



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 10. Issue.3. 2023 (July-Sept.)

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

CULTURE OF FEAR AND THE EXPERIENCE OF DR. B. IN STEFAN ZWEIG'S *CHESS*

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Article information

Received:20/07/2023

Accepted:27/08/2023

Published online:06/09/2023

doi: [10.33329/ijelr.10.3.112](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.10.3.112)

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Stefan Zweig's novella *Chess*. The researcher investigates the experience of Dr. B. and its relation to Stefan Zweig's life in the selected literary work. The study tackles the experience of Dr. B. from two points of view: firstly, the impact of the Gestapo upon Dr. B. and its relation to Stefan Zweig's life. Secondly, the importance of the chess match between Dr. B. and Mirko Czentovic, the world champion. The researcher uses a descriptive-analytical approach whereby the researcher applies Frank Fried's sociological theory culture of fear (2002). The results of the study revealed that Dr. B. faces fear in his homeland and during his journey to Brazil and it is reflected in Stefan Zweig's life. The study also pointed out that the Gestapo uses fear and isolation as techniques for controlling and investigating their prisoners. Dr. B.'s imprisonment led him to learn chess by using his imagination; thus, it led to his illness and escape from the Gestapo. Nevertheless, during his journey on a ship, Dr. B. confronts the world champion in a chess match which causes all the passengers to experience fear which the chess match compels.

Keywords: Stefan Zweig, Chess, Culture of fear, Gestapo.

Background of the Study

Stefan Zweig

Prater (1982, p. 311) reported that Herman Kesten in 1948 wrote a maxim to Paul Luther saying "I sometimes feel that I was born in exile. Every original man of letters lives in his own, eternal exile". He continued "This could well apply to Stefan Zweig as a man of exile". Zweig was a poet, novelist, and essayist. Zweig was born in Vienna in 1881 and died in 1942. He was brought up in a wealthy Austrian-Jewish family. In 1901, with the publication of his first book *Sliver Strings*, which taught him that prose is the most proper activity for him. He travelled to England in 1935 and gained British citizenship, three years before the Nazis took over Austria, only to emigrate to Brazil in 1940. He and his wife committed suicide in 1942. Herman Kesten wrote about Stefan Zweig's death, and he asserted that he died as one of the good Germans, like a philosopher. Therefore, Stefan Zweig's novella, *Schachnovelle*, was translated as *Chess* or the *Royal Game*. It was published a year after his death. According to Klawiter (1965), Stefan Zweig spent his time observing and studying all kinds of people and their behaviours. His psychological curiosity lasted till his death, and many considered it his remarkable characteristic. In 1904, Stefan Zweig received his doctorate, thus, fulfilling a promise that he had made to his parents. By 1933, Zweig had already produced and published over 50 books and essays. His works were translated almost into every European language and Chinese. Towards the end of his life, as a humanist, he saw

only terror and force released in the world. Stefan Zweig appreciated his freedom and described it as the highest good on earth. Manthripragada (2017) argued, as a writer of Viennese Modernism, Stefan Zweig's struggle between art and politics and its manifestation does exist before his treatise on defeatism. His analysis of fear is a concession to pressing alteration in the balances of power; therefore, Stefan Zweig's travel has the upper hand in global politics.

### Chess Game

Historians recorded that the chess game has an Indian origin. The historical background of chess as a game was invented somewhere in North-west India in the sixth century of the Christian Era. Kishore (2006) argued that Chaturanga is a Sanskrit name which means four limbs or divisions of the ancient Indian army. Therefore, it is believed that one of the primary developments in the history of the chess game was the flourishing from India to Iran. It became a national game for Persia. The modern term "checkmate" is originally derived from a Persian phrase which means the "king is defeated". In the middle of the seventh century, the Arabs invaded Iran; in turn, the chess game took another dimension. After more than four centuries, the chess game passed on to the Spaniards, Spain, Sicily, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, France, and England. Throughout history, authors depicted heroes and heroines as chess players because of chess association with nobility and royalty. What is more, from the past to our present day, whether it is made of ivory, wood or any other material, chess is regarded as a game of beauty and joy. The ageless game has its aesthetic characteristics and universality. Chess symbolism is employed in art and literature by artists and writers. Machiavelli asserted that no tyrant can checkmate the spirit of liberty. Therefore, the chess game transcends all the boundaries and barriers of people alongside their countries, colours, classes, ages, and religions. The International Chess Federation reminds us that that "We are one race". In our modern time, chess is a popular game; and people who love to play it are increasing. According to Rasskin-Gutman (2009), what is known about chess is the creative imagination; and it holds the tenets which is the same as a poet holds when he writes his sonnet, or a scientist holds when he proposes a law of nature by seizing an improbable chance that nature will accord his creation. Chess is not limited to the categorization as a game for pleasure. It is a communication of two minds in one line. It takes into consideration the board's colours, the piece's composition, time and its influence, and the mental struggle to cope with the memories of the previous games. What is more, all the above mentioned construct conscious experiences. The fundamental essence of learning is memory, and it is a major cognitive process associated with intelligent behaviour.

Stefan Zweig expresses his infatuation, admiration, his high regard for chess and his enchantment in his novella, as he stated in the following extract:

But is not already an insult to call chess anything so narrow as a game? Is it not also a science, an art, hovering between these categories like Muhammad's coffin between heaven and earth, a unique yoking of opposites, ancient and yet eternally new, mechanically constituted and yet an activity of the imagination alone, limited to a fixed geometric area but unlimited in its permutations, (Zweig, 2021, p. 21).

### Objectives of the Study

The study aims to investigate Dr. B.'s experience and its relation to Stefan Zweig's life in this selected literary work. The study also focuses on the impact of the Gestapo on Dr. B. and the experience of fear on the ship during the chess match between Dr. B. and Mirko Czentovic, the world champion.

### Questions of the Study

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How did Dr. B., Czentovic, and the passengers on the ship experience fear during the chess match between Dr. B. and Czentovic?
2. What is the impact of the Gestapo upon Dr. B. and its relation to Stefan Zweig's life?

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**Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to the previous studies that had been conducted under the lens of Frank Furedi's theory culture of fear. It is of interest to researchers who are interested in the culture of fear and literature. It is specifically important because it connects literature with special political events during the Second World War and its effect on people's immigration from their country to another one seeking freedom and safety.

**Methodology**

The researcher uses a descriptive-analytical approach by focusing on Dr. B's experience with the Gestapo and its relation to Stefan Zweig's life. It is based on the theory of Frank Fruedi regarding the culture of fear (2002). In modern society, Furedi, an emeritus Professor in sociology, views culture of fear as an unchangeable phenomenon, whereas life in which well-being and security are difficult to be found due to wars and their consequences. Therefore, it appears the ground for human suspicion by leading him to wonder about his daily activities and events. Moreover, people exercise their lives in a way filled with uncertainty in everything whether in the present or the future.

**Analysis and Discussion**

The analysis focuses on Dr. B and The Gestapo, and Dr.B. and The World Champion:

First, Dr. B. and The Gestapo

The narrator narrates how he met Dr. B. on a ship in the ocean. The ship carries many passengers and sails from New York to Buenos Aires. The Ocean refers to depth, ambiguity, and the unknown. Therefore, according to Furedi (2002), it brings the unexpected, and everything unexpected is dangerous and risky.

After knowing that Dr. B is a lawyer from a highly regarded Austrian family, the narrator conveys to Dr. B. the passengers' request to challenge the world chess champion, Mirko Czentovic, in a chess match. Furthermore, McConnor will bear the financial risk for any possible defeat. With his astonishment, Dr. B. asks the narrator to confirm that his opponent is the world champion. After confirming that his opponent is the world champion, Dr. B., with a remarkable hesitation accepts the match. Furthermore, he requests the narrator to inform the gentlemen not to put exaggerated hopes in his abilities.

Hesitation and uncertainty hunt Dr. B. because of the confrontation with the world champion. What is more, the chess match is not an easy task. According to Fruedi, "To be at risk is an ambiguous concept" (2002, p. 19). But what is so different about Czentovic is that he defeated his opponents fiercely. Knowing his opponent's abilities brings fear, and at the same time, it shakes one's own confidence. It is a powerful destructive force that occupies his mind with a threat. Therefore, Dr. B. spreads fear and uncertainty that define the characteristics of the chess as a game. Dr. B. becomes the source of this fear and uncertainty for the gentlemen. Therefore, Dr. B. tells his story to the narrator of how he learned chess, and the conditions that derived him to become a chess player. Dr. B. was placed in a cell by the Gestapo alone, whereby he has no communication with anyone. He suffers from the deadly loneliness that corrodes his lonely soul. The pain of loneliness and the fear of the unknown begin to run through his mind and tire his body. For him, everything becomes a mystery; and he does not know what will happen to him. The cell represents a prison which is a source of fear and alienation. The prison feeds on fear till it becomes a monster. According to Fruedi (2002), this leads writers to give glowing reviews on public expressions of anxiety. An article in a prominent British daily is titled "Be Very Afraid."; strong expressions of worry, according to the source, are "but a cry for a new accountability." Individual and group manifestations of anxiety are thus more likely to be lauded rather than dismissed as unreasonable panics. Dr. B. contemplates on his situation as a prisoner.

The Gestapo placed Dr. B. and other people in separate rooms in a hotel where the place was decent; all they did for them was nothing. What is more, nothingness is the greatest pressure that has been exerted on them. The room has a door, a bed, a chair, a washbasin, and a barred window. The door is locked day and night. Books and even a pencil were not allowed to be left on the table. Education is a source of fear that threatens the Gestapo men because they want people to remain ignorant to spread their totalitarian power and regime.

The regime burned many books, including Stefan Zweig's books and his contemporaries who were committed to getting rid of the regime, he asserted that "wait, wait, keep silent, and silent again. That festival celebrated with my books has unhappily attracted much more attention abroad than I could have expected." (Prater, 1982, p. 312). Therefore, silence is an approval for the current situation and the objective support of the other side. What is more, it is an expression of impotence to react against the opponent. In other words, Stefan Zweig was a man of peace. Anyway, it is a political technique to control the mass by the Gestapo and a justification for why the Gestapo left Dr. B. for complete nothingness both physically and psychologically. There was nothing to do even nothingness is unbearable. The Nazis hoped to grab some incriminating evidence against the monasteries proving illicit removal assets and evidence against the imperial family and all those Austrians who selflessly fought for the monarchy. People like Dr. B. are in another category; therefore, the Gestapo men didn't put him in the concentration camps but saved him for special treatment.

Interrogation is another source of fear and dread. He is afraid to speak during interrogation and tries to be careful when he speaks; even words become a source of fear. The imagination constantly strives for the worst possible interpretation of circumstances (Furedi, 2002). Fear is everywhere and in everything, and Dr. B. begins to fear himself. Nonetheless, in such painful and terrifying circumstances, his existence becomes a battle between life and death. He is afraid, terrified, distracted, in a complete isolation, in psychological warfare, fatigue and torment running through his veins.

Anything may happen, anywhere, and by any person. He tries to find a suitable solution to save himself from anything that could lead to his illness or death. "That anything can happen can be affirmed by the most rare and exceptional experience" (Furedi, 2002, p. 110). The Nazis spread fear everywhere to gain control. Fear is the most powerful weapon to control your opponents and enemies. What is more, when the interrogator is under the threat of fear, it means that he is under the Gestapo's command and will. In addition, by using time tested method, Dr. B. doesn't know whether it's day or night. Dr. B's thoughts about the interrogation are a burden, anxiety, and emotional dreadfulness because of his uncertainty in everything. It is a loss of being, death while you are alive, and the suffocating isolation of prisoners. A Hitlerian military and a tyrant ruler practices his tyranny on people by using his soldiers and prisons. The Gestapo spreads fear everywhere, deprives people of everything and enforces them to ultimate obedience. Dr. B. is unable to sleep because of overthinking. Therefore, he scrutinizes every question and every word, "individuals are perceived as victims of their circumstances rather than as makers of their destiny" (Furedi, 2002, p. 143). Dr. B. conflicts with the Gestapo's interrogation, his nothingness and solitude. He wishes to be in a concentration camp where he can communicate with people, talk to someone, and do anything, but this nothingness gnaws at him daily in his cell. For months, Dr. B. suffers from his situation. Waiting is another technique used by the Gestapo before the interrogation starts, and of course, this waiting keeps him thinking, expecting, and fearing them. Fear must prove itself and its existence in one way or another.

During his imprisonment, Dr. B. found a book for chess players. It lifts him from loss, isolation, embraces his pain and loneliness with all its words and lines. It takes him to a world other than his world and cultivates hope in him. He stares at it while it is in his hands and learns from it how to become a better person: the friend in times of trouble and the best friend in times of grief. It is priceless and highly valued. After trying for many days, he succeeds in learning and can see any position of the chess pieces in his mind. His intellectual energy is activated, and he becomes obsessed with it because it fills his days. Therefore, chess becomes his beloved companion and rescues him from his solitude. Stefan Zweig wrote, "The work that I used to approach with tenderness and reverence is now just a refuge for me" (Prater, 1982, p. 318).

Learning the attack and defence mechanism helps Dr. B. face the Gestapo's interrogation, and even they had put a certain respect for him because of his "unshakable resistance" (p. 52). Bordoni (2017) asserted that overcoming fear requires figuring out how to live with it, manage it, and make use of it as a defence mechanism. After he had learned how to play chess by heart, nothingness rises again. He divides his mind into black and white, playing against himself. Within his imaginary faculty, the conflict increases and intensifies because the dual way of thinking exhausts his mind, and at the same time, he must think instead of two different people.

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Playing chess against himself drives him to madness. "It is the inflated consciousness of danger which expresses itself in risks which are, by definition, without boundaries, either in time or in space" (Furedi, 2002, p. 36).

The abstract imaginary realm enforces him to put steps ahead for each black and white side. Playing with the square in his mind, thinking, absorbing, watching, and predicting dragging to his collapse. His life becomes unbearable. For him, by challenging himself, it is the same, whether the winner is the black or the white one. With his obsession with playing day and night, he suffers from a "chess sickness" and begins to attack his body and mind (p. 58). One day, he woke up and found himself in a room in a hospital. The chess game tired his mind a lot, and he could no longer resist psychologically and physically. Is there anyone who can compensate him for his suffering? Who can create a world of safety for him where there is no fear or torment? Or should he continue his life in the unknown? Memories of his imprisonment will remain with him forever. Wherever he goes, he will remain a prisoner of his mind, society, and circumstances.

The pressure exerted on him made him resort to chess, which burdened him because there was nothing but chess to do in his miserable cell. Until he reached the hospital exhausted. Dr. B. almost lost his life because of playing all the time. Moreover, even time to eat becomes a burden which causes him to lose weight and wants nothing but chess. The fear that permeates his life enters the depths of his thinking and crystallizes in his love for chess in his dark loneliness. He is a victim of the Gestapo. But what will Hitler's followers leave behind other than the destruction? As in his black and white sides, it has become a survival matter, wavering between them every moment, hoping for something to happen. But he lost control of his health and could no longer continue in his terrible and tragic situation. With the help of a doctor in the hospital, the authorities left him free. Therefore, he was able to travel. He left all the fear, torment, and suffering behind him without any intention to go back again. According to Svendsen (2008), the difference between the secure person and the insecure person is that feeling of fear does not affect the secure person, while it works very well with the unsecured who lives in a state where the basis of his existence could be dragged from him at any given time. Many intellectuals, scientists, authors, writers, and artists emigrated because of the uneasy life, filled with fear, the uncertainty of the existence, and wars with the political regimes: "The fruitful but difficult combination of scholarship on exile and the history of science and scholarship," (Schwarz, 1999, p. 100). On the other hand, Stefan Zweig's arrival to America in 1940, was only to immigrate to Brazil, as he talked about the situation of people in America who escaped from Hitler (Prater, 1982).

Fear within Dr. B. rises higher and higher. He doubts whether the abilities and experiences in which he has will help to play a real chess game with a real opponent. He had been used to playing chess only in his mind and using his imagination. Uncertainty about the outcome of our actions increases the uncertainty and negative expectations about occurrences (Fruedi, 2002). Moreover, the confidence in which he has covered with his fear and uncertainty gives him excuses not to challenge the world champion. Therefore, he gives himself a lower value by comparing it with the world champion. Also, he tries not to put himself in unwanted situations because he lacks the courage. In addition, he needs this courage to defeat his opponent. It comes from knowing himself as an imaginary chess player. Therefore, he praises his fear by accepting himself as a cowered man.

What is more, the doctor warned him that "anyone suffered from mania remains at risk forever" (p. 63). The disease takes control over his health and increases his fear and doubts. Moreover, he wants to keep his health good, and playing chess drives him to think that being alive means being ill. For him, playing chess is a threat, and he is aware of it. Furedi (2002) argued that the possibility of damage, injury, illness, death, or other unfavourable related to a hazard is referred to as a risk. Hazards are often characterized as threats to individuals and their values. The division between actuality and possibility underpins all risk ideas. As a result, Dr. B. gives himself the right to play only one chess match against Czentovic, the world champion. Therefore, according to Einstein, "I have no exceptional talents, other than a passionate curiosity." (Adair, 2014, p. 32).

### **Second, Dr. B. and The World Champion**

When the match starts between the two opponents, Dr. B. and Mirko Czentovic, the world chess champion, nervousness, ambiguity, and restlessness begin. The group of people who gathered to watch the game are alarmed. Intellectual abilities and emotional intelligence impose themselves. A hidden psychological

conflict between each player and observer in the match intensifies the atmosphere. Uncertainty took over the place and the results. Fear spreads its wings inside the players. Therefore, playing chess carefully is the best way. It is a confrontation between an unknown man as a chess player and the world champion. The game is frightening, terrifying, shrouded in anticipation and waiting. Passengers watch anxiously. What is more, with every movement by any player, fear escalates until it reaches its highest levels and penetrates the safety of the spectators and players. The mental struggle innervates, and each player tries to plan advanced steps forward. The culture of fear proves itself even in the future. It is a scourge that eats away at people's minds. The higher someone scored as a star performer, the greater his emotional intelligence qualities emerged as the cause for his efficiency (Goleman, 2015). How does fear work in this case? It humiliates, occupies, and forcibly binds everything and makes it impossible. The unknown areas that we do not know are the source of fear, so they are the appropriate ground for building a dictatorship that is ruled by something invisible. It is the ghost of the world champion and his ability to defeat his opponents. As for how to show fear, it is his steady sight while playing the match. He strikes fear into his opponent's heart for complete possession. Even when he is afraid inside, he wouldn't show his fear, because he is the world champion. Even the title of the world champion is scary.

Dr. B. is in an engrossed situation. "Seizing a pencil to write a note of something" (p. 65) as he calculates his moves ahead before Czentovic moves. It is the mental strategy caused by fear; because he must prepare himself for what is yet about to come. Chess is an unbounded game, yet it is restricted because of its unique rules. Therefore, Dr. B. becomes faster than Czentovic; it is the overwhelming force of fear that acts as an engine and drives all the unseen forces. According to Foucault (1987), Fear and anxiety are two interconnected emotions. They can all be considered emotional reactions to potential threats. Fear is an emotional response to an external threat. Nonetheless, anxiety reflects internal conflict.

By moving his knight in advance, Czentovic makes Dr. B. tremble. The unbelievable move for the benefit of Dr. B. and the huge turn in the match happens because his fear of losing has been turned into a fear of winning. Dr. B. pushes his queen forward and announces his triumph loudly: "So! Finished!" (p. 66). Dr. B. defeated Czentovic by crushing his arrogance and experience, leaving the world champion motionless and helpless. Fear is transmitted to Czentovic and controls his mind. He is unable to react or make a move because he doesn't want to lose in front of Dr. B. as a chess player and the people who watch the match as observers. Walking back and forth in the smoking lounge while time passes, Czentovic made his decision to move all the chess pieces from the board and resigned. He does not want his profession as a chess player, especially on board, to end in defeat by someone like Dr. B. Quietly, with fear suppressed in his depths and pride manifested in his might. Czentovic asks for "Another game?" (p. 67). Dr. B. with his anxiety and fear, excitement and terror, health struggle, intellectual abilities, calculating strategies, and uncertainty mixed with heavy doubt. He accepts Czentovic's request. The narrator's fear appears and gently requests Dr. B. to delay the chess match and with a fearful statement, "Not now! That is enough for one day! It's too much of strain for you." (p. 68). Many observers agree that culture is perpetually concerned with health and is constantly in the grip of a certain medical or environmental crisis (Furedi, 2002). The tension between Czentovic and Dr. B. highlights the atmosphere. It is because the world champion takes his maximum time in each move, putting a certain pressure on Dr. B.; by using such technique, he drags his opponent to the edge. It makes Dr. B. drink too much water and smoke cigarettes because of his anxiety. "Smoking and stress are some of the factors in the field of health promotion." (Furedie, 2002, p. 19). What is more, it is to refer to the dangerous situation of people's health. It is also a hidden threat to the environment. The consciousness about his state influences his behaviour.

Therefore, Dr. B. tries to calm down during the match, "But he was still in control of himself" (p. 69). In addition, the more the match proceeds, Dr. B. loses his temper and remains in his internal world, filled with agony. It is another side of his nervousness. What is more, by considering the communication between the two minds in one line, the chess square, the black and white, the player's arms, the square flips over, and the king of Czentovic is protected. Therefore, Dr. B. left the match defeated by the world champion, as he mentioned, "this gentleman is really extraordinarily talented" (p. 72). The culture of fear dominates everything; in a world shrouded in mysterious loneliness, fear with people, watching, and anticipation. Dr. B is an example of a deep experience of fear which takes different forms in different aspects of his life. Sometimes, he becomes a source

of fear and plays the mediating role played by the media in spreading the culture of fear. On the other hand, he is a prey to this fear by society in a mutual relationship. In the harsh experience of imprisonment, illness, and even in a state of playing chess, people who fear are highly valued and celebrated. Those who are afraid to take risks and losers are the ones who are praised.

### Conclusion

Stefan Zweig is a man of exile. Like his character, Dr. B suffers from the experience of fear in modern society through his imprisonment by the Gestapo. He confronts his suppressed fears, which collide with his infinite, unknown, and unlimited isolation. Dr. B. faces the interrogation of the Gestapo men, intimidating him, to obtain information from him. He is pressured in various ways until he reaches the stage of fear. The manifestation of it presents itself whether in speaking or even, he fears himself. Moreover, the experience of isolation leads him to learn the game of chess, which becomes the cause of his fears while facing the world chess champion. Therefore, these fears are from a known or unknown cause which exposes him to danger, illness, uncertainty, deliberation, and thinking. What is more, Dr. B. cultivates fear and suspicion as it is implanted in him in a reciprocal relationship with society. Fear is transmitted from one person to another until a culture of fear is formed, then controls people's thoughts and completely captivates them. People act according to their fears, which embody the struggle of anxiety about the unknown, whether in the present or the future. This conclusion relates to the objectives and research questions as stated in the research paper at the beginning.

### Acknowledgements

The author is indebted to Professor Bader S. Dweik for his constructive comments and suggestions on the earlier drafts of the paper.

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