

**The Imparable Logic
and Psychology
in Chess**

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The Imparable Logic and Psychology in Chess

Borojclub Zlatanovic

Thinkers Publishing 2024



To my son Vasilije

Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
☉	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
≈	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
△	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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Preface

Much has been written in chess about specific openings, players and tournaments. From experience, those are not easy books to write (because you need to be analytically laser-sharp), but at least you know what you're signing up for. By contrast, books like the one you currently hold might be laxer on the minutiae, but as a whole can be harder to conceive and transform into finished reality. While not requiring using cloud engines on depth-56 to find a novelty, they are instead (so to speak) "painted with a broader brush".

Two examples of what I mean are Vukovic's *The Art of Attack in Chess* and the famous classic, Nimzowitsch's *My System*. In each, the author is a professional who brings across nothing more nor less than their philosophy of how the game should be played, and the degree of emotional energy they pour into it manifests in a work that rightly reflects the status of our game, not merely as an academic endeavor but as a cultural one. The current book is a fitting, if not overdue, addition to that genre.

As a cultural phenomenon, chess exists somewhere on the spectrum between natural philosophy (by which I mean science in its traditional form) and fine art. Viewed statically from the outside, it combines elements of both. Viewed dynamically from the inside, that same ambiguity which the game of chess straddles can be viewed as being that between logic and psychology.

On the one hand, the classical game of chess is a brutal arena of intense psychological competition, where human beings sit opposite each other and test whose brain is better using a set of weighted pieces and an oddly patterned square game board. Having a more resilient brain clearly helps in this context; you want one which does not dwell on the past and which remains alert to possibilities, processing both sides' options with roughly equal weight despite the wishes of the ego and the visual reinforcement that the ego gets from seeing the board 'your way up'.

On the other hand, the game is supremely logical. We have, as a collective, been obsessed with codifying the 'right' way to play chess; partly this stems from an actual desire to be better at it, and partly (I think) from a wish to use the codes thus established as scapegoats, should our own brains prove inadequate in the heat of battle. From the time of Dr. Tarrasch, through the aforementioned *System* of

Nimzowitsch and the pedagogical structure of Botvinnik and Petrosian, and into our present-day use of Stockfish and AlphaZero as oracles, the scientific, almost mathematical study of chess has proceeded at pace with the increase in competitive capacity of its gladiators.

It goes without saying that a successful player these days should have a gameplan which doesn't reside fully in the logical camp (think: "I'll always play the same opening, because the engine says it's the best") nor fully in the psychological one (think: "I'll play occasional random moves while staring at the stars, to throw the opponent off!".) It's important to develop an understanding of how those two elements interact.

This can be done, as in my case, by tedious and oftentimes painful tournament practice. It can also be done, potentially, by the right textbook. Such a textbook is not something a young upstart such as myself should write, and it's also a task best suited for either a professional coach or ex-professional player.

Boroljub being a professional coach, I was eager to see what he made of the subject matter and I am happy to say he did not disappoint. He picks apart the way the greats (as well as more approachable mere mortals) apply the diverse range of areas in their brains, and not just the bean-counting parts!

Speaking of beans, the author's native Serbia, where I've also been many times, has a deep-rooted and profound coffee culture. It is through this that I first made the acquaintance of Boroljub; in such towns as Ruma, Paracin, and Novi Sad where we have found ourselves concurrently, the long mornings before classical chess games very much lent themselves to intellectual discourse and an espresso or two while our opponents drive themselves to distraction preparing for us. The things we discussed included history, language, and of course writing.

His conversational style, like his chess style, is passionate and decisive, and I believe this comes across in his work as well. I urge you to see this book as not just one among many, but as a labor of love from a lover of the game. I wish all the readers success, enrichment, and above all, enjoyment.

GM Daniel Fernandez, May 2024.

Introduction

We live in era of computers (unfortunately!) and we are simply forced to use them often and widely. Chess is no exclusion – it is impossible even to imagine modern chess without computers, engines, databases, online platforms, etc. Modern generations have their first connection with chess through computers, not books, and that is wrong of course! Young players prefer to memorize than to understand; they follow some fashionable line even if they do not know what is going on! That motivated me to write this book – **logic** must be included in the process of chess education! Moreover, **logic must** be the most important part of that education process. Youngsters often neglect **logic** and not surprisingly they get surprised when their “well-remembered” variation doesn’t work. Experienced players often lead the game out of theory, to places where understanding will prevail over memory and energy. That is my favorite concept against youngsters – setting static situations on the board – because young players usually go for dynamics, because they are good at calculating and memorizing. Understanding and **logic** are everything you need with statics on the board.

But there are many more logical aspects to highlight. A chess game is full of decision-making moments and there are many methods you should use to find solutions. I will present a wide spectrum of ideas that will help you to decide. Of course, every game is different and various factors can and should be considered in the process: standings, emotions, zeitnot (time-trouble), opponent’s character, tiredness... evidently, **psychology** also plays a significant role in the decision-making process. That is why I decided whenever possible to highlight moments from real chess struggles to help you decide under this or that pressure.

I do not want to act as an expert here. So, this book is not written by a *medical expert*. It is written by an *experienced player and coach* who many times felt this or that pressure, faced this or that problem, and had to make a decision. So, the book is not based on *medical advice*. This is a collection of practical advice related to common dilemmas and problems in a chess game. I want to help you to feel relaxed and well equipped in similar situations. If you know what is going on and what to do, you will easily maneuver through “the bushes of logical and psychological problems” and find an escape that will affect the final result – in your favour! I am sure that this book will broaden your horizons, make you calm and confident, and greatly help you to perform better.

You can provide ideas, suggestions and feedback to: borzlat@gmail.com.

Enjoy and welcome!

Borojlob Zlatanovic, Serbia 2024



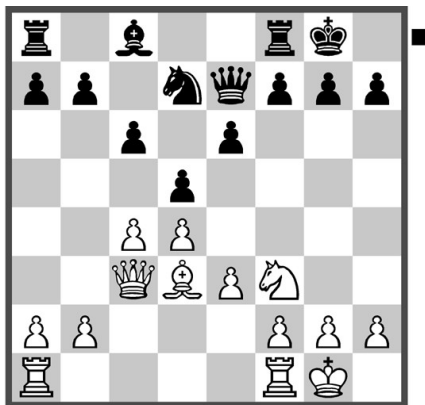
Planless Play

It is clear that every move must be part of some plan. Advanced end experienced players may more easily build longer plans, but still, that does not mean much. Sometimes it is important to base play on shorter plans. Sometimes it is important to focus on your opponent's plans. But how long should plans be? How often should we switch plans? And finally, how should we punish planless play? Sometimes mixing up various plans may look like planless play. All these answers and many other things will be explained in this chapter.



Game I

♙ Alekhine, Alexander
 ♚ Maroczy, Geza
 🌐 Karlsbad 1923



It is a well-known fact that every move must be part of some plan. Also, well known is the advice: "It is better to follow a bad plan than no plan." Here I will try to highlight various failures: playing without a plan, with a bad plan, and – also a very important and common

mistake – switching plans too quickly without gaining anything. Our f example is a famous diagram from a famous game... and Black played a famous move.

11... f5?!

Let's suppose Black wanted to prevent e4 and maybe to install a knight on e4. Then the move ...f5 would not be automatically bad, but Maroczy connected it with a very bad idea.

11... dxc4! 12. ♗xc4 b6 is a simple way to activate the bishop and strike at White's center with ...c5 or ...e5, after placing rooks on c8 and d8 respectively.

12. ♖ac1 g5?

This is already a huge mistake. The center is not secured so a flank attack

shouldn't work. Weakening the king's position is fatal. There is nothing Black can gain, as White can easily meet any attempt at attack.

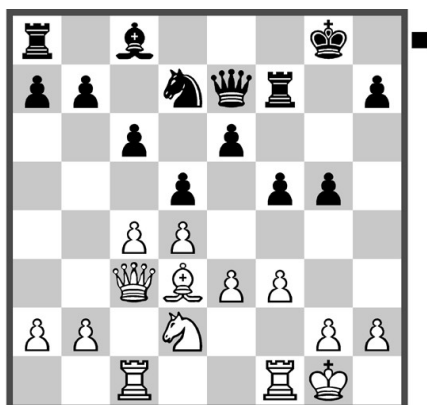
13. ♞d2!

White voluntarily removes the knight and prepares a counterstrike in the center with f3 and e4. Meeting a flank attack with a counter in the center is a classical strategy.

13... ♖f7

We can consider this as a solid, multi-purpose move. Still, the move barely fits with Black's pawn moves.

14. f3



Position after: 14. f3

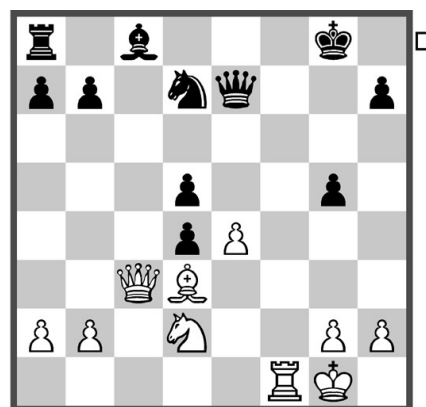
14... e5??

Suicide. Black opens the center and opens doors for White to invade and attack the black king. The previous moves might make sense with a closed center, but it is nonsense to open it.

15. cxd5 cxd5 16. e4

White could well say "thanks" to his opponent at this point.

16... ♜f1 17. ♜f1 ♜xf1+ 18. ♜xf1 exd4



Position after: 18... exd4

19. ♚c7!

Invading, and locking down Black's entire army.

19. ♚xd4? would be a mistake. 19... ♚c5 20. ♚xc5 ♞xc5 21. ♚c2 ♞xe4 22. ♞xe4 dxe4 23. ♚xe4 ♚e6 would lead to inevitable draw.

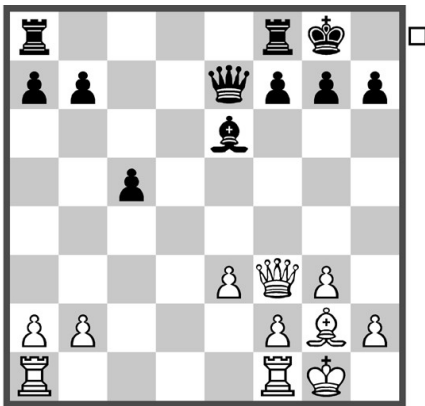
19... ♚g7 20. ♖f5 dxe4 21. ♞xe4 ♚b4 22. ♖xg5+

Black resigned

1-0

Game 2

♁ Marshall, Frank James
 ♚ Capablanca, Jose Raul
 🌐 New York 1909



Another famous diagram. White, to move, should clearly occupy the open file or do something to launch his majority. But Marshall made an epic mistake.

16. ♖fc1?

White cannot stop Black's majority.

A) 16. ♙xb7? ♙xb7 17. ♕xb7 ♖ab8 with a much better position for Black.

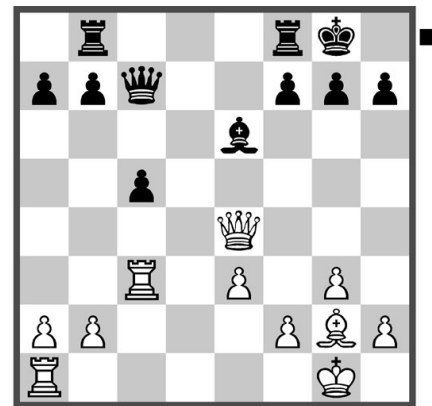
B) 16. e4 is the most consistent continuation. The idea is to launch his majority, pushing the e- and f- pawns after ♙e3.

16... ♖ab8 17. ♙e4

This move was played with the primitive idea of 18. ♗h3. Never go for one-move threats if they are not part of some good plan.

17. e4 again was a better option.

17... ♙c7 18. ♖c3?



Position after: 18. ♖c3?

Marshall fails again. Doubling White's rook on the c-file only hits a wall.

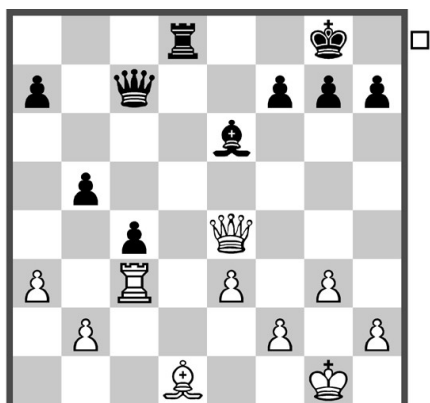
18. f4 was better, taking the last good moment to launch the majority.

18... b5! 19. a3 c4 20. ♗f3

Having no good moves available, you go for bad ones.

20. ♖d1 trying to find some counterplay on the open file was logical.

20... ♖fd8 21. ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 22. ♕xd1 ♖d8



Position after: 22... Rxd8

The game is strategically over. It is clear White cannot stop the majority, while any activity on the other side is simply missing.

23. Qf3 g6 24. Kc6 Ke5!

Of course, Black centralizes his queen, keeping b5-pawn protected. At the same time, there are threats to the b2- and c3-pawns.

25. Ke4 Ke4

Now Black allows the exchange as the b5-pawn is not under attack.

26. Qxe4 Rd1+?

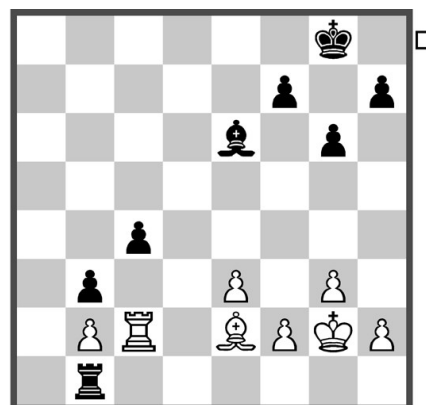
Perhaps played automatically to prevent Qf1 with centralization.

But 26... Qh3 was a much better choice. 27. Rc1 [27. f4 Rd1+ 28. Qf2 Rd2+–+] 27... Rd2 wins much quicker.

27. Kg2 a5 28. Rc2 b4 29. axb4 axb4

White's position is hopeless.

30. Qf3 Rb1 31. Qe2 b3!



Position after: 31... b3!

32. Rd2

32. Rc3 Rxb2 33. Qxc4 Rb2–+

32... Rc1 33. Qd1 c3

Creating a passed pawn. The game is effectively over – there are just technical issues to convert the endgame with the extra bishop.

34. bxc3 b2 35. Rxb2 Rxd1–+ 36. Rc2 Qf5 37. Rb2 Rc1 38. Rb3 Qe4+ 39. Kh3

If 39. f3 Rb2+

39... Rc2 40. f4 h5

With the idea of playing directly for mate.

41. g4 hxg4+ 42. Qxg4 Rb2 43. Rb4 f5+ 44. Kg3

44. ♔g5 ♕g7

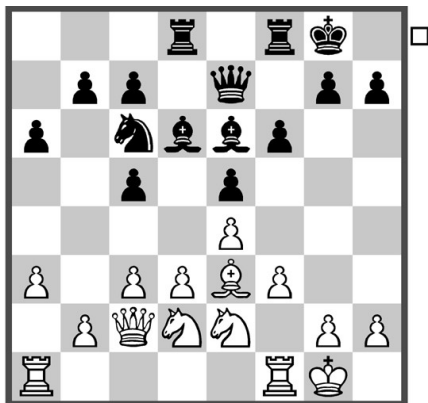
44... ♖e2 45. ♖c4 ♖xe3+ 46. ♔h4
♕g7 47. ♖c7+ ♔f6 48. ♖d7 ♘g2 49.
♖d6+ ♔g7

White resigned, not waiting for mate. He had a bad plan of stopping Black's majority, but to spectators it looks like he had no plan at all.

0-1

Game 3

♟ Romanovsky, Peter
♞ Smorodsky, Andrey
♠ Moscow 1924



This middlegame is balanced. The bishop pair is not active enough and it is not clear if it can become active. It would be natural to play for ...c4 and/or ... f5, without allowing White to occupy key squares in the center. On the other hand, White is happy to wait; his unique chance to get active is to play b4.

15. b4 ♖d7 16. ♘b3

16. ♘c4 looks more natural because it prevents ...c4.

16... cxb4?!

This move helps White to realise his plan.

16... c4 is more logical: White will get the c5-square, but Black will get c4.

17. axb4 ♕f7 18. ♘ec1 ♖fd8

Black places his pieces in their best spots, but it is unclear what to do next.

19. ♖d1 h6?!

This move controls g5, perhaps with the idea of attacking with ... g5.

On the other hand, 19... f5 works surprisingly well. 20. exf5 [20. ♘g5? ♖f8 is better for Black: he will transfer play to the kingside and the g5-bishop will allow him to gain several tempi] 20... ♘xf5 21. ♘d2 ♘e7 22. ♘e4 ♘d5 leads to a complex position with mutual chances. White has a problem with the passive knight and Black's position looks preferable.

20. ♘c5

(see diagram next page)