

While everyone sang, "Shine on, shine on, harvest moon . . ." Should've. "I am *not* too young," should've said. "I am old enough to have babies and I will marry you. Here is my sun-tanned hand in holy wedlock." But he just went and never came back. "Maybe when we are older," I said, and he said, "Sure, when we are older." But he never came back, he never . . .

"Never came back," she sobbed aloud and then hugged the small form to her to hide her hot tears against its chubby throat. The music had stopped and presently she heard a voice beside her and felt an arm around her shoulder.

"What's wrong, Sheila? What can I do?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all, Hugh," she said. For Hugh was her husband's name.

She wiped her eyes and brushed her hair back so that his arm fell from her shoulder. He watched her until she handed the baby to him and said, "I'll go get dinner now." She waited until she was in the kitchen before she took that deep breath which one must take after crying.

He rocked the baby and kissed her fingers when she tried to stick them into the cave of his mouth. He sang to his Teresa as he rocked:

"Swing low, sweet chariot,

Daddy's come to carry you home . . ."

In the kitchen Sheila looked out at the maddening white barrenness of the snow, and pressed her teeth together until they ached.

## The Game of Chess

F. William Backemeyer

The persons of the dialogue: A Student, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, William Wordsworth, Titus Lucretius Carus

**S**TUDENT: Pardon me, Dr. Nietzsche, but if you're not especially busy just now, I would appreciate it if you could enlighten me on a subject that greatly interests me.

Nietzsche: What is it that's bothering you, young man?

Student: Well, sir, I'm quite a newcomer here in Heaven, having died of exhaustion during my junior year in college, but I've been hearing fascinating stories about a great game of chess that was once played between Lucretius and Wordsworth.

Nietzsche: Ah, yes, that was *quite* a game!

Student: Did you witness it personally, sir?

Nietzsche: Yes, I was fortunate enough to be the only spectator at that famous game.

Student: Would you do me the honor of relating the story to me?

Nietzsche: Certainly. I believe I can recall the events in approximately the order in which they occurred, but would you also

like to see the game itself?

Student: I surely would, since I understand that the game was just as interesting as the conversation held over it.

Nietzsche: That's quite true. Come, let us go down to the Heavenly Chess Club, where we can find a chess set. There, also, you can get the actual setting of the game.

Suppose I begin the story at the beginning. I had been tutoring my friend Lucretius in the fine points of the Royal Game for quite some time, and he had become a most excellent player. In fact, he had definitely reached the class of Wordsworth and myself, so I had been eagerly awaiting a chance for them to play each other. One day the chance presented itself.

Ah, here we are at the Club—and here is the very table at which they played!

As I was saying, one day Wordsworth was returning from his usual twilight ramble among the clouds when I interrupted his "bliss of solitude" with, "William, my friend, are you completely submerged in the 'still, sad music of humanity,' or could you be enticed to play a game of chess with my prize pupil here, Lucretius?"

"It would be a pleasure," said Wordsworth. "I have heard that your friend Lucretius has become a first-rate chessplayer, and have looked forward to the time when we might meet."

So I introduced the two, and they immediately sat down to play.<sup>1</sup> Lucretius, drawing the White pieces, opened with the Queen's Pawn: P-Q4. Wordsworth countered with the Indian Defence: 1 . . . . N-KB3; and the game proceeded along normal lines as follows:

2. P-QB4	P-K3	8. N-K5	P-B3
3. N-KB3	P-QN3	9. PxP	BPxP
4. P-KN3	B-N2	10. B-B4	P-QR3!
5. B-N2	B-K2	11. R-B1	P-QN4
6. N-B3	O-O	12. Q-N3	N-B3
7. O-O	P-Q4	13. NxN	....

Now the game had thus far been contested in complete silence, with both players obviously putting everything they had into the struggle. However, when Lucretius took the Knight on his thirteenth move, I commented that the move had been a good one, since Wordsworth's Knight had been headed for the strong outpost QB5. Lucretius nodded, but Wordsworth calmly said, "It was only a ghost—you've wasted two tempi merely to be rid of a ghost."

"We'll see," said Lucretius.

The ice had been broken. From that moment on a steady stream of conversation continued as the game progressed.

"It seems strange, Lucretius, that we've not met before," said Wordsworth. "You've been here in Heaven for quite some time

1. The moves of the game are those of the Immortal Zugzwang Game, Seamsch vs. Nimzovich, Copenhagen, 1923.



now, haven't you?"

"According to *your* measurements, yes," Lucretius answered, "but since I don't believe in after-life, I must simply be having a rather long dream!"

"Surely you're not serious?"

"Oh, by all means," said Lucretius. "You see,

For in very truth  
It cannot be we should suppose that linked  
With each and every frame there needs must dwell  
Nature of mind and reason's potency,  
E'en as no tree can in the skies abide,  
Nor clouds in ocean's brine, nor in the fields  
Can fishes have their home, nor blood reside  
In wood, nor sap in stones. Nay, 'tis ordained  
And stablished where each thing can have its place  
And prosper. So the nature of the mind  
Can ne'er apart from blood and sinews keep  
Its life."<sup>2</sup>

"But after being here so long a time . . ." said the astonished Wordsworth.

"So long? As far as I'm concerned, it's still a summer night during the plague at Athens. I believe you call it 55 B. C."

"And this is all just a dream to you?"

"Of course.

. . . images

It is that in our sleep at times are wont  
To trick our minds, when that we seem to view  
The form of one whom light of life hath left."<sup>3</sup>

Why is it that people can't understand that all creation: earth, sky, sea, stars, sun, living creatures, *and* the race of men have come into being, and must, by the same token, one day go out of being? They have been born, so they must also die. And why is it that man seems to think himself different from the rest of nature?

Nor in other wise  
Is seen our mortal state, save that we fall  
A common prey to those same ills as they  
Whom nature hath cut off from mortal life."<sup>4</sup>

"These are all very interesting hypotheses," replied Wordsworth, "but what proof can you give me for your statements?"

2. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, V, 122 ff.

3. *Ibid.*, V, 61 ff.

4. *Ibid.*, V, 346 ff.

"Well," said Lucretius, "I don't want to labor my points now, during such a fascinating chess game, but if you're really interested, I'm writing a poem, *De Rerum Natura*, which contains an ample supply of evidence for my beliefs."

"There's an unfinished copy of it in the Heavenly Library," I interjected.

Wordsworth looked at me as if to say, "Fool, you think I haven't read it?" But he only commented quietly that he would have to look it up sometime. He then continued, "Lucretius, what is your conception of how life on the earth began?"

"Ah, a fascinating problem, and one on which I love to contemplate. I am firmly convinced that all life came from the earth itself.

For ne'er could living beings  
Have fallen from heaven, nor beasts that roam the earth  
Have issued from the briny pools. With right  
It followeth then that earth hath won the name  
Of Mother, since from earth have all things sprung."<sup>5</sup>

"And just how did this process take place?" asked Wordsworth.

"First, then, the winged tribes and every breed  
Of flying fowl did leave their eggs, safe hatched  
By springlike warmth, as now, in summer's heat,  
Locusts will fain put off their polished shells  
In quest of life and living. Then it was  
That earth did first give birth to mortal beings.  
For all the fields did teem with gentle warmth  
And moisture. Hence, where there was at hand  
Appropriate place, there grew up wombs, attached  
By roots to earth; and when, at time fulfilled,  
The tiny creatures' growing age, in flight  
From moisture and in search of air, had burst  
Their prison, so would nature turn toward each  
The pores of earth, and from wide-opened veins  
Constrain them to exude a sap most like  
To milk, as even now, when she hath borne  
A child, each woman's breasts are filled forthwith  
With sweet new milk, since thitherward are turned  
All the rich humors of her nourishment.  
Earth gave these little ones their food, the warmth,  
A garment, and the soft thick-tufted grass  
A downy bed. But since the world was young,  
No bitter cold it roused, nor heat o'er fierce,  
Nor winds of violent might. For evenly  
Do all things wax and reach their full-grown strength."<sup>6</sup>

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5. *Ibid.*, V, 793 ff.

6. *Ibid.*, V, 805 ff.

"Very interesting! And did all of these new-born creatures survive?" asked Wordsworth.

Lucretius replied,

" . . . in those far-off days full many a race  
Of living things must needs have perished, nay,  
Nor aught of offspring could beget and thus  
Preserve its kind; for whatsoe'er we see  
To breathe the vital air of heaven, 'tis craft  
Or courage, yea, or fleetness that since first  
Their life began hath guarded and preserved  
Their several breeds."<sup>7</sup>

"Tell me, Lucretius, during your 'prolonged dream,' have you ever taken the opportunity of browsing in the Heavenly Library?"

"Yes, once in a while I rouse myself from my Garden, and, if I don't go to the Chess Club to play with my friend Friedrich, I usually go to the Library. But why do you ask?"

"Have you ever, while there, read any of the works of Charles Darwin?"

"Oh, yes. Great fellow, isn't he?"

"I suppose he is. But would you, Lucretius, consider yourself, as Darwin, a scientist?"

"I should like to think that I was."

"And, as a scientist, haven't you written that all the earth is controlled by natural laws?"

"Absolutely. That is one of my strongest beliefs. In fact, one of the purposes for the writing of my poem has been to

Set forth the laws whereby all things are framed,  
And how they needs must hold thereto, nor e'er  
Can break the ancient rock-bound laws that rule  
Their being."<sup>8</sup>

"I see," said Wordsworth. "And from your reading of Darwin, would you say that you agreed with his theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest? From what you have said, I would guess that you do."

"By all means,

. . . for many a requisite  
We see must be fulfilled in living things  
Ere they avail to propagate their kind  
By generation."<sup>9</sup>

As a matter of fact, I not only agree with Darwin's theory, but I

7. *Ibid.*, V, 854 ff.

8. *Ibid.*, V, 54 ff.

9. *Ibid.*, V, 849 ff.



think it is one of the most dynamic and immensely beautiful ideas I have ever known."

"I believe I share your enthusiasm, Lucretius. In fact, I would agree with Thomson, when he says that

. . . living creatures with a will to live, with an insurgent self-assertiveness, with a spirit of adventure, with an endeavor after well-being (it is impossible to exaggerate the personal aspect of the facts, even if the words which we use in our ignorance may be too metaphorical) do trade with time and have commerce with circumstance, as genuine agents, sharing in their own evolution. There is abundant room for sympathetic admiration of the tactics of Animate Nature, though the strategy may—and for science must—remain obscure."<sup>10</sup>

I would, however, my dear Lucretius, call your attention to the last sentence I have just quoted. For I believe that I have spied a grave contradiction in your reasoning: How can you, being a scientist believing in the absolute importance of natural laws, support the theory of natural selection, 'depending as it does purely on the laws of chance?' "<sup>11</sup>

Lucretius sat staring at the board for some minutes. I don't know whether he was thinking about Wordsworth's question or about the game, but finally he said, "Perhaps you're right, Wordsworth. Perhaps you're right."

Now by this time, the game had progressed to a very exciting stage. Wordsworth had severely cramped the men of Lucretius, and had deftly maneuvered his own forces so that they were poised for a King-side attack. The moves had been as follows:

13. ....	BxN	17. Q-Q1	P-N5!
14. P-KR3	Q-Q2	18. N-N1	B-QN4
15. K-R2	N-R4	19. R-N1	B-Q3
16. B-Q2	P-B4!	20. P-K4	BPxP!

With his twentieth move, Lucretius had hoped to free his game, but Wordsworth's surprising reply made the situation even more crucial.

"Good gosh, Luke," said I, "he's going to slaughter you if you don't start remembering what your teacher has taught you!"

"I wonder, Friedrich," he replied, smiling at me, "just which one of us has been the teacher, and which the pupil?"

"You have a point there," I said quietly, recalling my philosophical leanings since becoming acquainted with Lucretius.

He returned his thoughts to the game, and, after some considera-

10. Quoted in Lull, *Organic Evolution*, p. 130.

11. *Ibid.* (italics mine).

tion, captured the sacrificed Knight. The concluding conversation took place during the following moves, Lucretius being constantly on the defensive:

- |          |        |           |      |
|----------|--------|-----------|------|
| 21. QxN  | RxP    | 24. Q-K3  | B-Q5 |
| 22. Q-N5 | QR-KB1 | 25. QR-K1 | .... |
| 23. K-R1 | R/1-B4 |           |      |

Finally Lucretius said, "Though I am losing the game, I must admit, Wordsworth, that I am a little bit disappointed in your style of play!"

"I am sorry," replied Wordsworth. "How is it that you are disappointed?"

"Well, I have read some of your poetry, and have been impressed only with the shallow simplicity of it all. You write about nature, but with a syrup of moral sentiment that leaves out the immense forces of fierceness, destruction, and cruelty in nature. As I have said,

. . . the child, like sailor tossed ashore  
By cruel waves, when nature first hath cast  
Him forth by travail from his mother's womb  
Upon the coasts of light, naked doth lie  
Upon the ground, speechless and stript of all  
His life doth crave, and filleth all the place  
With woeful wailings, as is meet for one  
Whose life must pass through such a flood of ills.<sup>12</sup>

You, on the other hand, seem to prefer to speak of Skylarks and Butterflies and Daffodils! You miss entirely the great variety of nature and its dynamic aliveness, its immensity and grandeur. Why is the scope of your vision so limited?"

"Is it so limited?" answered Wordsworth. "True it is that I would rather write of Daffodils than Earthquakes, but does that mean that there is something wrong with my vision? Or is it *your* vision, my friend, that is lacking? Do you not understand Tennyson, when he says,

Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.<sup>13</sup>

Can you not see in the heart of a rose all the variety, aliveness, and immensity of nature made perfect?

12. Lucretius, *op. cit.*, V, 221 ff.

13. Tennyson, "Flower in the Crannied Wall."



You must excuse me, Lucretius, for this passionate defence of my poetry. However, I do not understand what all this has to do with the style of my chess-playing."

"Well, you see, Wordsworth, I had expected a style of subtle simplicity from you, which would have been in keeping with your poetic style. Instead, your play has contained those very elements that I find lacking in your poetry: immensity and fierceness! Rather than making delicate, quiet moves, you have been relentless in your aggression. This, then, is the contradiction which I have spied."

"I dare say," replied Wordsworth, "if you really understood my poetry, you could find no contradiction. Perhaps the light will shine a little more brightly when you see the way in which I intend to finish the game."

Lucretius had just played his twenty-fifth move. He sat back in his chair and waited for his opponent to make his reply. Wordsworth thought for a few moments, then raised his hand to touch the most insignificant piece on the board—the King's Rook's Pawn—which was standing passively and defensively in front of his King, and was still on its original square. He pushed the Pawn forward one square (25 . . . P-R3!!), looked across the table, and whispered, "Zugzwang!"<sup>14</sup>

Lucretius looked at the board in silence for a long while. Then he tipped over his King in Resignation.

Wordsworth said mildly, "Perhaps now you can see what I mean when I say,

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."<sup>15</sup>

## Magic With a Broadaxe

Edward B. Kennedy

**M**OST people look at a railroad track and see a warning signal, an elevated roadbed, or perhaps an oncoming train. A few persons are sufficiently concerned to observe the two parallel strips of steel which reach out into the distance and seem to point toward their destination. A few among the few may even marvel at the achievements of men who have been able to complete so vast a project with no visible bumps or dips for as many miles as the eye can reach. But rarely does anyone see the connecting links between

14. Literally: *the compulsion to move*. In chess, a person in Zugzwang can make no move without incurring immediate defeat; yet the rules state that he *must* move.

15. Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."