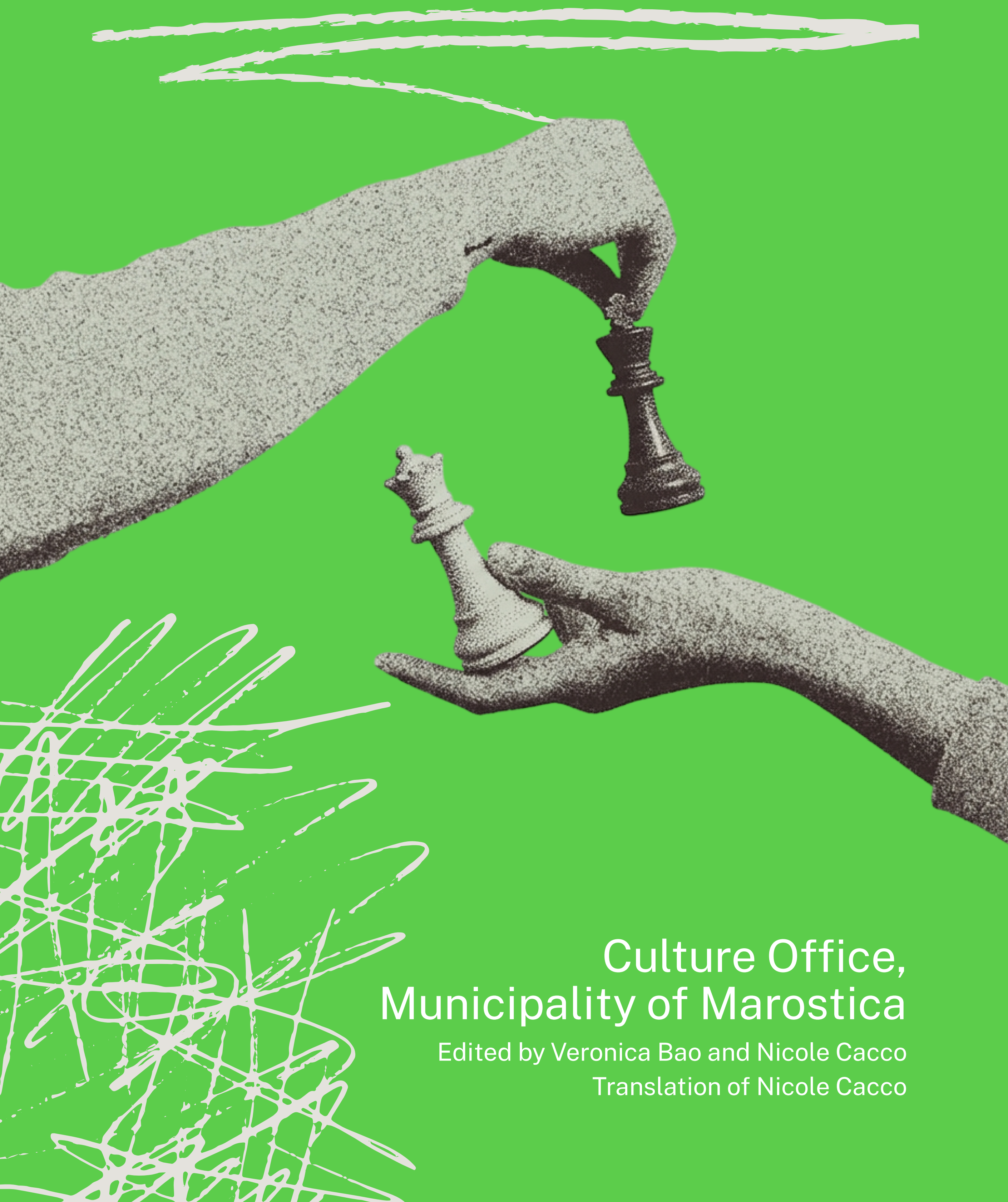


The exemplary nature of chess



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Chess has accompanied human history for centuries, transcending cultures, languages, and borders without losing its symbolic power. Seemingly simple, it conceals a complex universe of rules, choices, consequences, and responsibility.

On the chessboard, two opposing wills clash, but the confrontation never descends into chaos. Everything unfolds within shared boundaries, where intelligence prevails over force and thought guides action.

This is why chess stands as an exemplary model, speaking not just of play, but of civil coexistence. Every move demands focus, self-control, and respect for the opponent; every mistake becomes a learning opportunity; every victory or defeat invites reflection.

In their balance between freedom and rule, competition and respect, chess offers a powerful image of how conflict can be governed and transformed into growth, becoming a compelling metaphor for social living and responsible behavior.

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• CHESS AS A MODEL OF PEACE: TRANSFORMING CONFLICT

Chess is a game that, in many ways, "simulates" a **conflict between two opposing factions**, the whites and the blacks, each striving to prevail over the other. Even the pieces symbolically reflect the **components of a traditional army**: pawns represent infantry, knights embody cavalry, rooks stand for fortifications, bishops symbolize clergy or advisors, while the king and queen personify political power and decision-making.



The connection between chess and the Vietnam War is particularly fascinating. U.S. General William Westmoreland famously drew inspiration from the game in his military strategy, treating the **battlefield as a chessboard** and pursuing a “head-to-head” victory by systematically eliminating the enemy’s “pieces”, even from a psychological standpoint. Yet this approach revealed the limitations of a purely strategic mindset when applied to a complex and asymmetrical reality. Contrasting sharply with this wartime interpretation, chess has also...



Richard G. Salf e Thomas R. Parrott (medici del 1° Battaglione, 22° Fanteria), Firebase Louis, Vietnam, 1970. National Archives and Records Administration.

used as a **tool of protest against war**. For example, in early March 2022, just days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, forty-four Russian chess players signed an open letter to Vladimir Putin, demanding an end to the conflict and reaffirming the value of human life, fundamental rights, and freedom. In the letter, grandmasters expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people and condemned all forms of violence, emphasizing how chess teaches responsibility for one's actions and respect for the opponent. There are also countless initiatives that harness chess to support young people living in war or crisis zones. Among these, the FIDE-backed "**Chess for Peace**" project aims to foster dialogue, inclusion, and personal growth through the game. When played with respect for its rules and a deep understanding of its nature, chess cultivates a positive environment rooted in mutual respect, patience, and the resolution of conflicts through intellectual means, not violence.



Equally emblematic is the variant called **Paco Sako**, designed to highlight the game's peaceful essence. In this version, **pieces are not captured but "embrace" one another**: when two pieces meet, they coexist in the same square and move together.



The separation occurs only if the pair is captured, allowing the player to reclaim their piece. Since the king cannot join others, it loses when "embraced", and thus, victory is achieved.

achieved, not through destruction, but through union.

Though chess is often linked to war due to its strategic depth and "military" terminology, a deeper analysis reveals it as a **symbolic transformation of conflict**. The game does not glorify violence but channels it into a regulated, rational, and equitable confrontation, one where **respect for the opponent and the rules is paramount**. Chess proves that conflict can be addressed without ruin, through dialogue, reflection, and intellect. Far from celebrating war, it becomes a powerful tool for educating toward peace.

• THINKING BEFORE ACTING: CHESS AND MATHEMATICS

Chess shares a deep connection with mathematics: patterns, structures, logical thinking, and geometry are just a few of the elements that bridge these two disciplines. For this reason, chess is often used in educational settings to achieve goals such as developing critical thinking, concentration, and logical-mathematical skills.

One key point of intersection lies in the **analysis of the chessboard** itself, a **8 × 8 grid**. This structure serves as a foundation for exploring numerous mathematical concepts. The board can be interpreted through **symmetric patterns and coordinate systems** (e.g., 2,1), mirroring Cartesian coordinates, with direct applications in the **study of geometry**.





Chess begins with **perfect symmetry**, both in the arrangement of the board and the positioning of the pieces. Understanding the mathematical principles behind symmetry can provide a strategic advantage,

since it allows players to more easily spot their opponent's weaknesses and develop more effective game plans.

Some decisions made during a match also rely on **concepts of probability and statistics**. Players assess positions, recognize recurring patterns, and estimate the possible outcomes of their moves, thereby increasing their chances of success. Anticipating an opponent's moves and crafting counterplays demands intense mental exercise, one that can only be sharpened through practice and experience.

A decisive factor in the outcome of a game is the **ability to apply logic and deduction**. These skills enable players to identify a problem, analyze the variables at play, and devise a strategy to solve it, following a reasoning process very similar to that used in solving mathematical problems.

Chess is the **perfect meeting point between mathematics and logic**.

Through a simple chessboard, the game helps develop essential skills such as **abstract reasoning, analytical ability, and problem-solving**, proving how mathematical thinking can be applied in a concrete, dynamic, and engaging way.

• THE POWER OF THE RULE: CHESS AND LAW

While chess and law may seem unrelated at first glance, they share surprising similarities that bring them closer than one might think. Both are **disciplines built on rules that must be followed**, with consequences for non-compliance. Of course, there are many differences, but the respect for norms reveals how they shape possibilities of action and interpretation, creating a compelling parallel between the two fields.

Like in chess, **every piece is bound by specific movements** within which it can act, similarly, a legal entity operates within the boundaries set by the legal system, and violating those limits results in penalties.



This principle is central to both chess and everyday life: **without rules, all order collapses**. In chess, this would mean players could act arbitrarily, making the game impossible to play; in society, it would lead to the dissolution of social order, reducing norms to mere optional “suggestions.” Rules, therefore, are not a limitation on freedom or play, they are their essential foundation, creating a structured context within which individuals can act consciously and freely.

A skilled chess player doesn't just mechanically know the rules; they must analyze and interpret them, understanding their strategic potential. Mastering the rules helps avoid risky moves and quickly spot an opponent's mistakes. Every decision on the board stems from a careful evaluation of future consequences, as **a single wrong move can jeopardize the entire game**. Similarly, a jurist doesn't just have a formal knowledge of legal norms, they must interpret and apply them to real cases. They analyze legal texts, compare them with judicial precedents, and construct logical, coherent arguments to support their position.

In law, too, it is essential to anticipate the effects of one's choices, because a misinterpretation or an inadequate defense strategy can determine the negative outcome of a case. Thus, it can be said that, both in chess and in the legal field, the decisive advantage belongs to those who can most accurately anticipate the consequences of their actions and use the rules not passively, but strategically.





In both fields, true mastery lies not merely in following the rules, but in wielding them strategically to **shape the final outcome in one's favor**. In chess, players frequently face tough choices, evaluating positions based on playing

style, pressure, or willingness to take risks. Each decision carries consequences, whether positive or not, for the game. **Critical thinking and rationality** are therefore essential during play.

Similarly, judges often make difficult, contentious decisions when weighing conflicting narratives, competing interests, and long-term effects. The ability to take calculated risks is key in shaping outcomes, proving that neither chess nor law offers simple or one-size-fits-all solutions, **only responsible, forward-thinking choices**.

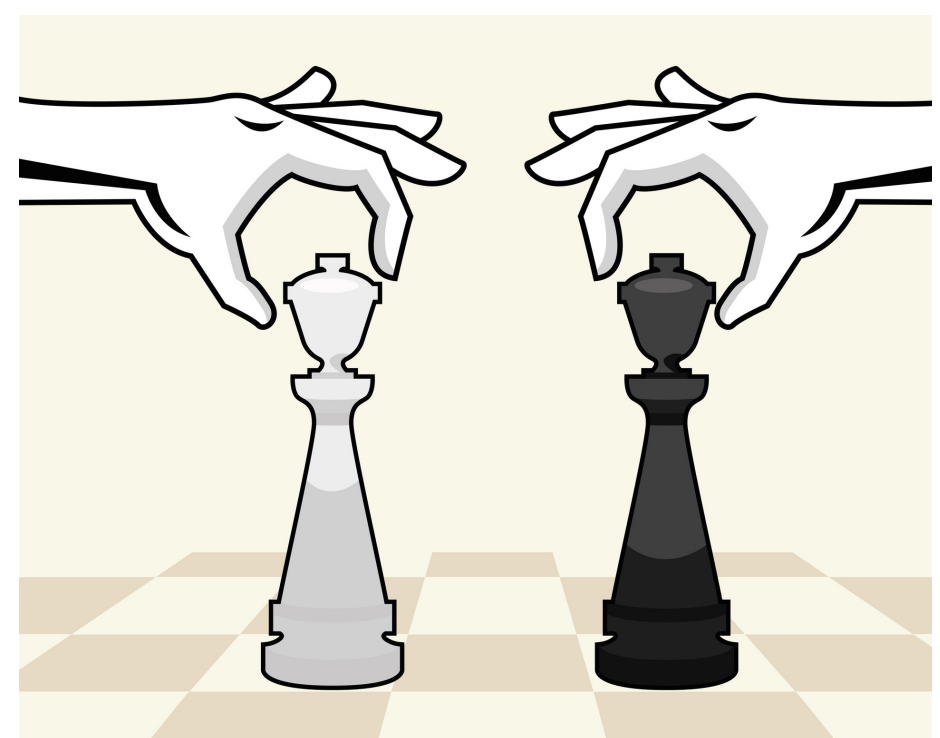
Chess and law reveal that freedom isn't the absence of rules, but the ability to navigate them thoughtfully. In both, success hinges on interpreting norms, anticipating consequences, and owning one's decisions. Chess thus becomes a powerful metaphor for law and human behavior, where order and reason enable structured, non-arbitrary coexistence.



• CHESS AS A METAPHOR FOR LIFE AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Chess serves as a powerful metaphor for life and the civil dynamics that govern coexistence. Every game is an **exercise in responsibility**: each move carries consequences, positive or negative, for the game and demands the ability to assess and anticipate actions. The same principle applies to life: **all actions have an impact, and decisions carry consequences**.

The game teaches the **value of patience and planning**, resisting the logic of immediacy.



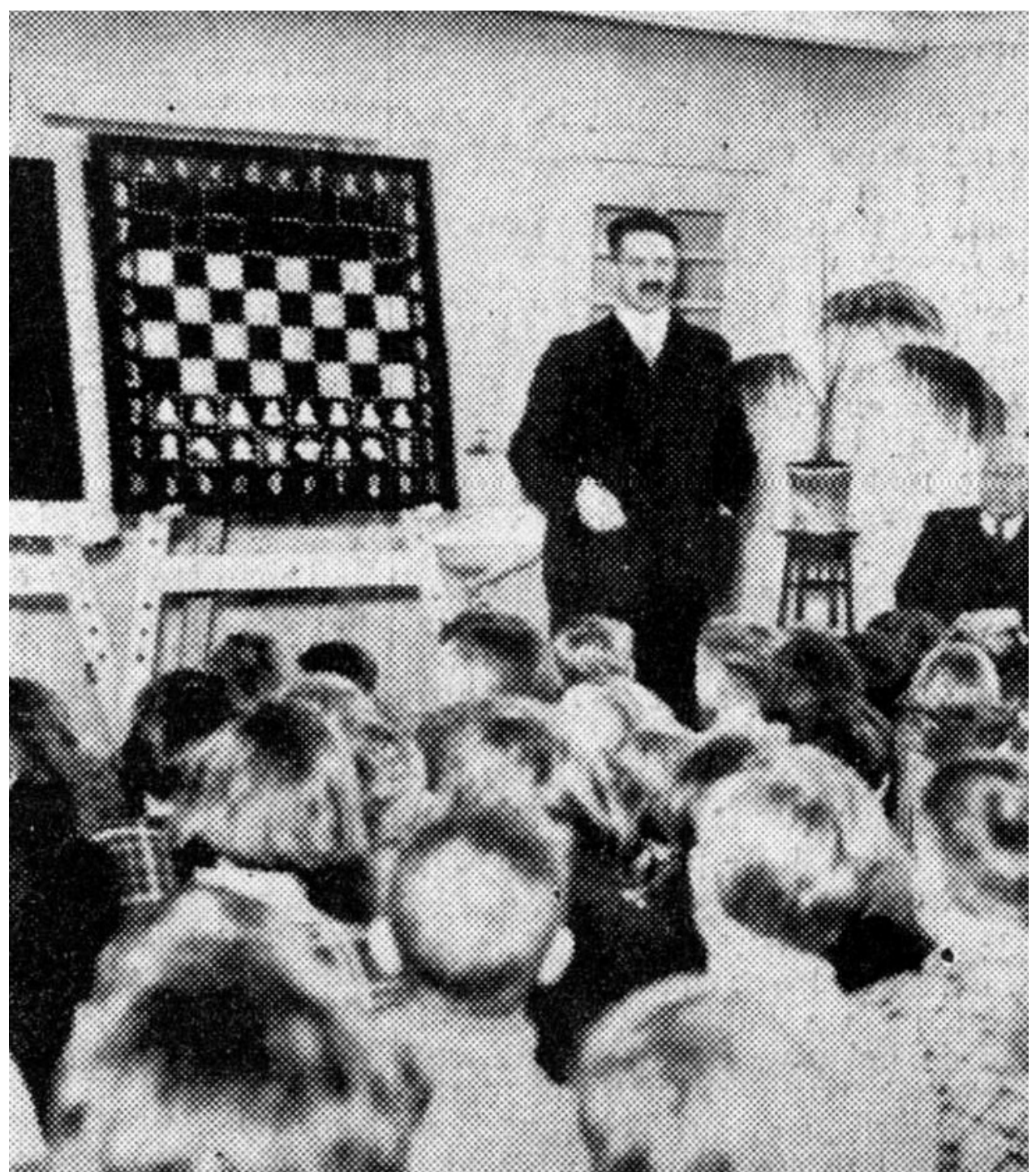


Winning doesn't mean reacting impulsively, but knowing how to wait and build a strategy. Additionally, just as chess games can present unexpected challenges that require adaptability, everyday life is full of surprises, and the game trains the mind to **solve the unforeseen**. The chessboard can be seen as a **symbolic representation of society**.

Each piece has a distinct role and function, yet all are essential. Even the simplest piece, like the pawn, can become decisive, proving that every individual, regardless of social standing, holds dignity and value within the community.

Moreover, chess **teaches civil and non-violent confrontation**. Conflict exists but is governed by shared rules and rooted in respect for the opponent. This mirrors democratic **principles of dialogue and fair competition**, where differences are addressed through reasoning, not force.

Teaching chess in schools, beyond these lessons in civic education, helps develop mental skills such as **memory, logical reasoning, mathematical ability, concentration and attention**. Given all that has been stated, it is clear that chess serves as an effective metaphor for civic education, teaching **rule-following, personal responsibility, social cooperation and democratic engagement**, all while **sharpening learning skills**. Many school programs, especially at primary and middle school levels,



School Chess Lessons (Schoolschaken), 1936, Amsterdam (Netherlands).

integrate chess into curricular and extracurricular activities, often aligned with European Union initiatives.

In this way, chess emerges as a **powerful educational tool for shaping informed and responsible citizens.**



Youth Chess Tournament (Bekwaamheidsspelen), circa 1950, Haarlem (Netherlands)

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