

Preface and Acknowledgments

According to the Bartle taxonomy of player types, one can distinguish between four kinds of video gamers: *killers*, *achievers*, *socializers* and *explorers*. *Killers* enjoy competition by force or strategy; *achievers* are perfectionists who want to get out of a game as much as they can; *socializers* have fun in interacting and hanging out with other players, and *explorers* like to create, craft and discover the world of the game in a non-linear way. This taxonomy of players is more general than it seems at first sight. For example, it is easily applicable to PhD students in philosophy and their respective theses, whereby, of course and as always, overlaps are the norm rather than the exception. Firstly, there are killers who enjoy fighting with arguments as if they were on a battlefield: They ‘defend’, ‘hold’, ‘attack’ a position or any kind of -ism with rigor and intelligence and have a keen sense for abstract, ‘cold-blooded’ reasoning. Then there are *achievers* who often have been working on their subject matter since long before their PhD period in order to become a designated specialist in their research area. They have read nearly everything of the primary and secondary literature on their topic; they take the omnipresent publish-or-perish mentality to heart; they know exactly where there are research desiderata to be filled, and their strengths are therefore planning and knowledge. The *socializers* among the PhD students of philosophy invest a great amount of time to learn languages, visit conferences, make connections, and engage in or avoid departmental politics. They usually regard their own thesis as a project of collaboration or as a contribution to a team of researchers rather than the masterpiece of the lone wolf. Finally, the *explorers* enjoy undertaking research off the beaten tracks by discovering more than just one side and implication of the subject matter they are interested in. They do so by integrating different, even non-philosophical disciplines into their work and by assembling lines of argumentation that may seem unconventional. Their strengths are curiosity and originality. Thus, each of these four types has clear benefits, and the weaknesses of each type are mirrored in the benefits of the others. But I can think of nobody, neither in my experience as a gamer nor in my experience as a PhD student in philosophy, who ever embodied all of the four types at once. Even one type alone is hardly possible to master.

When I look back now on my thesis and on the years spent on the preparation, the research, the discussions and the actual writing of it, it seems that for the most part I can identify my way of tackling philosophy with the *explorers*, and, to a lesser extent, with the *achievers*. Although, in particular for the content of my thesis, it would have been useful to possess more qualities of a *killer* to persuasively develop my own position and to show the insufficiencies of others, it somehow happened that I saw more truth than falsity in most of the texts I studied. For one reason or another, I preferred to combine different stances into an assemblage of which only the name is my own rather than to destruct them in order to construct something which has to be defended in order to exist. This does not mean, however, that I consider my thesis to be the result of teamwork, of an academic environment like you would have in a graduate school or as doctoral assistant, of teaching and discussions with students, or at least of previous, similar

studies in one single discipline, the footsteps of which I intend to follow. For reasons internal to the content of my thesis and external to its realization, I was not able to be as much of a *socializer* as I would have liked to be, notwithstanding the chance I took to learn Italian and to present at conferences in the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Japan. What I did, however, and what I have always enjoyed, was to pick from the topics that interest me, even if they range over different scientific disciplines, and to transcend my horizon, in other words, to explore what is possible in writing a philosophical text and perhaps to go slightly beyond this conventional threshold. The work and the working of *explorers* is genuinely open-ended, which is why, as I will also mention in the thesis itself, I consider my research only as a building block which can and should be implemented like modelling clay into a more embracing theory. In order to make this possible and to avoid a certain vagueness, superficiality or hastiness that is often connected with interdisciplinary work conducted by one single person, I attempted to be as careful as possible in my acts of exploring and to not just ‘skate over’ the fields I discuss, but to concentrate only on a few thinkers and topics therein. This, together with the vision that there is much more to be done (inside and especially outside of academia) with the ideas touched upon in the following pages, makes me want to join the camp of the *achievers* as well. Since I am and want to be anything but an expert in the fields I explore, however, I join this camp only as an onlooker for whom philosophical reflection counts less as a result and as the product of an industry of experts, and more as a movement towards discovery beyond the limits of one’s own horizon. *Careful philosophical exploration* is thus the watermark underlying the following pages, with all the risks and benefits this hybrid form of philosophy implies.

Luckily, no matter with which type or types one identifies, there are always people without whom the privilege of embodying such a type would be impossible in the first place. First and foremost, I would like to thank my two supervisors Matteo d’Alfonso and Georg Stenger for the freedom, trust and support they gave me in developing this thesis. I also thank Hans Rainer Sepp for helping me with publications and for seconding some decisions I made in this project’s early stages. Furthermore, the input I got during conferences and meetings from Alfonsina Acito, Wolfgang Huemer, Michael Kubovy, Baingio Pinna, Toru Tani, Enrico Terrone, Fiorenza Toccafondi, Giuliano Torrenco is invaluable. Thanks to all of them. For reading, helpful discussions and/or general support in different respects, I thank my friends Marco Bazzan, Attilio Bragantini, Kyla Bruff, Nicole Canino, Carli Coenen, Raffaele Coppeta, Irene Delodovici, Bogdan Dzogaz, Jana Krutwig, Kentaro Otagiri, Nathalie Saouma, Andrea Schönbauer, Helmer Stoel, Hanna Trindade, Ad Vennix, Wawrzyn Warkocki, Thomas Wolfers and Susanna Zellini. I thank the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the University of Ferrara and FWF for financial support. I thank Robert Püringer and Ingeborg Lux from Austrian Academy of Sciences Press for our professional collaboration and Nicola Wood for her meticulous revision of the text. For her love, her care and support, her patience in going through the whole text and painstakingly pointing out what a supposedly *careful exploration* could not notice, as well as for her social and intercultural coaching, I warmly thank Elise Coquereau. She has always been the *socializer* to whom I look up.

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