

Finite and Infinite Games for Liberty

Is it possible for liberty to win against power?

I think the answer to that question depends a lot on the kind of game which liberty-loving people play.

In his book *Finite and Infinite Games*, Professor James Carse broke the games we play down into two categories:

“There are at least two kinds of games: finite and infinite. Finite games are those instrumental activities – from sports to politics to wars – in which the participants obey rules, recognize boundaries and announce winners and losers. The infinite game – there is only one – includes any authentic interaction, from touching to culture, that changes rules, plays with boundaries and exists solely for the purpose of continuing the game. A finite player seeks power; the infinite one displays self-sufficient strength. Finite games are theatrical, necessitating an audience; infinite ones are dramatic, involving participants...”

If you care about human freedom, you might be playing the game of “abolish the state/this or that state agency.” After all, the collective framework we call the state is most responsible for the abuse of power in the world today. This is the game most people on the libertarian spectrum have chosen for a life end.

As noble as this cause is, it suffers from the drawbacks of all finite games.

1. “Abolishing the state” is a game which will almost certainly result in a loss. “The state” is such a big idea driving such a big institution that it’s doubtful the end of abolition could be reached in one lifetime.
2. “Abolishing the state” is a game which has an end. What happens after the end? If abolition is your life purpose, what else have you left for your soul to strive for?

So what is an infinite game for liberty?

How about “making people freer”?

1. "Making people freer is a game which is hard to lose – especially considering all the unfreedom around us. It can take millions of discrete forms, while "abolishing the state" can take only one.
2. There's no end to the game of making people freer. States may end, but the human struggle with oppression (from within and without) will likely continue until the machines wipe us out.

Too many people burn out on trying to bring about the end of evil institutions.

Consider how much simpler and more fulfilling is liberty's infinite game.. You will be better able to enjoy your freedom as you gain it. The infinite game of liberty transcends one human lifetime. than a path with a simple end goal at cost, and you will be q

If the state goes away as a result of that, I won't complain.