

Christian Hesse

The Joys of Chess

Heroes, Battles & Brilliances

New In Chess 2011

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Foreword by Viswanathan Anand

Whether chess is chiefly a sport, an art or a science has been discussed since when the dinosaurs were still in town. The game, this much is agreed upon, contains richly diverse aspects from all three domains of human endeavour. The one which dominates momentarily and individually depends on the activity and the person involved. In tournament play, inevitably the sporting side of chess is most pronounced. But there are many other sides to it, such as the art of composing chess problems and scientific inquiry into endgames.

Chess as a sport is full of emotion. This is very noticeable in matches for the World Championship. They have an all-pervasive facet of tension. These matches are not about who is the best

player nor are they purely chess contests or searches for the truth. It is more fitting to compare them to an ambush. You need to foresee what your opponent will do. At the same time he is attempting this vice versa. You prepare surprises in an atmosphere of being aware that at any given stage, you might actually be the one being surprised. This combination creates a constant feedback loop in your thinking paths. These loops occur everywhere in chess and need to be kept in mind.

Not surprisingly then, chess offers a highly fertile arena for applied psychology. The match I played with Vladimir Kramnik in Bonn, 2008, may serve as an example. On my side, the decision to play 1.d4 also had a psychological com-



World Champion Viswanathan Anand and Christian Hesse after their game in Zurich on November 27, 2010

ponent. The queen pawn openings had been on my 'To do'-list for quite some time but in chess switching from e4 to d4 is akin to going to a different planet. There is a huge amount of work involved. Even if Kramnik anticipated the move when laying his groundwork, he still had to spend a large amount of time preparing for 1.e4. So my choice of opening move would at least invalidate a significant portion of his preparation. Coincidentally, it was a double-edged sword because Vladimir has had more experience with the resulting positions. But in the end the strategy worked since I was able to get more of my positions on the board.

This book seeks to reflect the richness and variety of chess as a game. It contains topics as diversified as a theory of chessic beauty, the geometry of the chessboard, heroes of defence, deaths at the board, and gamesmanship. The book bridges the gap between the world of chess and the rest of the world and

makes numerous connections such as to literature, arts, philosophy, mathematics, physics and other areas. It is a rich compendium of spectacular highlights and defining moments from chess history: fantastic moves, beautiful combinations, historic blunders, captivating stories, and all this embedded into a plenitude of quick-witted ideas and contemplations as food for thought.

It is a bedside book with about a hundred chapters of after-hours length. You can pick it up, read a bit, adjourn, and read some more later on. And you do not need to set up a chess board or start a chess program to enjoy it. It is at the same time a modern book of the 21st century as well as a romantic book full of positive passion for the game. It is a book in search of the unusual in chess that does not fit any template or previously set mould.

Viswanathan Anand
World Champion

Introduction

Chess forms part of the world's cultural heritage. Since it developed, the game has found its way into cultures all over the world. According to present-day estimations, some 200 million people in the world are active chess players. That is a considerable fanbase for what is fundamentally a purely cerebral activity which was deliberately invented by human beings. What can explain such popularity?

On one hand: games have always been fashionable. In the middle of the last century the human being as a thinker (*homo sapiens*) and as a doer (*homo faber*) were joined by the human being as a player of games: *homo ludens*. Since that time play has counted as one of the basic elements of what constitutes a human being and it has even played a role in the creation of culture. Some of the great cultural components of our society such as science, art, politics and others have developed from forms of behaviour associated with play.

On the other: chess is unique amongst games. It forms a self-contained model of life and the world in miniature. Although the area in which the game takes place is limited to only 64 squares and although the ways one can behave are limited by a small number of clear and transparent rules, it is complex in a way which borders on the marvellous and operates on so many levels that it can be said to mirror in symbolic form the basic facets of human existence. Chess is an intellectual martial art and at the same time a sounding

board for aesthetics, passion and intellectual heroism, a whole realm of ideas, emotions and flights of fancy, and also unique insights, mental stimulation of both the left and right hemispheres of the brain, joint creativity and wonderful harmony between logical and paradoxical elements.

One important facet of chess culture is chess literature. Many chess lovers are also lovers of chess books. Far and away most of the chess books which are published nowadays are conceived and sought for as fundamentally contributions to theory: this includes numerous major and minor works on the theory of the opening, the middlegame and the endgame. These are books which need to be approached in a seriously studious manner. What is recognised as under-represented on the other hand is the whole field of *belles lettres* or chess literature. By that I mean books which can be read and enjoyed in a purely intellectual fashion, without setting up a board or loading a computer program. The sort of reading one needs for a few minutes before falling asleep or after waking up at the weekend.

The book in front of you thus presents a varied chess show: memorable games, original problems, puzzling studies, all in all a plethora of subtle manoeuvres, magical positions and unimaginable disasters. These intellectual chess adventures which lie between battle and art involve a link between things to reflect on and aphorisms, anecdotes and the odd atmospheric moment from the life of chess and from life itself.

All this is tightly packed into independently readable episodes. Free-floating variations on the chess theme, illustrated with a wealth of diagrams to make life easy, all put together in a loose sequence with no intentionally prescribed order.

It has become a very personal book which also has some unusual facets such as can be found associated with the royal game. Despite their variety, all the contents have one thing in common: they all deal with matters which I personally have found interesting. A chess lover for many years, it was my intention to write the sort of book I would like to read myself, a book that, as well as anything else, would demonstrate the mysterious power of attraction exercised by chess and thus help to clarify exactly why people play chess.

The seeds of this book were sown in my brain a good three decades ago. But the main work of turning them into reality stretched out over the last five years alongside my professional duties in countless little windows of free time. Numerous contacts with chess lovers and others have left their mark on the book either directly or indirectly. At this point I would like to express my thanks to all those people and institutions who have contributed in whatever form to its production, namely John Beasley, Graham Clayton, International Master Mark Dvoretzky, Harrie Grondijs, Carsten Hensel, François Labelle, Grandmaster Jon Levitt, Grandmaster Oscar Panno, John Rice, Vlad Sasu, Gerd Wilts and chess archives and archivists all over the world.

In addition, my special thanks are due to:

- Vladimir Kramnik, reigning chess World Champion, for pleasant exchanges of views about chess and other matters as well as for being prepared to contribute a preface.
- Ugo Dossi, a modern artist, for his friendship and for the superb artwork on the title page.
- Grandmaster Christopher Lutz for a truly masterful editing of the book in manuscript form.
- Grandmaster Lothar Schmid for his wonderful hospitality, stimulating conversations and the possibility to make use of his extensive chess library for my final researches.
- Hosam Mahmoud and Bernd Sakulski, both friends and fellow chess lovers, for information, suggestions, pleasant experiences at the chessboard and in general.
- Ulrich Dirr, graphics artist and typographer, for his beautiful and aesthetically pleasing organisation of the rough copy.
- the Chessgate Publishing House and those who work in it for accepting the book in their catalogue and their ever pleasant cooperation.



My greatest and most heartfelt thanks must go as ever to my family, Andrea Römmele, Hanna Hesse and Lennard Hesse, for all their support. It is to them that this book is dedicated.

Mannheim, 17th October 2006
Christian Hesse

History repeats itself

History is the science of things which do not repeat themselves.

Paul Valéry

History may not repeat itself, but it does rhyme a lot.

Mark Twain

Everything is new that is well forgotten.

Viktor Kortchnoi

The number of possible positions on the chessboard exceeds the number of atoms in the universe by a wide margin. For that reason games of chess are unique events. This makes it all the more amazing that even in the endgame or deep into the middlegame there are games in which identical positions can be found.

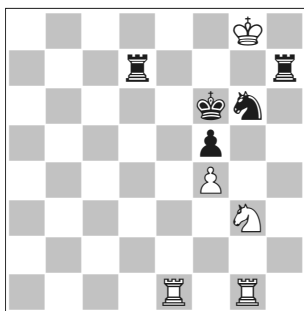
□ Jorgensen

■ Sorensen

Stockholm 1945



35



Though his king is helpless, like in a *mansuba*, White can save himself with a mate in three moves: **1.♘h5+ ♖xh5**

2.♖xg6+ ♔xg6 3.♗e6# There is nothing extraordinary about that. What is extraordinary, though, is that exactly the same position and exactly the same mating attack had already occurred in an old Arabic manuscript of al-Adli ar-Rumi, in his *Kitab ash-Shatranj* (The book of *shatranj*) of 842. The manuscript is no longer extant, but it has been quoted from by many other authors with the result that parts of its contents have been saved.

The chess master al-Adli with the nickname ar-Rumi lived approximately from 800 to 870, partly in Baghdad, and around 840 he was the dominant player. His book is regarded today as the first general work on chess (*shatranj*). The contents include chess history, openings, endgames and some hundred *mansubas*. He also undertook to grade chess players into 5 categories and classified openings according to *tabiyas*. In 847 in the presence of the Calif al-Mutawakkil, al-Adli lost a match, a sort of world championship, to ar-Razi, whom we already met in the chapter 'Some history'.

Provocation

For the researcher into creativity, Edward de Bono, the concept of provocation is one of the fundamental pillars of his methodology, the purpose of which is to effectively unleash the creative urges. His technique of directed provocation is based on the idea of leading our thinking out of its usual channels and ideally bringing about a state of instability in which our usual vision of things breaks down. This is the way to stimulate thoughts which cannot be arrived at in conventional ways.

One formalised recipe for actively bringing about provocation is the principle of reversal, by which the opposite of that which is generally expected, normal, conforming to all the rules or probable is intellectually considered. A provocation technique implemented along such lines does not always lead to usable ideas of course, but when it does they are usually extremely original on account of the fact that they go against known rules.

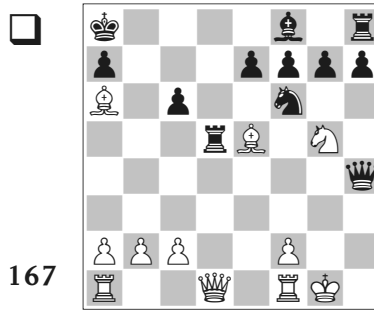
The method for the creative generation of ideas which I have just described can naturally also be useful when looking for moves in chess. The person who is provoked in such a calculated way usually experiences irritation, because he has been confronted with something which steps outside a border in his subconscious. In retrospect it is easy to imagine how in all the examples in this chapter the technique of provocation could lead to markedly provoking key moves.

Provocation is a principle of liveness.

M. Piccoli

□ **Rossolimo**
 ■ **Livingstone**

New York 1961



Position after 17...♔a8

We have here a very complex position, with attacking opportunities, several pieces hanging, insecurely positioned kings and an uneven distribution of material. The position is also hard for chess programs to understand. Into this wild mêlée there now comes a move which has been listed by chess journalist Tim Krabbé in his top dozen of the most fantastic moves ever played: **18.c4!!!** A splendid piece of provocation, trying to tempt Black into capturing the queen and – insofar as he can avoid doing so – into being prepared for all other counter moves. It is astonishing to see how much ingenuity and wit can develop over the board.

The force of this move is based on the vulnerable position of the black king and the possibility of cleverly setting up an attack against it. There could follow: 18...♖xd1 19.♗fxd1 ♔xg5+ 20.♕g3 ♘d5 21.cxd5

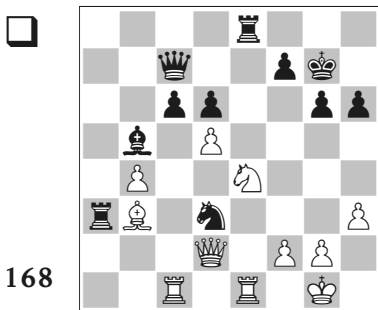
e5 22.dxc6 ♖c5 23.♗f1 ♘b6 24.♞d7 h5 25.c7 h4 26.♙xe5 ♜xe5 27.♞c1 ♞c8 with a position evaluated as level by *Shredder* and complicated chances for both sides. Essentially Black and White start by following this strategy. 18...♜xg5+ 19.♙g3 ♞xd1 20.♞axd1 ♘d5 21.cxd5 c5 22.b4 c4 23.♞d4 e5 But here Black unwisely moved his e-pawn forward and White reached his goal by move 28. 24.dxe6.e.p. ♙xb4 25.♞d7 ♞b8 26.♞fd1 ♙e7 27.exf7 c3 28.f8♜ and Black laid down his arms. Not a moment too soon, because after 28...♙xf8 29.♙b7+! ♞xb7 30.♞d8+ etc. he is mated. 1-0



In the next example, the apparently wayward tiger-like leap by a knight brings out practically without any preparation just how unstable the position is.

□ Timman
 ■ Kasparov

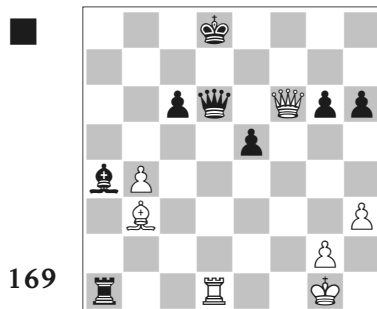
Hilversum 1985



Position after 31...♞a3

Timman played 32.♞f6!! and the cat was out of the bag. A mischievous piece of provocation and at the same time a great temptation for the black king to leave the protection of his pawns for a minute. 32...♞xe1+ 33.♞xe1 ♗xf6

Kasparov helps himself to the knight and accepts Timman's challenge. Who will end up with the upper hand in the clash of opinions brought about by the knight move? 34.♜c3+ ♘e5 35.f4 ♙a4 But 35...♗g7 36.fxe5 dxe5 37.♜b2 with approximate equality was preferable. 36.fxe5+ dxe5 37.d6! ♜xd6 38.♜f3+! ♗e7 38...♗g5 39.h4+ ♗xh4 40.♞e4+ ♗g5 41.♞g4+ ♗h5 42.♜h3#. 39.♜xf7+ ♗d8 40.♞d1 ♞a1 41.♜f6+ 1-0, and Timman had proved himself right. A high-grade interdependent final position, which one really needs to let sink in visually.



Final position

The black monarch is in check from the white queen, which is directly attacked by the black queen, which is pinned against its own king by the white rook, which in turn is pinned against its own king by the black rook, which is defending a black bishop, which is attacking a white bishop and pinning it against its rook. And all the pieces suffer from exhaustion. A promising candidate for the optically most intricate game ending of all time.

And to finish, a few more exhibition pieces around this theme from the realm of the chess problem. The first one is a famous three-mover by Lev Loshinsky. With him we are on the stage of really great chess problems. This is a fine construction for chess connoisseurs.

Vengeful chess: the spite check

Revenge is healthy. It makes one free,
it heals the pain of the soul.

C. *Riesen: Das Schwarzbuch der Rache*
(The black book of revenge)

A little revenge is more human than no
revenge at all.

F. *Nietzsche: Also sprach Zarathustra*
(Thus spoke Zarathustra)

Being a war game, chess produces during an encounter – but also before and after – a whole range of different emotions. When, after hours of struggle accompanied by an ever-changing stream of feelings, we finally see approaching doom over the board, there is sometimes a slight temptation to bend our opponent to our will, even if only for a short time and without any real hope of changing matters. A final, though superfluous, check which acts as outlet for our frustration and a little bit of vengeance can lessen our despair at the capitulation which is fast approaching.

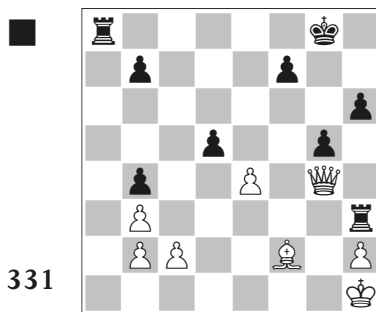
In many a great chess player, there is a tendency to petty revenge-seeking. The spite check, by definition, is a check to your opponent when your own situation is hopeless; it has no realistic prospect of success and usually immediately precedes resignation.

The British grandmaster and several times World Championship arbiter Harry Golombek (1911-1995) once described the last move by Black in the game which follows as the realisation of a spite check in its purest form:

☐ **Phillips**

■ **Fazekas**

Ilford 1955



Position after 35. ♖g4

Black is about to lose his rook and in fact his situation is quite irrevocably lost, or as they now say even in German *FUBAR*, which I recently saw defined in the dictionary of abbreviations for advanced learners as: 'Fouled Up Beyond All Repair'. Fazekas still found some pleasure in 35... ♜a1+, and took delivery of the reply 36. ♕g2, before giving up on the game.



Spite checks can be seen at all levels of play, even at the exalted heights of grandmasters:

Attacks – at all times and on all sides

Even a tiny amount of force can by
persistence overcome hard resistance.
*after Choirilos of Samos: Poem about
the Persian wars, approx. 450 BC.*

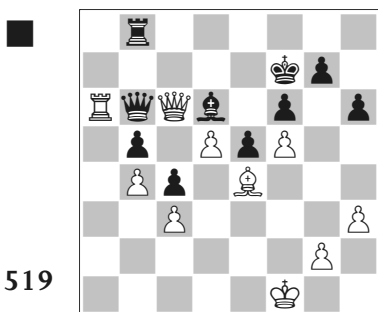
The principle of continuously attacking the king – perpetual check – is a well-known route to a draw. It consists of checking the opposing king every time it moves. This turns it into a special case for a draw either by repetition of position or under the fifty move rule. If an opportunity for perpetual check should arise, it is seized by the player who considers his position to be the worse and wants to end the game at least with a draw.

The best-known opportunity for perpetual check is to be found in a position from the *Man versus Machine* match, which Kasparov played against the supercomputer *Deep Blue*.

□ **Deep Blue**

■ **Kasparov**

Game 2, *Man versus Machine*, New York 1997



Position after 45.♖a6

Kasparov had been completely outplayed in this, the second game. The commenta-

tors and analysts praised the computer's deep positional moves, à la Karpov, as it scorned to win material but continually strengthened its position. Demoralised, Kasparov finally resigned in position **519**. This defeat also foreshadowed his defeat in the match as a whole. The world of chess was shocked. For the first time, a reigning World Champion had lost a whole match to a computer under tournament conditions. Some journalists compared the event to the landing of the first men on the moon or the invention of printing by Gutenberg.

At first no one doubted that Kasparov's decision to resign in position **519** was the correct one. But it did not take long for the game to be exhaustively analysed in the internet community. Then came the surprise. Kasparov's resignation had taken place in a drawn position. After 45...♙e3 46.♚xd6 ♜e8! 47.h4! (White opens up a flight square for his king) 47...h5!! (not 47...♞e7? 48.♙f3 ♚c1+ 49.♜f2 ♚d2+ 50.♜g3 ♚e1+ 51.♜g4 h5+ 52.♜xh5 ♚g3 53.♚e6+! ♞xe6 54.dxe6+ ♜g8 55.♞a8+ ♜h7 56.♞h8+! ♜xh8 57.e7 ♜h7 58.e8♚ e4 59.♚g6+, and White wins) 48.♙f3 ♚c1+ 49.♜f2 ♚d2+ 50.♙e2 ♚f4+ 51.♜g1 ♚e3+ 52.♜h2 ♚f4+ 53.♜h3 ♚xf5+ there occurs a flawless perpetual check.

Kasparov's seconds, Grandmaster Yury Dokhoian and computer expert Frederic Friedel, now had a tricky problem on