

REBEL AT THE END OF HISTORY

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There is an opinion that Hegelian philosophy of history is a teleological grand narrative which can only leave us at the end of history, and so justify now a kind of post-communist bourgeois triumphalism, inverting its former employment as a kind of marxist inevitabilism. This casting of Kojève's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*¹ as a role-play game/computer game aims only to demonstrate that a far more aleatoric logic is possible while still respecting the key elements of the game.

A Description of the Game

There is in legal theory an occasional resort to the notion that lawbreaking is futile, as it simply destroys the mutual understanding upon the basis of which games — and civilisations — proceed. The game proposed here suggests otherwise, in making use of lawbreaking to transform one game into another, and so proposes a positive evaluation of the rebellious impulse and a correspondingly negative evaluation of games requiring rule-based consensus.

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Most significantly, there are moves which go backwards as well as forwards, and there are multiple ends of history — some desirable, some not. The game has some of the features of a maze, in that there are dead ends, yet there is no clear ultimate destination. No two games need be alike. The motor of the game is a rebellion against the situation the player is in, but there is more than one type of rebellion, and more than one outcome of the confrontations to which rebellions give rise. Rebellion recurs in the game, as does sovereignty, but law makes only one fleeting appearance. The game has the unusual feature: that one can play it to different ends, and players in the same game can even pursue different ends. Thus one player's definition of victory might be to create the rule of law, whereas another player might aim to inaugurate freedom, and yet another licentiousness or dandyism. Thereby,

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¹ Kojève (1969).

² Kojève (1969).

playing by the same rules, the game may be fairly crude and brutal, or the most elegant gestural ceremony.

If pressed to justify this frivolity with serious matters, I would point out that Kojeve's lectures come to us via the efforts of Raymond Queneau to collect them together. Queneau, as a member of Oulipo, was enthusiastically committed to rule-based game play of all kinds. The occasionally enigmatic game names come from Kojeve.

At each stage, players need to adopt the identity and arm themselves with the weapons appropriate to success at that stage. Strategies which aid success in one game will prove disastrous at the next level.

Perhaps the most graceful game play is to play to keep the game alive, whether that means moving to another level, or repeating a strategy until it changes its meaning from war to art. In this approach, the only defeat that really loses the game is the defeat that ends the game, either by eliminating all possibilities of fresh rebellions against the situation created, or by reaching a dead end. In this context, law tends to be a bad play, suppressing rebellion and creating stasis.

The game consists of a series of struggles and rebellions which lead into fresh games at other levels. There are ten levels, or games. These should not be viewed as a linear progression, but as a connected series.

Game One: Animal Battle

Enter animal one

Enter animal two

Fight

Either: One kills

Two dies

Or: One wins

Two submits

Comment: History and humanity start

Progress to Level Two

Game One Repeats

Enter animal one

Enter animal three

Fight

Animal one kills again

Three dies

Repeat, with new challengers, until

Enter animal one

Enter animal (one + x)

Fight

animal (one + x) kills animal one

End of game

Comment: Humanity and history fail to start

Game Two: Recognition

Enter winner animal

Enter loser animal

Loser recognises winner as master

Recognises himself as slave of winner

Both become human

Name characters: One who risks death to win: Hero

One who accepts defeat to live: Coward

Choose to play Hero Game or Coward Game

Game Three: Hero Game — Duelling Masters

Choose costumes

Scenario: Ancient Greece

Alternatively: Feudal Europe

Setting: City or Nation

Enter King

King demands tribute from Noble

Noble rebels in name of family, refuses to pay tribute

(Exemplary version of this game: Shakespeare's Henry IV)

Climax: Rebel and King go to war

Rebel prefers death to dishonour

(Return to Game One)

King wins

Rebel dies

Repeat this outcome, each time expanding King's territory, until the victorious city/nation becomes an empire

Empire becomes emperor's family property

Empire too large for Kings/masters to defend

Hire mercenaries

Cease to be warriors

Fail to become workers

Become bourgeois

End of game

Go to Game Five

Or

(Return to Game Two)

King wins

Rebel submits

Game Four: Debauchery

Enter Master
 Refuse to play for honour
 Therefore lose when challenged

Or prepared to die for
 'right to debauchery'
 Die/end of game

Become Slave
 Go to Game Five

Game Five: Redemption Game — Revolution

Enter slaves
 Slaves work
 Masters own slaves
 Slaves rebel against non-mastery of their work
 Overthrow Masters (Redeem earlier cowardice)
 Inaugurate freedom
 End of History

Or Masters win
 return to Game Three
 Or Repeat Game Five
 with fresh uprising
 Or go to Game Seven

Game Six: Game of Pleasure

Slaves refuse work
 Masters enforce slavery

Or refusal of work
 successfully resists
 masters
 Go to Game Eight
 Or go to Game Nine

Return to Game Five

Game Seven: The Chinese Solution

All become bourgeois citizens
 Universal contentment in unfreedom
 End of History

Or outcome: boredom
 Return to Games Two
 or Four
 Or proceed to Games
 Eight or Nine or Ten

Inaugurate Law

Game Eight: Barbarism

End of History: post-honour and post-work,
 live for animal gratification
 Possible return to Game One, Game Two

Game Nine: The Dandy: the Japanese solution

Aestheticise everyday life
Make of every action a ritual,
where form is all, content nothing

Or form the actions of
love in this End of
History manner:
proceed to Game Ten

Game Ten: Game of Love

Players cede from a discredited public life
and engage in the struggle for recognition in
a private realm: desire not the recognition of
all others, but the desire of a particular other

Or; ritualise this game:
return to Game Nine.

Reference

Alexandre Kojève (1969) *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Cornell University Press.