected to intense and constant loads and an ability to physically and mentally resist developed with prolonged preparation sessions. In addition, repeated engagement can cause problems such as tendon inflammation, compression of the median nerve, pain in the spine or cervical area, and vision problems.

For this reason, both teams and individual athletes have progressively introduced specific training programs, including cardiovascular activities and strengthening and mobility exercises, not to imitate traditional sports training, but to optimize endurance and alertness, prevent the onset of injuries and promote a balanced psychophysical state. In this context, the body becomes a functional means of interaction with the digital environment.

The comparative analysis highlights both affinities and contrasts between e-sports and traditional sports. On the one hand, common elements such as solid planning, a high level of expertise, constant commitment, well-defined regulations and a large participation of spectators emerge. On the other hand, however, there are substantial differences that call into question the canonical categories with which the very concept of sport is defined. In addition to, as we have seen, the bodily component, other distinctive aspects concern the deep integration with the virtual environment and with automated rules, and the management structure, often not centralized and strongly conditioned by the companies producing the games. In this sense, e-sports represent an extreme case that pushes us to reconsider the effectiveness of traditional parameters when applied to contexts born and developed in the era of technological transformation[8].

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[7] *Ibid.*

[8] For further information see. Kane, D., Spradley, B. D., *Recognizing Esports as a Sport*, in https://thesportjournal.org/article/recognizing-esports-as-a-sport/

The identity of electronic sports has been analyzed by various currents of philosophical thought, including Formalism, Conventionalism and Interpretivism, which propose divergent interpretative perspectives. The discussion is not limited to a linguistic or terminological issue: defining these practices as sporting activities has significant cultural and social consequences, influencing institutional recognition, prestige or access to subsidies.

2. Philosophical lenses for the analysis of sport and e-sports

2.1. Philosophical Theories of the Definition of "Sport"

Although sporting activity has been present in human practice for centuries, a philosophical analysis of its meaning began to develop only in the seventies. The main problem lies in the great variety of disciplines involved and the lack of a shared and universally valid definition. In any case, establishing what should be considered "sport" is not just a theoretical question: concrete consequences depend on this definition, such as recognition by institutions, participation in Olympic events and inclusion in educational programs.

It is possible to focus the analysis on three currents of thought belonging to the "internalist" perspective[9], each of which aims to investigate the constitutive and distinctive elements that define the essence of sporting activity.

Firstly, Formalism, associated in particular with the thought of Bernard Suits, who interprets sporting activity as a particular category within the ludic universe, identifiable through a set of basic rules. According to the American philosopher, the nature of

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[9] The internalist approach, in the context of philosophical reflection, represents a theory that attributes centrality to subjective factors in the context of the justification of knowledge. According to this view, a belief can be considered well-founded only if the individual has immediate access to the reasons that support it, or if these justifications reside in mental conditions within the subject's consciousness.

participating in a game lies in the deliberate effort to deal with superfluous difficulties, built on four main components: the "prelusive objective", i.e. the concrete purpose that characterizes the activity (e.g., hitting pins with a ball in bowling); the "means of use", i.e. the permitted ways to achieve the end, intentionally selected so as not to be the simplest possible; the constitutive rules, i.e. the prescriptions that determine the difficulties, prohibiting more direct or advantageous solutions; the "lusorious attitude", that is, the voluntary attitude with which these norms are accepted, thus making the activity in question practicable. In addition, to differentiate sport from other forms of play, Suits introduces additional conditions: the presence of a motor component, large-scale collective recognition and a stable organizational structure over time[10].

Although presenting itself as a coherent and well-structured model, the formalist approach has been questioned because of its excessive inflexibility: it, in fact, tends to exclude examples such as chess or e-sports themselves, as they do not meet the criterion of physical effort. Furthermore, this approach shows limits on the ethical level, since it does not provide tools to assess the moral correctness of norms or behaviors. Another critical issue concerns the lack of attention to the unwritten rules and the shared spirit of sports practice, fundamental elements for understanding its culture. Finally, the so-called "logical incompatibility", according to which breaking a rule would mean ceasing to participate in the game itself, is considered problematic and not very adherent to the reality of sports practices[11].

Secondly, Conventionalism emerges as a response to the rigidities of Formalism, emphasizing the central role of informal understandings and shared values that permeate the sporting environment. According to this perspective, the regulatory provisions cannot be understood or applied outside the cultural and practical

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[10] For further information see. Suits, B., *La cicala e le formiche: gioco, vita e utopia*, Bergamo, Junior, 2001.

[11] Antunes, P., *Suits and "game-playing": formalism and subjectivism revisited. A critique*, in «Sport, Ethics and Philosophy», 2024, doi: 0.1080/17511321.2024.2329900.

context in which they are inserted, made up of collective habits and common expectations[12].

In this framework, the Australian philosopher Fred D'Agostino proposes the notion of *ethos* to indicate that set of tacit practices and unofficial codes that guide the concrete implementation of rules such as, for example, the degree of physicality considered acceptable in a given discipline[13]. The American teacher and inventor William Morgan, on the other hand, distinguishes between more superficial conventional agreements, useful for practical coordination, and deeper habits, rooted in the moral principles and cultural meanings that give meaning to sporting activity[14].

Although it represents a more elastic approach and more in tune with the real dynamics of sporting activities, the conventionalist vision is questioned for its conceptual indeterminacy, which makes it difficult to establish precisely what the actually operational habits are. The main problem, however, lies in the danger of slipping towards a form of moral relativism: if normative authority is based exclusively on what is commonly practiced or accepted, it becomes problematic to question widespread but ethically controversial behaviors. This approach, in fact, lacks an external evaluation criterion that allows for a critical analysis of the very conventions on which it is based[15].

Finally, Interpretivism aims to overcome the theoretical deficiencies of previous models, focusing on the identification of the intrinsic purpose of sporting activity. According to philosophers such as Robert Simon and J. S. Russell, the ideal core around which sport revolves lies in the pursuit of physical-athletic excellence. In this perspective, sport is conceived as a context aimed at the development and testing of human abilities. This purpose serves as a

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[12] Cacchiarelli, M., *Società dell'anti-agonismo. Philosophical models of competition*, in «Lessico di etica pubblica», 1, 2020, pp. 89-99.

[13] For further information see. D'Agostino, F., *The Ethos of Games*, in «Journal of the Philosophy of Sport», 1, 1981, pp. 7–18.

[14] Morgan, W. J., *Broad Internalism, Deep Conventions, Moral Entrepreneurs, and Sport*, in «Journal of the Philosophy of Sport», 1, 2012, pp. 65–100.

[15] Cacchiarelli, M., *Società dell'anti-agonismo. Philosophical Models of Competition*, op. cit.

criterion for interpreting norms, practices and behaviours: regulatory provisions, for example, should be understood and applied in a way that supports, and not hinders, the distinctive quality that each discipline aims to enhance.

The interpretivist orientation provides a solid and coherent regulatory framework, but is not without objections. One of the main difficulties lies in clearly identifying the essential purpose attributable to each sport, since opinions can differ. In addition, the proposed guiding criteria are sometimes imprecise when trying to apply them to concrete situations. Another criticism concerns the tendency to consider these principles as universal and out of time, neglecting the cultural and historical factors that influence sports practices[16].

These philosophical currents, as we have seen, diverge in their objective, propose different readings of situations at the limit of the sports definition such as, precisely, e-sports, chess or parkour, and deal differently with complex moral issues, such as the use of prohibited substances. Formalism disapproves of the latter as they break the regulations; Conventionalism discusses their legitimacy on the basis of *ethos*, but risks legitimizing controversial behaviors; finally, Interpretivism rejects them because they alter the aspiration to physical-athletic excellence.

Formalism, moreover, tends to exclude e-sports due to the absence of physical effort; Conventionalism evaluates their legitimacy based on the degree of cultural acceptance, while Interpretivism could consider them sporting activities if they are intended as a ground for cultivating mental, strategic or technical skills.

In more detailed terms, the formalist perspective identifies a contradiction in the case of e-sports: although it requires fine motor skills, exceptional speed of response, advanced coordination between sight and movements, considerable mental capacity and both psychological and physical resistance, the physical effort involved is limited to specific areas of the body, in particular hands and eyes, and is conveyed by digital interfaces. This implies the

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[16] *Ibid.*

absence of extensive physical activation, a characteristic considered central in traditional forms of sport.

Even if these activities meet requirements such as wide popularity and consolidated organizational structure (with official leagues, professional teams and multimillion-dollar prizes), the formalist conception, linked to a broader vision of corporeality, tends not to fully recognize such practices as authentic expressions of sport[17].

The conventionalist approach does not attempt to establish in advance what is meant by the physical component, but focuses on how the reference environment, composed of practitioners, supporters, organizers, sports bodies and public opinion, interprets and attributes value to the skills required in e-sports, such as mental, tactical, reaction and fine motor skills. The use of the concept of "athlete" to describe participants, the presence of teams, and media discussions (such as the possibility of inclusion in the Olympic Games, participation in international sporting events, or market expansion) are all signs of evolving cultural norms that are still being compared.

As a result, the conventionalist perspective comes to an uncertain and variable conclusion: the recognition of e-sports as sports disciplines depends on a collective process that is still evolving, in which it will be decisive to understand which shared practices will end up being established. While this approach is able to effectively represent the changing and open nature of the notion of sport, it exposes, as mentioned, the risk of falling into a form of relativism, since it does not have solid criteria for questioning conventions that are emerging, even if they are based on economic logic rather than on substantive values[18].

Interpretivism, on the other hand, does not focus on the presence or absence of bodily movement in the classical sense, but rather questions the value of the skills involved, such as mental alertness, tactical planning, speed of execution and precision in gestures, and whether these can represent an authentic expression of human ability

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[17] Hauge, D., *What is the Nature of Sport? Formalism, Conventionalism and Interpretivism Reconsidered*, in
https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10196288/2/Hague_10196288_Thesis.pdf
[18] *Ibid.*

worthy of sporting consideration, in line with the profound purpose that is attributed, on a conceptual level, to sporting activity.

In this sense, two fundamental readings are outlined: a narrower point of view, which associates the sporting value exclusively with the use of the body in the classical sense, leading to the exclusion of digital disciplines from the list of sporting activities; a broader perspective, which understands excellence as the ability to face articulated tests imposed by a regulated system, enhancing a wide range of human faculties, including intellectual and motor precision. Within this framework, e-sports can also be recognized as authentic expressions of excellence, as they test complex skills in a competitive context.

The outcome of the interpretivist approach is based on the way in which the concept of "excellence" is defined. This orientation opens up the possibility of recognizing digital competitions as sports practices, but only on condition that a solid regulatory argument can be provided that highlights their consistency with the fundamental principles that characterize sporting activity. In this way, the focus shifts from purely descriptive parameters, such as the use of the body, to more axiological considerations, linked to the meaning and value of the sporting experience. This allows for greater conceptual openness, but also introduces the risk of a lack of clarity and precision within the boundaries of the definition[19].

3. Ontological evaluation of e-sports
and conceptual implications

The expansion of the phenomenon of e-sports has stimulated a reflection on their real identity. The central issue lies in the difficulty of establishing what is meant by "sporting activity", given that there is no shared definition. Attributing or denying this label is not only a theoretical issue, but has tangible consequences: think of the possibility of being included in the Olympic programs (a topic addressed by the International Olympic Committee), the possibility of

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[19] *Ibid.*

obtaining subsidies, the legal and social recognition of professional video gamers, and the public image that derives from it. The interest in considering e-sports as a sporting form therefore also arises from concrete reasons, since this recognition brings real benefits in terms of economic resources, bureaucratic facilities and commercial attractiveness[20].

Those who consider e-sports as similar to traditional sports highlight numerous elements of continuity. Firstly, the organisational model, whereby e-sports are structured into leagues and events on a global scale, with codified regulations, defined playing standards and professional teams, largely replicating the structure of conventional sports. Secondly, preparation, in fact high-level gamers undergo intensive and methodical training programs, including technical exercises, study of strategies and analysis of previous matches, all guided by specialized figures such as coaches and analysts.

Thirdly, the necessary skills, since e-sports require a wide spectrum of skills, including mental skills, alertness and motor precision. Finally, professionalism, for which there is a well-defined working context, with gamers paid, contracted, supported by sponsorships and included in a specific career path.

As we have seen, Interpretivism, according to which sporting activity is understood as a shared commitment to forms of excellence, can accommodate e-sports, provided that a broader concept of merit is adopted, which also includes mental and tactical skills. Similarly, conventionalism, which attributes centrality to socially constructed agreements, can justify the inclusion of e-sports in the sports landscape, leveraging their recognition by official bodies (such as the issuance of visas for professional players and integration into academic training courses) and collective acceptance[21].

On the other hand, one of the most recurrent criticisms concerns the lack of significant physical effort, understood as the

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[20] For further information see. Kanellopoulos, A., Giossos, Y., *Esports: Philosophical Perspectives*, in «European Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science», 1, 2024, pp. 125–148.

[21] Hauge, D., *What is the Nature of Sport? Formalism, Conventionalism and Interpretivism Reconsidered*, op. cit.

involvement of different muscles of the body, an element considered fundamental by many classic theories on sport. The static character of e-sports is often perceived as incompatible with the physiological benefits generally attributed to motor exercise typical of traditional sports disciplines.

On a theoretical level, Formalism conceives sport as a structured form of play that requires physical skills and has social diffusion and institutional recognition. In this perspective, digital competitions risk being excluded if the concept of motor skill is understood in a conventional way and limited to extensive body movement.

A further objection focuses on the pervasive intervention of technology in competitive digital contexts: the challenges, in fact, take place within simulated spaces, made possible by electronic devices and computer programs; the rules that govern the gaming experience are not decided by independent bodies, but are directly integrated into the digital architecture of the software, designed by developers and, moreover, publishers they hold exclusive rights to the games, exercising power over the design, updating of regulatory dynamics, granting authorizations for use and managing the main competitions. This model of centralized control is totally different from the system of autonomous associations that regulate traditional sports disciplines. In essence, every digital discipline is ontologically subordinate to an external economic subject, which can modify or cease its existence based on market choices[22].

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[22] *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The examination of the ontological identity of e-sports has brought to light a series of moral issues closely related to the way in which the very concept of sporting activity is understood. Among the main ethical reflections that emerged are the critical issues inherent in the theoretical models taken into consideration: on the one hand, Conventionalism risks slipping into a fluid and unstable ethical vision, especially when legitimacy depends exclusively on collective consensus or economic dynamics; on the other hand, Interpretativism invites us to refer to an ideal of "excellence" in performance, which, in the digital context, must be revised to enhance mental skills, tactical planning and fine motor skills. In addition, there are additional ethical challenges, such as responsible management by publishers who control platforms, regulating illegal conduct within virtual environments, and consistency with shared moral values such as *fair play* and combating the use of performance-altering substances or tools.

A fundamental conflict is evident between the advancement of the technological dimension, represented by competitions related to e-sports, and the protection of the founding principles that historically characterize sporting activity. This contrast is reflected above all in the discussion on the importance attributed to prolonged physical effort compared to the enhancement of different types of human activities, such as cognitive or technical-strategic ones.

Similarly, a dichotomy is observed between a virtual context, highly regulated and dependent on digital infrastructures, and the decentralized and culturally rooted structures of traditional sport, often guided by implicit ethical codes. The fundamental question is to understand how it is possible to welcome the transformations introduced by technology while keeping intact the nature of sport as a path of personal growth oriented towards the improvement of human skills, based on equity, fairness and mutual recognition, even in a context marked by strong pressures related to profit.

Looking to the future, we can hypothesize a progressive transformation of the very notion of "sport", which could open up to a greater extent to forms of virtual competition. It is, however, essential that this transformation is not configured as a simple passive adaptation to market trends or mass diffusion, but as the result of a critical and responsible examination of a moral nature. It therefore becomes essential to adopt a values-based perspective, capable of questioning the role and meaning we want to attribute to competitive challenges in the context of digital innovation.

It is therefore essential to have a constant dialogue between sports bodies, digital content creators, gaming communities and citizens, in order to face the new challenges that this scenario entails. Only through this collaboration will it be possible to ensure that the inclusion of e-sports takes place in harmony with the ethical and cultural foundations that give sport its educational and human value, protecting its authenticity against the pressures deriving from technological innovation and economic interests.

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