

The Compulsion to Move
By Dennis Stephens
May 10, 1994

Transcribed by
Pete McLaughlin
June 6, 2012

Today is ahh... the 10th of May 1994, the same date as the lecture on the other side of this tape and I want to talk to you about what is undoubtedly the most puzzling of all the mental mechanisms.

It is not only the most puzzling but is also evidently the one that's least understood. Well there's ahh... there's not even a word in the English language which gets even close to describing the mechanism. Yet the mechanism is very, very common. Causes considerable stress to every games player, particularly compulsive games players who are highly trained to the mechanism and ahh... in certain circumstances... under certain circumstances the ahh... the games loss that the ahh... mechanism can bring about can ruin a person's life and ahh... , although on the other end of the spectrum the game loss can be quite trivial, but never the less it ahh... there's a broad spectrum of possible game loss associated with the mechanism. So it... it... it's far from the umm... a ahh... far from a trivial mechanism.

01:18

When I first umm... discovered this mechanism in my own psyche during my own research I ahh... started to hunt up my reference books, my psychology books and reference books... general reference books and I could find absolutely no trace of this ahh... this mechanism.

And ahh... I was hard put upon to find a... ahh... as description... a title that would describe the mechanism till I remembered that the mechanism occurred in the game of chess. The game of the... the noble game of chess contains this... this... this mechanism, and in chess the mechanism is called zugzwang and so we will adopt that title and use the ahh... use the word zugzwang to describe this... this... mental mechanism.

02:06

The word Zugzwang is a German word and umm... the word zugzwang in German describes the mechanism exactly as it occurs in the game of chess and although the translation of the German word **zugzwang which means the compulsion to move**, although the translation of this word is not an exact description of the mental mechanism it's close enough for our purposes so we will call... we will call this mental mechanism Zugzwang. it's a... it's a... It's a good... it's as good a name as any and better than most.

02:46

I'd better start off by explaining how the mechanism occurs in the game of chess, what is zugzwang in chess. Well zugzwang occurs in chess when a player umm... although it's his move and his position is quite sound, any move he makes is a bad move and will lead to inevitable game loss. However, one of the rules of chess says that the player when it is his turn to move he must make a move or he will forfeit... forfeit the game by violation of the rules of chess.

03:24

So the unfortunate player in zugzwang is faced with two... two ...two ... two losing game options. He either makes a move and loses the game by making a bad move or he loses the game by not making a bad move, and ahh... and loses the game by breach of the rules of chess. So ahh... they... they, to celebrate that they call the mechanism zugzwang in chess, which means literally the compulsion to move. The player is beaten by the compulsion to move.

03:54

Even in the game of chess we see this quality of ahh... that is reflected in the life game that ahh... this quality that umm... that the player is under no... no particular threat. No particular threat and yet suddenly because of this compulsion to move that he loses the game. And similarly in life the player can be jogging along in games play, everything seems to be going well, when suddenly an event occurs, the next moment, immediately, he's facing a situation... he's in zugzwang. He hits a zugzwang situation and immediately goes into game loss. And it can be tremendously puzzling to the player because he just doesn't know amm... what went on, what's happening.

04:43

He's not under a tremendous duress from the opponent. He's not under tremendous duress from the... from the universe, but because of the particular circumstances that occur he's... game loss is inevitable. And that's the situation he finds himself in; it's a most puzzling situation.

05:03

What makes it particularly puzzling for the games player... upsetting for the games player is that he can't really blame anyone for the zugzwang. He doesn't know quite how he got...how he got overwhelmed, how he lost the game, because he's under no particular duress from anyone. And it's just because of the particular circumstances he finds himself in that he goes into game loss.

05:25

So psychologically the mechanism hangs fire on the time track. Anyone who's ahh... nearly anyone who's been zugzwanged in life, and most people have, you'll find that the incident will sit there as a great puzzlement. They just don't ... just don't know how it happened. They don't know quite what happened. They don't understand the mechanism of... of... of what happened to them and the unfortunate thing is that while this.... They don't understand what happened in the incident. The incident contains a... contains a "not know" a... a... a "not be known",

contains a mystery and while the incident contains a mystery it won't erase, and while the incident won't erase, of course, the "to know" goals package won't erase. Can't erase the "to know" goals package in the presence of mysteries, you see.

06:13

So the ahh... the... level 5... the whole of level 5 can be prevented from completing because of a zugzwang incident sitting on a person's track.

This is why I'm mentioning the mechanism; I have to mention it to you, that ahh... because you may need this data to get it apart. You may solve it, you may get the incident apart and discover it all for yourself, a person could do this like I discovered the mechanism in my own research, but never the less, this tape would ahh... would be helpful to you, particularly if you'd tried and tried and then despaired. Well this tape would then solve it for you, because I do understand the exact anatomy of Zugzwang and the solution to zugzwang does occur... I do explain in this tape.

06:58

Now without more ado I think the best ahh... best approach would be to give ahh... give an immediate example from life of ahh... of zugzwang.

A wealthy businessman umm... decided that ahh... he'd like to engage upon a little tax evasion and so he... he writes on his tax return... his tax return form that he's made ahh... ummm... that he's made a large donation to a well known charity, when in fact, of course, he hasn't. And umm... completes the tax return and sends it off to the tax office and thinks no more about it. And a few weeks later he gets telephone call from the charity thanking him very much for his donation and asking him when they can expect a check.

Now granting only that this businessman regards any unnecessary expenditure of money to the tax office or to the charity as a game loss, granting that, granting that and only granting that, then the man is zugzwang.

08:11

Now let's see... Let's examine this situation. Now first of its quite clear what has happened. That he sent his tax return in and because there's such a large amount of money involved on the donation to the charity that the tax office had contacted the charity and asked if it's true that he has made this donation to the charity. The charity upon receiving this information from the tax office said to the tax office, "we'll investigate, hand on, we'll let you know" and have thought to themselves, "right, well... we can well get a good donation here." So umm... they're very hopeful so that they immediately contact the businessman and work on the assumption that ahh... that he...he...he's made this donation and ahh... and they just simply want to know when they can expect to get the check. See?

09:03

So everyone... they're hopeful and the tax office is simply doing their job.

09:08

Now that is... that's how... that's how the situation came about, quite clearly. Now when we examine this situation that umm... The businessman isn't under any tremendous duress here, is he? There's no... no overwhelming force being directed against him, yet his game loss is inevitable. He... he... he... what could he do?

Well ahh... the first thing that he could do is pay the charity the amount that he said he would pay them in his tax return. He pays the charity. The charity then report back to the ahh... report back to the tax office that they've received the check from the ahh... from the businessman and that satisfies the tax office, and so their happy. And the charity is happy, the tax office is happy but the man has lost the game because he's now paid, in his own mind, an unnecessary expenditure of money to the... to the charity, so he suffered game loss.

10:07

So that's one option. The other option he can make is to... to not pay the charity, but if he doesn't pay the charity, the charity are bound to report back to the tax offices that they've received no donation from this businessman to their charity in that financial year. Now because of the large amount of money involved on the tax return the... the ahh... the tax office are bound to ahh... take some action on this and they will fine the man for forwarding a ahh... forwarding ahh... a false tax return. So again, he suffers game loss here; he's now paying out unnecessary money to the tax office.

10:51

So if he pays the charity he loses the game and if he doesn't pay the charity then he has to pay the tax office and again he loses the game, so either way... one way or the other he's gonna... he's gonna lose the game. So ahh... we say he's zugzwang and ahh... the game loss is inevitable.

11:12

Now I could give you many more examples of zugzwang but I won't do so because that example is quite sufficient for our purposes and is a good typical example of zugzwang. They don't know... not every zugzwang contains an intent on the part of the game player to break the law or do anything untoward but, never the less, ahh... that example is quite typical, quite typical of the zugzwang situation.

11:45

Now ... Now the first thing we must understand about zugzwang situation is that game loss is inevitable, don't miss that one. Game loss in zugzwang is inevitable. The person isn't going to

get out of the game loss, it's inevitable. One way or another he's going to lose the game. And ahh... it's our umm... it's our goal our purpose on this tape to discover just what is going on and why this is inevitable.

12:13

Well there's a few things we need to... to.... Technical terms and technical things we need to look at and examine. Then we can go ahead and do what we call a zugzwang analysis and you will see when we've completed the analysis the whole picture becomes very, very clear.

12:33

The Losing Game Option

So first of all let's take up one... the first of these technical terms.

The technical... The first of our technical terms we need to look at is this subject... is this subject of a losing game option. **A losing game option.**

Now this is a technical term in games play. It's a technical term and is defined as follows. A lo...a losing game option is any action that the player is free to undertake that he knows will lead to game loss. **Any action that the games player is free to undertake that he knows will lead to game loss.** End of definition.

So there's two... two... two things about the ahh... the losing game option that are important. One is that umm... that there is freedom of choice in it. **A person is free to ahh... to engage upon this action or is not fre... or is ... is free to engage upon the action or not to engage upon the action.** There is no compulsion. There's a free action.

13:45

And the other is that they know, they do know, consciously, aware, they do know that if they engage upon this action they will lose the game. That's why we call it... that's why...that's why we call it a losing game option.

13:58

Now every postulate that a person operates on in games play, any postulate, every postulate that person operates on can have a number of losing game options. Now I'll give you an example of this and you'll ... you'll see what I mean.

14:15

If a person is operating on the goal to... or the purpose to survive, this person is operating on the purpose to survive, then a losing game option is to throw themselves off a cliff. They know that if they throw themselves off a cliff they will lose the game; they will not survive.

They also know at...that's...that's game option A, so as we say,... to throw them.... "Losing game option A, throw themselves off a cliff" "Losing game option B, to shoot themselves through the heart with a bullet" their game... will cause them to die and cause them to lose the game when their running on the postulate to survive.

So you see that ahh... Any postulate can have a large number of umm... of umm... of losing game options. You see that?

15:13

It's not a one to one proposition. Not a one to one relationship between a postulate and a losing game option.

15:21

The other thing you need to know about the ahh... about the relationship here, between a postulate and losing game options is that if the postulate changes the losing game options change. That much is obvious on first principles but I thought I better mention it for completion... completeness sake.

15:38

Senior Encompassing Game

Now the next technical thing we need to understand, to come across and look at to understand this mechanism of zugzwang is the concept of a senior encompassing game; a senior encompassing game.

I won't give a precise definition of this I'll simply describe it to you and you'll... you'll... you'll understand what it is. By its name it's obviously ahh... the game the person is playing is surrounded by a larger game.

Ahh... an example of a senior encompassing game is all the games on this planet are played within the laws that govern... the physical laws that govern this universe. So the laws that govern the universe ... the laws that govern the physical universe are a senior encompassing game to any games that are played on this planet. You follow that?

16:36

Another example of a... of a senior encompassing game can be the laws of the country or the laws of the land in which you live. You may be playing certain games within the country in which you live but you're playing these within... within the structure of the laws of the land. You see that? In which you live.

17:04

Generally speaking there's only... senior encompassing games fall into two types. They either... they either... their either the... the ahh... their either the laws of the physical universe itself or their the laws of the land or the laws that your operating on in the society in which your living. They may be a something as simple as the... as the laws of chess... the game of chess, but they're, never the less, an agreed upon set of laws that when you play a game of chess you abide by these laws. So there again they're a part of the society in which you live. You see that?

17:35

So there's, generally speaking, only two types of senior encompassing game, the laws of the physical universe itself, and the laws of the society in which you live.

17:45

Ok so much... so much for that.

Now zugzwang comes about and this is... this is the inner datum of the inner datum about zugzwang, zugzwang comes about in games play when a situation arises where the senior encompassing game impinges upon the game of the player and produces a relationship between his losing game options of a particular type.

18:23

This relationship, assuming the... the ahh...let's call any two of the losing games options of a postulate, A and B. So we have this postulate and ahh... any two of its umm... any two of its losing game options of this postulate may be... we'll call... we'll call A and B.

The senior... In a Zugzwang situation the senior encompassing game impinges upon, but because of the circumstances, impinges upon the player and causes his losing game options to be related in the form "if not A then B" now if you've ahh... I'll go through it again. The... the zugzwang situation occurs when the situation is such that the senior encompassing game impinges upon the game of the player and causes any two of his losing game options of a postulate to be related in the form "if not A then B" and that ahh... that is zugzwang.

19:55

Zugzwang defined

I'll give you a formal definition of zugzwang, "**A player is said to be zugzwang when any two of his... any two of the losing game options of a postulate, call them A and B, are brought into the relationship "if not A then B" by the impingement of a senior encompassing game. The game loss in zugzwang is inevitable.**" Now when we look at that definition there we see why the games loss is inevitable. It's inevitable simply because if the person's games options or losing game options I should say are in the relationship "if not A then B" then if a person doesn't ... doesn't ahh... doesn't embark upon ahh... losing game option A then he must embark upon losing game option B and therefore would lose the game.

21:03

So he's in no choice, he's in this cliff stick of he either loses the game by... by adopting losing game option A or if he doesn't embark upon game option A he will embark upon game option not A... if he doesn't embark upon game option A then he will embark upon game option B and lose the game. See that? That is the zugzwang. That is the zugzwang mechanism.

21:36

Now if you follow this through so far... followed the complexity of this through so far you'll see that it's ahh... it's not surprising that the mechanism is com.... Is very deeply buried and is... and is very little understood. Why people get so terribly, terribly puzzled when they get zugzwanged. They simply do not understand the mechanism.

22:00

You have to be a bit of a logician. You have to be a bit of a psychologist and you have to be a bit of a mental researcher like me before you could even get close to understanding the mechanism of zugzwang in life.

22:13

For those of you who are logically inclined I can give you the logical propositions, the logical postulates of zugzwang. The person is operating on postulate X, shall we say, and postulate X has ahh... at least two losing game options which we will call A and B. OK?

There's our... there's our background and zugzwang occurs when the senior encompassing game impinges and brings about this following situation. We have "if A then not X," "if B then not X", "if not A then B". They are... just those three propositions, that's the end of those three propositions.

23:12

Now when you examine those three propositions in logic you will find that the valid... one of the valid deductions from those three propositions is that postulate X is reduced to zero. That when those three propositions hold then X... X equals zero. In other words, propositions... postulate X cannot maintain. In other words it goes into loss. That's why the game loss is inevitable in Zugzwang. postulate X cannot... cannot... cannot succeed, it can only fail under those circumstances.

So this being ... the point... for the purpose... for the benefit of magicians who may be listening to this tape is that that is the logic of zugzwang and if you write it down on a piece of paper and do the necessary ahh... necessary piece of logical deduction you'll see that what I say is true. That's the logic of zugzwang.

24:08

Now let us now... apply what we know to what we call the zugzwang analysis, zugzwang analysis. Now the most difficult part of the analysis is understanding what we're doing, in other words if you've understood this so far the rest is easy. The difficult bit is... is behind us on the tape.

A zugzwang analysis is simply consists of isolating losing game options A and B. once you've got them it will stand out like a sore thumb that... that... that ahh... that there... there... there in the relationship "if not A then B" then you'll see then why the games loss was inevitable so the analysis simply boils down to... zugzwang analysis simply boils down to listing... going ... getting the situation at the point a zugzwang occurred in the sit... picking up the situation on the track at the point where zugzwang occurred, when you became aware that game loss was inevitable here and listing your losing game options.

Just list them, there won't be many. Usually there's only two, three, four, half a dozen at the very outside. Sometimes there just two, most commonly there's just two, call them A and B and you will see in a glance that ahh... that your faced with a situation of either adopting A and if you don't adopt A then you must adopt B. But because B is a losing game option game loss is inevitable. And once you've done that you understand the zugzwang.

The zugzwang, the mystery comes out of the zugzwang. You see how the senior encompassing game has been forced. That peculiar relationship of "if not A then B" between the two losing game options in the situation of your postulate in the situation and you understand that... then you understand everything about the ahh... about the zugzwang in that situation and it collapses. You see that?

26:30

You don't really need to know what your postulate was but you will find out what your postulate is, you don't really need to know what your postulate was once you start listing your losing game options the postulates that these losing game options are... are associated with or connected to will pop into your mind so that you will discover the postulates.

There's only one postulate that's involved, there's not a number of postulates, it's just one postulate that goes into failure in zugzwang, and it is the failure of that postulate that brings about the game loss. There's not a number of postulates that go into failure in zugzwang, there's just the one.

27:08

Now lets apply this to our... what we've been... this analysis now to our... our examples of zugzwang. First we'll apply it to the game of chess. Well here the application is so trivial that umm... it will fall apart as we touch it.

27:25

Umm... here the losing game options. The players got two losing game options. A he makes a move, that's A he makes a move, bearing in mind their all bad moves and losing game option B is to refuse to make a move.

Well the senior encompassing game here is the laws of chess, that's the senior encompassing game, and if he's in... the zugzwang situation is such, when he's in the zugzwang situation then the... the... the... he's in a situation where not A... "if not A then B" maintains, the laws of chess insist on that. Now that's the senior encompassing game impinging upon the particular game of chess that's being played.

28:20

And ahh... he ... if he... in other words he's faced with the situation where if he doesn't make a move then ahh... he's refusing to make a move and if he's refusing to make a move he loses the game by... by... by default, by violation of the rules of chess. In other words it...that's... that's losing game option B. see that?

28:42

Now there's the analysis of the... of zugzwang in chess. The postulate that the player is operating on in the game of chess is to not to lo... is to not lose the game, to not lose it. He'll set... the chess player is always happy to either win the game or draw the game, his goal is not to lose it. So that's his postulate and his lose... two losing game options will ahh... will deny this umm... this postulate.

Ok that's the complete... completes the analysis in the chess game.

29:16

Now let's take up the analysis now... apply the analysis to the umm... to the ... to the business man and his donations to charity. Well ahh... let's start off with the postulate here. The postulate I've already given is that the businessman doesn't want to make any unnecessary expenditure of money. That's his postulate.

29:43

So his losing game option A is to pay the charity. That's losing game option A, and losing game option B is to pay the tax office fine. Now the senior encompassing game here is the laws of the land and is the laws of the tax office... of the tax system... tax office system, which says that ahh... that under certain circumstances the tax office is bound to check up on what people put on their tax returns. That's a standard part of their operating procedure, is to make checks, particularly when there's large amounts of money involved.

So ahh... that's the laws of the land and that's the... that's the laws of that umm... that he invokes there... of the senior encompassing game, and this senior encompassing game steps in and zugzwangs him. The senior encompassing game impinges upon his game that he's playing

and enforces this relationship of “if not A then B” between his losing game options and says that if you don’t pay the charity then you will pay the tax office fine. “If not A then B”, and thereby reduces him to zugzwang and inevitable game loss. You get it?

31:13

And you see how easy it is. Now all the bits are easily explainable. The whole... whole mechanism comes apart when you understand the postulate, the losing game options, the senior encompassing game and this peculiar relationship of “if not A then B” that umm... that the ahh... under certain circumstances the senior encompassing game can impose upon the losing game options.

31:45

What puzzles a person, always puzzles a player about zugzwang is that ahh... he makes a postulate, which is not in... in ahh... which is not in opposition to any postulate in the universe or any postulate of the... or any law of the society in which he lives, necessarily. He makes this postulate and the next thing he knows is that the law of the universe or the law of the society is... under certain circumstances steps in and ... and enforces game loss upon him.

This is what makes it so terribly, terribly puzzling. He doesn’t understand the mechanism of the senior encompassing game and the fact that the... that he’s not living in a vacuum. He... He’s living in a society, he’s living in a universe and this universe can impinge and can impose upon him and can upset the affairs of mice and men. You see what I’m getting at here?

32:40

This is ... this is what... what he doesn’t grasp. When the person understands this, understands that there is such a thing as a senior encompassing game and that he’s got games within games then he un... starts to understand the ahh... the ahh... the zugzwang mechanism and he just adds to that this subject of the losing game options and that peculiar relationship that gets imposed upon them of “if not A then B” between two... any two of the losing games options of a postulate then that’s the whole picture.

33:16

Now this analysis will take apart and zugzwang situation. The data I’ve given you on this tape is sufficient to take apart any zugzwang situation. If you’ve got an incident on your track when you were zugzwanged then the point to pick it up. You pick up the incident at the point at which... where you... game loss became inevitable. Where you suffered the inevitable game loss and that’s the point to address and that’s the point where you will find the... most easily find your losing game options and most easily find the senior encompassing game and so forth. It will all be there in that instant in time where... where the senior encompassing game imposed itself upon the junior game you might say and imposed zugzwang upon it. that’s the point where you pick up the incident. If you pick it up at that exact point all the data I’ve given you, all the bits will be there. They’ll just fall, BANG, into place, bang, bang, bang, bang. The zugzwang will come

apart very, very quickly and... and ahh... in a flash it will... will come back.... Come apart and you'll understand, possibly for the first time in many years just how come you lost that particular game.

34:30

A games player if he understands this mechanism very, very thoroughly and very, very well and is able to change his postulates very quickly. In other words his postulates are in state of... in a fluid state, he can avoid the zugzwang because there's always intimations that it's happening. He always gets, if only for a few fractions of a second, he... he's got... he's always got sometime. Sometimes he's got days, weeks, months but he's always got some time in which to change his postulates and avoid the game loss.

35:03

In the game of chess it's inevitable. He can't avoid the game loss in chess because the rules of chess are quite... are quite inflexible, quite fixed and he abides by and agrees by those rules and so forth.

But let's take the example of the ahh... of the businessman. At the point where he received that phone call from the charity requesting... thanking him for his donation and asking when their going... when they can expect to receive a check if at that point he changed his mind about this postulate about what he considered game loss and regarding the expenditure of money. In other words if he no longer regarded it as a... as a... as a game loss to pay the charity, he can escape the zugzwang; you see? He could write out a check for the charity and say, "well I'm not losing... I'm not losing the game when I pay the charity" so he could simply write out a check for the charity and everyone would be happy and he would not lose the game. If he can change his mind and... an... an... and adopt that.... Adopt that mental attitude.

36:05

The non compulsive games player could do that. The com... compulsive games player can't do that, so he suffers the zugzwang.

So as I said earlier on, on the tape, the people most likely to suffer zugzwang are the compulsive game players. There in... they... there in a state of compulsive games play which fixes their postulates. Their fixidity of postulates fixes them to such an extent that they can't change their postulates at a moment's notice when they have to in a zugzwang situation so they go into inevitable game loss. So it's the compulsive games player that suffers most zugzwang. The non compulsive games player can avoid it.

36:50

It's umm... actually it's a very interesting observation upon our society, and how little is understood about life and games play in our society that this mechanism of zugzwang is not understood. I can assure you that the mechanism is.. is... is totally... not understood in our

society and the fact that it is not understood is a total indictment upon our society in terms of how much it understands about life and games play, because the mechanism isn't a difficult one to take apart if you study it and ahh... and are familiar with a few basics of life and livingness.

37:26

Finally and very, very briefly there is a connection between the subject of... of zugzwang, overwhelm and the subject of the game strategies. Quite obviously if you're in a frame of mind to do so and you know the losing game options and postulates of your opponent and the senior encompassing game of your opponent it's not difficult to set up a situation which puts your opponent in zugzwang and therefore inevitable game loss.

There are a number of game strategies called zugzwang game strategies. They used to be regarded in life as rather fiendish. Nobody really understands them but umm... they can be highly workable by people who do have some understanding of this mechanism and have an urge to use such game strategies. So be prepared to find a connection between the subject of zugzwang and the subject of game strategies in life and livingness.

38:24

Well I see I'm coming up to the end of this tape now. I don't want to run off the end so we will close at this point. I hope this material was helpful to you. Bye, bye for now.

End of tape

38:32