

MIND GAMES

Alexey Kylasov

Russian Sport Science Institute, Russia

Diego Garcés

Regional Library Valle del Cauca named for Jorge Garcés Borrero, Colombia

Keywords: backgammon, bridge, chess, cyber sport, draughts, gambling, go, IMSA, mind sports, poker.

Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Collective Intelligence (Methodology)
 3. Cultural Genesis of Mind Games
 4. The Problems of Institutionalization of Mind Games
 5. Mind Sports
 6. Conclusion
- Acknowledgment
Glossary
Bibliography
Biography Sketches

Summary

Today, the entire panoply of Mind Games has become subject to the phenomenon of sportization – the creation of contemporary vertically integrated public sporting institutions involved in the promotion of individual *games* as types of sport. The institutionalization of mind sports meets the ideological and propaganda needs of many nation-states; which use the outstanding achievements of their players in international tournaments to symbolically enhance the prestige for their nations. State regulation in the field of games of chance has likewise led to their institutionalization in the form of sporting competitions, which are in essence as alluring as gambling itself. The growth in the significance of mind games can be put down to the persistent fascination they have held throughout the entire history of mankind, and the opportunities for their evolution in the cyberspace of the post-human future.

1. Introduction

Today the term “Mind Games” is understood as a generalized name for all types of tabletop, logical games and computer games, including gambling – all types of games which are based on spatial perception and the search for solutions to abstract graphical constructions:

- ***figurative-geometrical constructions:*** *Dominoes, Rubik's Cube, Tic-tac-toe, Battleships, Puzzles, and the more common table games, in which professional*

players compete around the world (Chess, Draughts, Backgammon, Go), and Card Games (Bridge, Poker, Whist, Slope);

- **digital constructions:** *Bingo, Barley-break;*
- **word constructions:** *the game “City” and “Gallows”, crosswords.*

There are a number TV game shows based on Mind Games, such as America's “Wheel of Fortune” and Russia's popular quiz club show “What? Where? When?” Numerous Lottery draws could be also be included here.

The imagery of mind games is present in various kinds of human activity, where rapid spatial solutions, associated with manipulating shapes, have to be found instantly. In the modern world, the image of chess is frequently used in such cases. Thus, curling is often likened to “chess on ice”. Another example – coaches of sports such as football, hockey, basketball or rugby, often compare their tactical decision making and the positioning of a player during a match to being similar to solving chess problems. But probably the most common comparison with chess can be found in the area of political strategy. In this case, perhaps, the reason lies in the clear symbolism of the inevitable “overthrow” of the king at the culmination of the chess match.

The apogee of the influence of mind games on political planning was reached in China, where appointments to key government posts became the prerogative of Buddhist monks – masters of *weiqi*. A special government department was set up within the existing system of bureaucratic rankings. This department was the home of the civil service's outstanding players – *dafujin*. The ruler of the Middle Kingdom believed that only those able to grasp the logic in the moving of stones around an empty board were fit to be involved in the administration of national government strategy.

Mounting evidence suggests that those in power around the world were often adept in a variety of mind games:

- **chess:** Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), the first conquistador (adelantado), who discovered America; Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584); Emperor of France Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821); the South African president and fighter for human rights Nelson Mandela;
- **bridge:** Indian philosopher and politician Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948); British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1874–1965); U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower (1890–1969); Chinese politician and reformer Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997);
- **backgammon:** English King Richard I – the Lionheart (1157–1199); Charles Darwin (1809–1882), who changed the world with his Theory of Evolution; Turkey's first president Mustafa Ataturk (1881–1938); Russia's second president Vladimir Putin;
- **draughts:** Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamun (1341–1323 BC); Asian conqueror Tamerlane (1336–1405); Italian hero and military leader Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882); American actress Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962), the sex-symbol who conquered the world;
- **go:** Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BC); Albert Einstein (1879–1955), inventor of the Theory of Relativity; American global programming developer Bill Gates; Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon.

The stumbling block in the socio-legal recognition of mind games has always been the relative ease with which prizes can be won by participating in certain types of game, referred to as games of chance, which have had negative associations throughout the history of mankind.

Games of chance came to be seen as games based on the fundamental principles of probability in the form of a “good hand” in cards or the picking of “lucky numbers” etc. Relying on chance negates the value of the players’ skills, giving all players equal chances of winning. As a rule, the prize of a raffle comes from a fund contributed to by the participants when entering the game. In most countries, gambling is regulated by law and exists in authorized forms only – casinos, slot machines, lotteries, totalisateur and others. The moral aspect of the state patronage of gambling contradicts the basic postulates of all the major religions: any regular player risks developing an addiction – so called gambling addiction – leading to degradation of the personality.

The divisions of mind games into gambling and non-gambling resulted in the birth of Contract Bridge in 1925 when Harold Stirling Vanderbilt (1884–1970) introduced the game, compiling the rules and developing a concept of scoring that minimized the element of chance. The same hands of cards are played at two or more tables by different groups of four players (two sets of partners) moving between the tables. After a certain number of rounds the players' scores are compared. The aim of each team or pair is to score more points than their competitors with the same hand. In fact, it is exactly the same configuration of cards which builds a bridge between the players. The game immediately gained enormous popularity. In 1928 a registered bridge tournament was established – the Vanderbilt Trophy – and Vanderbilt himself won the prize twice (in 1932 and 1940). The prize for this annual event remains one of the most prestigious in the sport.

The institutionalization of gambling has prompted the emergence of alternatives in the form of mind games, these games are seen by modern society as opposing gambling because in their representation they serve specific social functions:

- as tools for promoting abstract thinking in children and fitness for the brain in adults;
- as ways of symbolically strengthening the intellectual prestige of nations.

The primary function traditionally attributed to sport in general is as a means of achieving a healthy lifestyle in terms of maintaining muscle tone and preventing diseases of the locomotive system. In the case of intellectual games, many believe that they contribute to the development of mental abilities and preserve clarity of mind to a great age; some experts even incline to the belief that mind games can provide a panacea for Alzheimer's disease.

The secondary function linked with the sportization of mind games, is the implicit objective of using the victories of outstanding players in international tournaments as a way of symbolically strengthening a nation's intellectual prestige.

The process of the institutionalization of traditional forms of mind games, together with the formation of a hierarchy of public organizations (local, national, continental and international) began on the Anglo-Saxon model of sport after the wide public interest generated by the first world chess championships in London (1851) and draughts in Paris (1886). A new system was introduced – a cyclic competition with rules of accounting for game results in the form of player and team ratings, the system was supplied with the institutions of refereeing, specific preparation in the form of training, and special equipment and uniforms were introduced.

As a result of such innovations, international sports federations for Chess (FIDE, 1924), Draughts (FMJD, 1947), Bridge (WBF, 1958) and Go (IGF, 1982) were established, eventually coming together in the International Mind Sports Association (IMSA) in 2005. The first World Mind Games (2008), organized by the IMSA, gave a powerful impetus for the inclusion of different types of mind sports. This was due to the sportization of numerous logic games, many of which were already in the process of setting up international federations, these included: Backgammon, Poker, Xiangqi, and various ethnic and cultural types of games, mainly on a local level (Brazilian and Russian Draughts, Shogi, Renju).

In postindustrial society, mind games have undergone modernization thanks to the use of digital technology. This has not only led to the appearance of computer versions of traditional games – with the opponents in virtual environment simulations – but also to a significant increase in different types of mind games. The latter are commonly referred to as “e-sports” and can be divided into two categories:

- “**e-sports**” (Electronic Sports): virtual, individual or group (network) competitions using special software installed on personal computers; players provide one another with statistics of the game results, trying to achieve the best results;
- “**v-sports**” (Video Sports): competitions between video game players using integrated digital set-top boxes such as PlayStation.

The most extensive collection of samples and attributes, as well as a unique library of works on mind games are collected in the **Swiss Museum of Games** at La Tour-de-Peilz; the only museum of its type in the world.

2. Collective Intelligence (Methodology)

Mind games offer the most organic representation of the collective unconscious, whereby everyone, irrespective of whether one has had experience of the games or not, has an innate understanding of their peculiarities. In his paper “The Structure of the Unconscious” (1916), the psychologist Carl Jung defined the collective unconscious as a layer deeper than an individual's unconscious; a “common denominator” of logic skills universally shared by mankind – a product of the inherited structures of the brain. Mind games are completely commensurate with Jung's definition; they have no direct meaning - the movement of pawns or pieces are meaningful only on an unconscious level; their placement is determined solely by a set of abstract rules. Moreover, the rules of a game, as interpreted by Jens Brockmeier and Romano Harre, do not describe a

particular reality but are merely the “instructions” for its definition and understanding in an indirect attempt to “bring the game into existence”.

Any change in the instructions changes the game. Thus John Mingers, a systems analysis specialist, appeals to the theoretical model of the “games of games” – “Nomic”, put forward in the work “The Paradox of Self-Amendment” (1980) by philosopher Peter Suber. John Mingers uses Suber's game, “Nomic”, to illustrate the steps of the principle he derived – laws can only be created by laws, therefore there are two types of rules: mutable and immutable. In the game, players make moves in accordance with initial core rules. Each move consists of proposals and discussions, followed by a vote taken on changes to the rules:

- 1) repealing, creating new, or amending mutable rules;
- 2) repealing, creating new, or amending amendments, and;
- 3) transmuting immutable rules into mutable ones or vice versa.

If a majority votes for change, it is accepted. In this game of transformations, almost anything is possible. You can start playing “Nomic” and end up playing chess or any other tabletop game that happens to appeal to you.

Modern society's increased interest in intellectual games stems from a tendency towards maximum abstraction in the thinking processes and is akin to the purely theoretical modeling in mathematical problems. It is no accident that a passion for mind games was evident among many scientists including Isaac Newton, Karl Marx, Dmitry Mendeleev, Albert Einstein etc. Predisposition to intellectual games is created by fatigue which accumulates in the brain during heavy mental activity. According to the conclusions of Russian physiologist Ivan Sechenov (1829–1905), who discovered the dual nature of the nervous system, which motivates and, at the same time, inhibits the activity, the brain requires so-called “active rest” or alternation between the working organs. He substantiated the fact that in the process of restoring the body's energy the most beneficial effect on a person's emotional condition is observed after a change of activity.

Christopher Lasch says that of all the activities that people perform when trying to escape from the hardships of daily life, games are one of the most obvious manifestations of this trend. While satisfying the need for free fantasy and an outlet for excessive childish energy to overcome deliberately created obstacles, at the same time games recreate a primeval freedom and force a person to remember a carefree childhood. Mind competitions require insight and maximum concentration in completely futile activities which contribute nothing to the struggle between man and nature, the welfare or comfort of society, or to its physical survival.

The public character and the drama of mind competitions implies a relationship with *sport*, as pointed out by German philosopher Elk Franke. Sport – in his words – by virtue of its particular spatio-temporality and its conditions of play is akin to specialized areas of human activity, such as the arts and the theater – with, however, one quite significant difference: the action in the course of a sports contest does not “translate” any particular message in the way that a theatrical play or a poem does. From this point of view, a dramatic interpretation of any sporting event is pointless! This implies two

particular conclusions: a sporting event satisfies a) the essential features of the drama, but the drama is not due to content but form, created by the rules of the game, and b) the drama of sporting competition is not the product of invention, it is not a contrivance representing reality, as in the theater, but it is something which itself lays claim to the status of reality”.

The sportization of Mind games arose under the influence of the Anglo-Saxon, Western, model of the world. Psychologists distinguish between left and right brain hemisphere thinking and perception of the world. The left hemisphere is responsible for the analytical processes. Huge world which does not exist outside the relationships of its parts is divided into even more fractional units of analysis down to an almost complete dissolution of the substance into the microcosm. Left hemisphere thinking solves the problem following a predetermined algorithm. Such processes include human speech activity, reflection – man's cognizance of his own mental activity. These processes are very precise and objective, they are characterized by reliance on the mind's (and not on feeling and intuition), “ratio” understanding of reality. It is not only Western science, but also Western civilization as a whole that is based on left hemisphere processes and a left hemisphere view of the world. Thus, the West was only able to perceive and modernize existing mind games, but not create new ones.

The matrix-like culture of the most common mind games was established by Eastern civilizations, especially by those of China and India, where right-brain thinking is synthetic and based on a holistic perception of objects without distinguishing their individual properties, and on the parallel processing of a vast array of information. Right-brain processes are characterized by obtaining solid knowledge as enlightenment, with no analytical procedures, knowledge based on intuition. Right-brain thinking is not inclined to dissect the world; it considers it in integrity, taking into account the huge number of its interrelated constituent parts. In right-brain thinking, the unconscious is involved in decision-making for more deliberate, rational things, since it can encompass and take into account more factors that are inaccessible to consciousness. That is why the right-brain dominated the East has become the home of the mind games. The same applies to the existing localized intellectual games of the African and native Incan games of Central and South America.

Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) was convinced that human history is a collection of discrete units of social organization (“civilizations”) and each civilization passes along its own unique path, consisting of three stages, where the existing one is the last one. The target limb of all civilization cycles offered by him finds a strange incarnation in mind games born of the cultures of non-Western civilizations, but existing in their new forms – forms of post human cyber sports – man-made manifestations of the transculture of global civilization. These new forms of artificial intelligence create supranational identities in the area of semantic fuzziness and blurring of cultural boundaries, thus challenging the metaphysics of individuality and the discontinuity (civilization cycles by Toynbee) of well established ethnic and cultural traditions of logic games that are inherited by structures of the biological brain as the collective unconscious.

-
-
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE 26 PAGES OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx>

Bibliography

Бируни А.Р. (1030) *Индия*. Пер. А. Б. Халидова, Ю. Завадовского. – М.: Ладомир, 1995. – 727 С. [On the penetration of Chess into Persia and onwards to the West.]

Гавров С.Н. (2009) *Остернизация Запада и новая европейская идентичность*. Управленческое консультирование. 2, 72-80. [Analysis of the Western European nations identity changes, the impact on them of eastern cultures and religions.]

Кыласов А.В. (2010) *Окольцованный спорт. Истоки и смысл современного олимпизма. (Эссе по истории спорта и олимпизма)*, 328 С. Москва: АИРО-XXI. [A detailed exposition of the historical and philosophical aspects of the cultural genesis, institutional forms, infrastructure and social functions of sport and mind games.]

Кыласов А.В. (2009) *Идея олимпизма в контексте глобализации* // Вестник спортивной науки, 2009, №6. – С. 64–66. [Philosophical Analysis of trends in the development of sport in the context of globalization.]

Сеченов И. М. (1895) *Физиологические критерии для установки длины рабочего дня. Доклад в обществе любителей естествознания* // Сборник для самообразования. – СПб. [About dual nature of the nervous system, which motivates and, at the same time, inhibits the activity, the brain requires so-called “active rest” or alternation between the working organs.]

Юнг К. Г. (1991) *Об архетипах коллективного бессознательного* // Архетип и символ. – М.: Ренессанс. [Psychological analysis of the collective unconscious as the archetype of abstract actions.]

Depaulis, Thierry (1998) *Inca dice and board games*, In: Board Games Studies, 1: 26-49. – Gentile Lafaille, Margarita E., 1998. [About the mind games of Latin America.]

Garal, Jakob (2007) *Fair Backgammon Tournament Rules*. – Aachen-Kharkov. – 124 P. [Correct rules for Backgammon tournaments.]

Franke, Elk (2006) *Der moderne Sport – die zeitgemäße Religion der Jahrtausendwende? / Explicato mundi: Aspekte theologischer Hermeneutik*. – Berlin: Humboldt-Universität. – S. 219–239. [Religious and cultural basis of modern sport.]

Jeux d'échecs, objets d'art: mille ans d'histoire dans les collections suisses (1989) Catalogue de l'exposition temporaire du 14 septembre au 12 novembre 1989, La Tour-de-Peilz, Musée Suisse du Jeu. [Catalogue of mind games with classifications and descriptions.]

Lasch, Christopher (1978) *The Culture of Narcissism*. – New York: W. W. Norton. – P. 100–124. [An analysis of positivism in sport in the forecasting dimension.]

Lo, Andrew (2007) *Ancient Board Games in Perspective*. – London: British Museum Press, 2007. – P. 232–234. [Historical analysis of the conception, modernization and spread of mind games in the East and West.]

Murray H. A. (1952) *History of Board-Games other than Chess*. – Oxford: University Press, 1952. – 281 P. [History of Mind Games.]

Parlebas, Pierre (2008) *Cooperation and Opposition in Sports and in Traditional Games* / Traditional Sports and Games: New Perspectives on Cultural Heritage, TAFISA Magazine, №1. – P. 49–52. [Analysis of the contradictions of Anglo-Saxon sport and ethno-cultural traditions.]

Suber, Peter (1982) “*Nomic*” (*game plus commentary*) in Douglas R. Hofstadter, “Metamagical Themas: Nomic: A Heroic Game That Explores the Reflexivity of Law”// *Scientific American*, 246, 6 (June 1982) 16-28 [Thesis that laws can only create laws, therefore there are only two types of rules: mutable and immutable.]

Biography Sketches

Alexey Kylasov – born May 9, 1968 in Krasnokamsk, in Perm region of the USSR (Russia). He graduated from the Perm State Pedagogical University majoring with a master’s degree in history. Ph.D. in Cultural Studies defended on the topic “Sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon of the globalization era” at the State Academy of Slavic Culture in Moscow in 2011. He explores the socio-cultural issues and the philosophical anthropology of sports.

He combines his work as a fellow of the Russian Sport Science Institute with social activities in elected positions in different sports organizations: as a Member of the World Traditional Wrestling Committee of FILA, as a secretary general of the European Sports Committee, as a Secretary General of the Multisport Association of Russia. He lectures at the Faculty of higher school of Sports Industry at the Russian Economic University named for G.V. Plekhanov. He is the author of numerous scientific and journalistic articles and of a book “*Ringy Sport: Source and Sense of Modern Olympics*” (ISBN 978-5-91022-107-3, Moscow, AIRO XXI, 2010).

Dr. Kylasov is a member of the International Society of Olympic Historians (ISOH).

Diego Garcés – born September 30, 1959 in Lausanne (Switzerland). He is the son of the Colombian Ambassador to Switzerland. After finishing school in Switzerland, he studied at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, where he earned a bachelor’s and a master’s degree (BA, MA) in economics and Russian culture. In 1985, at the University of Chicago Business School he received an MBA degree in international finance.

He has worked in different international companies in Colombia, the U.S., Switzerland and Germany. In the Soviet Union and Russia he opened the first branches of foreign companies such as Procter & Gamble, in the early 90’s. He is currently the manager of 12th World Chess Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk and combines this position with research into the influence of social networks and the Internet on the success of a professional athlete’s career. He promotes dozens of chess brands, including Chess Queen and Chess King. He is a Consultant to the Director of the Regional Library named for Jorge Garcés Borrero in the city of Cali, Colombia. He authored the scientific work “The Problems of translating the poetry of Horace from Latin into Russian” (1983).

Mr. Garcés is a member of the International Chess Federation (FIDE), as well as the American (USCF), French (FFE) and Swiss (FSE) chess federations.