

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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The Universal Game of Chess



Dear Friends:

We are indebted to Thomas Huxley for the following quotation, which seems sufficiently important to be given thoughtful attention. He compares man's dangerous journey in this world to a game of chess as follows:

"Suppose it were perfectly certain that the life and fortune of every one of us would, one day or other, depend upon his winning or losing a game at chess. Don't you think that we should all consider it a primary duty to learn at least the names and moves of the pieces: to have a notion of gambit, and a keen eye for all the means of giving and getting out of check? Do you not think that we should look, with a disapprobation amounting to scorn, upon the father who allowed his son, or the state which allowed its members, to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight?

"Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know to our cost that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong show delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated--without haste but without remorse."

It would appear to be quite reasonable that those who give their lives to the advancement of scientific knowledge should come to the same general conclusion as those of Huxley. If exact sciences exist in this world, we must assume that as individuals we cannot avoid the implications. Even the thoughtful layman is aware that the law of cause and effect operates in human

affairs. If there is a master plan directing human conduct, the search for this plan must be the first labor of learning. There is much to know, but education should teach first things first. In the last twenty-five years we have become increasingly conscious of our place in a well-ordered universe. We are also beginning to learn that as individuals, very few of us are leading well-ordered lives. The individual has long considered himself to be a unique creature with the right to live as he pleases, regardless of consequences. Around this concept he has created philosophies, sociologies, and patterns of ambitions which have little or no foundation in realities, truths or facts. Considering himself to be "lord of all he surveys," he has tried vainly to transform his environment to justify his personal ambitions. As a result he now exists in an age of anxieties, and is renewing his search for those very securities which he has rejected for centuries.

To justify his conduct the human being assembled an intricate structure of materialistic speculations. He has tried to prove that wealth brings security, and that industrial expansion is progress. Religion has become a passive allegiance to theological doctrines, and many faiths have become party to such attitudes. The Divine Universe revealed to mankind by the great teachers of the past has faded away, leaving only an infinite expanse of physical space which will ultimately be conquered by ingeniously devised rockets. Most of us have been infected to some degree by science fiction which makes our daily lives more interesting, but not necessarily more meaningful. It would seem that the native intelligence with which we have been endowed should inspire us to explore the infinite potential within ourselves.

Huxley is also credited with another oft-quoted remark to the effect that we must admit individual and collective ignorance until we can define and understand, clearly and exactly, the natures of consciousness, intelligence, and force. To live constantly in association with these universal principles without striving earnestly to fathom their mysteries is a serious mistake. Some have assumed that the mind of man is incapable of dealing with these imponderables, and that we must all be satisfied with a kind of relative knowledge relating to secondary considerations. It is the proper end of relative knowledge to reveal symbolically those divine principles from which it is suspended. Creation is a continual revelation of cosmic purposes, demanding more and more insight if survival is to be assured.

The chess player is matching his skill against another, more proficient than himself. One of the basic rules of chess is that one should never select an adversary whom he can easily defeat. If he does so, his own game will deteriorate. It is not wise to imagine that in the game of life the other player is inadequate. In the larger sense we have had a tendency to downgrade universal law. It is exact when exactitude serves our purpose and riddled with exceptions when exactitudes are inconvenient.

Chess is probably the most scientific of all games. To cheat at chess is practically impossible, and every move must be made with all possible thoughtfulness. The game may be lost in the first ten moves, but may linger on for two hundred while the player is attempting to overcome the consequences of his own mistakes. Haste is almost always fatal, and championship games can last for several days. The skillful player must anticipate the long range intentions of his adversary and at the same time develop his own strategy with scientific care. The mogul emperors of India had courtyards laid out like a

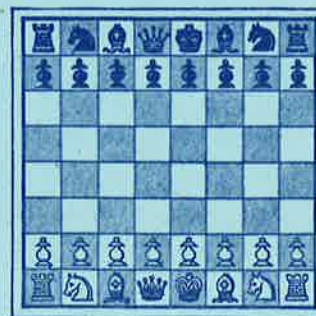
chessboard, and the various pieces were actual persons who moved about according to the commands of the two players. Generally considered a game of war, chess is actually a game of strategy based upon ancient cosmological and metaphysical concepts. It is interesting that the Queen is the most important piece, whereas the King is permitted only most limited moves. There are magnificent old jade and ivory chess sets for the use of Chinese nobility and the game took on Taoist and Confucian moralisms. Wherever the game was played, it was regarded as a valuable mental exercise, demanding intense concentration.

These aspects have contributed to the high esteem in which chess is held, also reminding the players of the immutable processes of nature and the equally precise functioning of the disciplined human mind. The present generation is suffering from the consequences of short range thinking. The good chess player never loses sight of the grand strategy of his game. He plans for the future, using every means at his disposal to thwart the obstacles set up by his opponent. The course of life never runs smoothly and just when it seems that we are attaining our goal, the King is checked or mated. The King may be likened to reason and the Queen to intuition which has no restrictions upon its movements. The Bishop is religion, and the Knight, science, with its erratic but extremely powerful pattern of moves. The Castle is the physical body and the mortal environment in which man exists. The Pawns are the eight powers of the soul providing the Soldiers, whose first duty is to protect the integrity of the King. Books have been written on the philosophy of chess which is truly the game of life.

The possibility of winning a game of chess accidentally is practically nil, and as Huxley points out, this is equally true in man's relationship with the larger universe to which he belongs. It is now becoming obvious that physical survival has its rules and these must be mastered first before the game can be won. The prevailing stalemate in mortal affairs reveals an almost universal ignorance and a more or less resolute determination to perpetuate this ignorance at all costs. The invisible player is really our best friend, and every move that he makes invites us to strengthen our own position. It is useless to become angry and sweep the chessmen from the board, and it is even more unrealistic to assume that the opponent is dishonest. The real purpose of the game is that we shall become truly self-sufficient and able to adjust wisely and graciously with the eternal plan for our salvation. No one can be made a good chess player by an act of congress or by miraculous intercession. These contrivances have no meaning. Francis Bacon summed up our bounden duty: "Keep the rules and live, break the rules and perish." Any good chess player accepts Lord Bacon's dictum, and it would be most helpful if this became a guiding light for us all in the years that lie ahead.

Always most sincerely,

Mary P. Hill



The following list of books is recommended reading. These books may be ordered from The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. (address on page one). Please add 35¢ for handling. California residents, include sales tax. Note: Prices subject to change without notice.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Chinese Astrology	Paul Carus (p)	\$ 2.95
The Choice Is Always Ours	Dorothy Phillips, Ed. (p)	1.95
The Cosmic Womb	Arthur W. Osborn (p)	2.25
Color & Music in the New Age	Corrine Heline (p)	1.00
Cosmic Humanism & World Unity	Oliver L. Reiser	14.50
Classics in Chinese Philosophy	Wade Baskin (p)	4.95
The Chinese Pulse Diagnosis	Dr. Shui Wan Wu (p)	3.50
Christ, the Avatar of Sacrificial Love	H. Saraydarian (p)	5.00
Dayspring of Youth	"M"	8.50
Death & Rebirth of Psychology	Ira Progoff	4.00
Depth Psychology & Modern Man	Ira Progoff	6.50
Depth Psychology & A New Ethic	Eric Neumann	7.00
Development of Personality (#17)	Carl G. Jung	6.00
Did Jesus Live 100 B.C. ?	G.R.S. Mead	10.00
Distilled Wisdom	A. Montaport	5.00
The Divining Rod	Barrett & Besterman	7.50
Dweller on Two Planets	Phylos (p)	2.95
The Diamond Sutra & the Sutra of Hui Neng	A. F. Price & Wong Mou-Lam (Trans.) (p)	2.95
A Dictionary of Pagan Religions	Weddeck & Baskin	10.00
The Divine Proportion, A Mathematical Study in Beauty	H.E. Huntley (p)	2.50
Dictionary of Astrology	James Wilson	12.95

BOOKS BY MANLY P. HALL

Story of Astrology	\$ 5.00	The Guru	\$ 5.50
Dionysian Artificers	5.50	Pathways of Philosophy	6.50
Words to the Wise	6.50	Self-Unfoldment	6.50
Journey in Truth	6.50	Way of Heaven	5.00

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