

GAMES AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

We can become obsessed with the score, and with winning, in two very different places in our life. Sometimes we do it with games: we become entirely obsessed with victory in the terms specified by the game. Sometimes we do it in our real lives: we become entirely obsessed with success, as measured by the rankings and metrics of our technology's institutional environment. These two phenomena look superficially familiar, but they're spiritual opposites. At its best, game-playing is done for its own sake. It helps us find our way into a rich, brilliant, fulfilling activity. In game-playing, we choose our scoring systems because we like the actions they shape. At their worst, rankings are a tool for warping our values – for forcing us into hollow, empty activity, for the sake of somebody else's interests. Real play is the heart of a meaningful life; an obsession with rankings and metrics can rob our life of vivid meaning

30 NOVEMBER 2023 6:00 PM

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DAVIS, ROOM 209
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