

THE UK NATIONAL LOTTERY  
AND  
CHARITABLE GAMBLING

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DECLARATION OF SOLE AUTHORSHIP

I affirm that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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# ABSTRACT

Sociological studies of the lottery have largely underplayed both the rich history of lotteries in the UK and the richness of meaning that it bears today for its players. They prefer, instead, to limit themselves to issues of pathological and deviant gambling, and to issues of class and regressive taxation.

Historically, the growth to maturity in the eighteenth century of UK state lotteries was co-extensive with the establishment and institutionalization of rational capitalism. Their banning in 1826 reflected the separation of legitimate financial speculation from gambling.

Sociological theories of gambling have found in it a similar tense affinity with the values of rational capitalism. Gambling is largely conceived, in one way or another, as a safety-valve allowing release from an irresolvable tension in capitalism between prudence and risk-taking.

The current UK National Lottery, however, creates difficulties for these theories. In this thesis I show that the ‘invisibility’ of the lottery – its privatization and its peculiar embeddedness in everyday life – renders problematic a central assumption of theories of gambling: that the release afforded is derived from its providing an exciting focus of economic irrationality.

The charitable aspect of the Lottery seems to be in contrast to the Lottery as gambling because the altruistic impulse seems to be fundamentally opposed to the acquisitive spirit of gambling. I show how the Lottery is, by its nature and by its use, able to arbitrate between these apparently contradictory pulls. Thus, in the case of the Lottery, one may add to Devereux’s list of ways in which gambling is able to serve as a mediator between irreconcilable value strains in capitalism a capacity to offer either a release or, indeed, a rapprochement between those values.

The contribution of the thesis is three-fold: a critical theoretical appraisal and development of theories of gambling, new empirical data (31 unstructured in-depth interviews) in an under-researched field, and an historical analysis of the relationship between lotteries and aspects of the development of capitalism.

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✿ *For Joan O' Mahony & Felix Ottaway O' Mahony* ✿

FELIX QUI POTUIT RERUM COGNOSCERE CAUSAS,  
ATQUE METUS OMNES ET INEXORABILE FATUM  
SUBIECIT PEDIBUS STREPITUMQUE ACHERONTIS AVARI.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

It was only an 'opeless fancy,  
It passed like an Ipril dye,  
But a look an' a word an' the dreams they  
    stirred  
They 'ave stolen my 'eart awye!

—George Orwell, 1984

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

In 1994, just after the first prize draw, one could overhear talk about the Lottery everywhere one went. I remember in particular a train journey where I listened in as two people discussed in fine detail such subjects as what their numbers were and what they were going to do with the jackpot that they were inevitably going to win. It began as the train left the station, and ended an hour or so later, when the two reached their destination. The final comment that I heard was: “Oh well, we probably won’t win anyway”.

These sorts of casual interactions seem, in retrospect, to be a sort of ‘everyday adventure’ for their participants. Like Simmel’s adventure, they were moments of a “dropping out of the continuity of life” [205, p. 187], but defined by a “decisive boundedness” [p. 189], by the context from which they departed and to which they would necessarily return; for the escape from everyday life that such conversations allows is, like going on a holiday, only meaningful if one knows that one has to return to everyday life.

Several years later, when I began research for this thesis, I was struck by a similar quality in the unstructured interviews that I conducted: a certain sort



of a pleasure, not only for the interviewees, but also for the interviewer, that was somehow different from the usual pleasure that people derive from being asked their views and from being part of some research.

In 1984, George Orwell has Winston Smith overhear a group of proles arguing heatedly about what numbers have come up in the lottery:

—Can't you bleeding well listen to what I say? I tell you no number ending in seven ain't won for over fourteen months!

—Yes, it 'as, then!

—No, it 'as not! Back 'ome I got the 'ole lot of 'em for over two years wrote down on a piece of paper. I takes 'em down reg'lar as the clock. An' I tell you, no number ending in seven—

—Yes, a seven 'as won! I could pretty near tell you the bleeding number. Four oh seven, it ended in. It were in February — second week in February.

—February your grandmother! I got it all down in black and white. An' I tell you, no number—

—Oh, pack it in!' said the third man.

They were talking about the Lottery. Winston looked back when he had gone thirty metres. They were still arguing, with vivid, passionate faces. The Lottery, with its weekly pay-out of enormous prizes, was the one public event to which the proles paid serious attention. It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive. It was their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant.

Winston Smith found hope in the proles because they had a freedom to experience passions that were forbidden to others. These passions were, however, evoked by trivialities; deliberately so, for they were devised by Big Brother as an adventure of the 'bread and circuses' kind to keep the proles reasonably contented and in their place. In chapter 7, he is excited to hear what he hopes and believes is the beginning of a riot that might presage a revolution, but it turns out to be a woman who is angry that she has missed out on buying a cheap and shoddy tin saucepan. Later on in the novel, he experiences a sort of

epiphany when he hears a woman singing a popular song: “The birds sang, the proles sang. the Party did not sing”. One sees something similar in the “vivid passion” with which the proles argue about the numbers that have come up in the Lottery, the “staggering feats of memory” that these illiterate people display, and their eager consumption of “systems, forecasts, and lucky amulets”. With the Oceania Lottery, these passions are for something not merely trivial, but, as Winston knows because of his position in the Party, something entirely futile: the Lottery of Oceania is fixed; there are no real winners.

The real Lottery is, of course, not fixed. It does not resemble Orwell’s lottery in many other respects, although some may be disposed to think of it in this way.

Unlike those of the proles, the kinds of conversations one might overhear are almost never heated. They are, in fact, marked by a pleasant sociability. Indeed, there are few other topics that seem to foster such geniality between conversants. The Lottery just seems to be an ideal subject for talk, as I discovered when I conducted the interviews for this thesis, some of which went far beyond the single hour, almost all of which went far beyond the range of subjects that I had envisaged to be related to playing the Lottery and to gambling. The real Lottery is, it would seem, far richer in people’s imaginations than Orwell’s lottery. The passions it evokes are less potent, less “vivid” perhaps, but they are more congenial than the anger of the proles, and they have a deeper hinterland than the meagre referents of tin saucepans, vapid popular songs, and the numbers in the draw.

The fertility of lotteries in the imagination finds a parallel in culture and literature. Not so very far back in its philology, the lot as the element of a gambling device converges with the notion, providential or otherwise, of one’s station or fate in life (one’s *lot*, one’s *allotted span*) and with the distribution of resources (*allotment*). Lotteries also lend themselves well to metaphor and simile. Journalists and politicians, for example, speak of “postcode lotteries”, particularly for the provision of health-care.<sup>1</sup> Cecil Rhodes famously said “Remember that you

1. See, for example, *Postcode lottery in GP services*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2116336.stm>.

are an Englishman, and have consequently won first prize in the lottery of life". Moral philosophers speak of the 'natural lottery': "morally arbitrary natural or social advantages or disadvantages: innate talents or handicaps, advantageous or disadvantageous family situations" [120, p. 7]. In literature, lotteries have been used as a figure for false hopes, as in *1984* and, at a more intimate scale, Chekhov's short story *The Lottery*, where the momentary belief that they have won the lottery opens up a broad terrain of hopes and dissatisfactions for a married couple. Other novelists have used the lottery to explore themes of fate, chance, luck, and arbitrariness, most notably in Borges's *The Lottery of Babylon*, where every aspect of life is determined by a lottery run by the mysterious Company; it begins "Like all men in Babylon, I have been a proconsul; like all, a slave. I have also known omnipotence, opprobrium, imprisonment". Another piece of fiction worthy of note is Shirley Jackson's short story *The Lottery*, where a lottery is used to show the arbitrariness of social scapegoating: it is used to select a member of the village in which it is set to be stoned to death. And there is also Jeff Noon's *Nymphomation*, where a new mathematical theory allows numbers to 'breed' until they take over the city of Manchester, dominating it with a sort of living lottery; a mathematics professor and his students seek to beat the numbers and destroy the game.

The obvious material attractions of playing the Lottery, its power to excite the imagination, and the depth and fecundity of lottery tropes and figures go some way to explain something else that I found curious and intriguing about the Lottery at the time: it seemed to have always been here. Rather like the vegetation that appears in a desert after rainfall, all of the practices, idioms, and beliefs about lotteries seemed to have been lying dormant waiting for the right conditions for a vigorous and luxuriant efflorescence. One part of the explanation for this is, perhaps, that while individual actors may have done so, culture has not forgotten the long and rich history of lotteries in the UK. No one whom I interviewed had any idea that lotteries had been employed from the seventeenth century onwards, nor had I until I began to look at the subject. There are some striking similarities between the lottery culture then and the lottery culture now. What appears to be a sort of 'cultural memory' of playing the lottery

may, however, be explained rather better by finding affinities between the two historical periods, both of which witnessed extraordinary changes in economy and society: for the one, it was the formation of the major institutions of capitalism; for the other, it was the collapse of the post-war Keynesian consensus, the globalizing of economies, and, particularly relevant for this thesis, the return to *laissez-faire* policies and privatized political economies. It is in these changes that the major differences between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries' lottery players may be found.

A good example of this is class. In both periods, lottery players came from all classes, but there was an important difference in how they played. In the eighteenth century, lottery tickets were relatively expensive – between £5.00 and £10.00 – the initial purchasers would either sell shares in tickets to poorer players or devise insurance schemes by which poorer players could speculate upon the draw without actually taking part in it themselves.<sup>1</sup> In the current Lottery, on the other hand, lottery play seems to cut across all classes.<sup>2</sup> Thus, while all classes participate, they do so in different ways now than they did then. This seems to confound to some degree many class-based understandings of the lottery. But there is one respect in which an initial exploration of the Lottery did seem to involve class: I, along with one or two of my interviewees and many of my acquaintances and some of my interviewees, have no inclination at all to play the lottery, while others, ostensibly from the same social and economic groups, are extremely enthusiastic players. It was, in fact, an initial exploration of this matter that led me to the Lottery as a thesis subject: why was it that I knew that I would never have a conversation similar to the one that I heard on that train?

Another non-player, one of my interviewees [interview: Nick M], who seemed to take pleasure in surprising me with the information that he did not play the Lottery, said that he had always been “immune” to the attractions of gambling, “not on a moral grounds, but I’ve... when I was at school, some children, boys, played the horses, or played pinball machines, and... I just thought it was throw-

1. See chapter 2 for more details.

2. 2004 data from the Henley Centre, cited in Camelot's *Social Report* [33, p. 6].

ing money away really”. He did join the work syndicate, but this was because he was the manager and wanted to “show willing” with his employees and he withdrew soon afterwards. He said that he was uneasy about making any moral judgements about Lottery players. At his workplace, there were a few who had opposed setting up a syndicate on moral or political grounds, but he said that was not his view. Playing the Lottery was simply something that did not interest him, except for the occasional annoyance of the queues at the shops when he was trying to buy cigars, when he might “curse” the scratchcard buyers and the Lottery itself. In some degree, such views may be understood merely as aspects of personality: his use of the word “immune” is felicitous here. And they may, to another and greater degree, be explained by social class: a manager with an established career might be less interested in changing his or her life than someone with no immediate prospects; but this does not sit well with the data that playing the Lottery is well-represented in all classes.

It was interesting that non-players are generally more reticent about their reasons for not playing than players are about the problems that winning the jackpot might cause. For some, they imagined it would affect their careers, that it might “derail everything... throw it into confusion” [interview: Peter F] as one put it. These people, typically from the middle classes, were people who had a clear career narrative to follow, for whom the interruption brought about by a jackpot win would throw their carefully constructed and hard-earned plans into disarray. On the other hand, some players, typically from working-class backgrounds, were more concerned about its effects upon their sense of community. The best example of this from the interview data is [interview: Douglas K], a retired merchant seaman, who said

Betty and Douglas K Douglas: You couldn't stay here... I mean... everyone would know. Even if you tried to stay the same. When I went down the pub everyone would know. You'd have to move to Canford Cliffs [a well-to-do area of Bournemouth] or somewhere, and when you were there, who'd want to know you?

This is how someone *imagines* a win would affect their life, but I also had

the opportunity to interview some jackpot winners: a group of workers in Manchester whose twelve-strong syndicate had won a jackpot of £1.88 million. Many of the winners were unwilling to be interviewed, and two wished to remain entirely anonymous, to the extent that they did not even tell me their names. The winnings, when divided up, came to £157,000 each, a large amount but not one that would be expected to be life-changing. However, the two anonymous interviewees were clearly traumatized by the money. One, in fact said that she regretted having been part of the syndicate, and that she felt trapped by the win: she could not pass over the opportunity, but she did not know what to do with it. Both had become suspicious of the motives of others, having felt that relatives were surreptitiously approaching them for gifts and loans. On the other hand, the interviewee with whom I made the initial contact [interview: Jackie D] was very confident about her ability to deal with the win, saying that her husband, a stockbroker, knew how to handle money, unlike her colleagues.

It is difficult to determine what will make one person play the Lottery, and another not do so; it was reported recently that Prince Harry plays regularly, for example [178]. For non-players who choose not to do so for ethical or religious reasons, there is little depth to their decision not to play: it is simply the following of an imperative. But it is clear that those people who do play have a richer and more detailed imagination about it than do those who do not about their non-playing. There is something about playing the Lottery that allows people scope for thinking about their position in society, their relationships with others, and their attitudes to money in ways that are not available for non-players. This observation is central to my method of selecting interviewees, as I will discuss later in this introduction.

## 1.2 GAMBLING AND LOTTERIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The UK National Lottery has enjoyed remarkable success since its first draw on 19 November 1994. Currently, around 70% of adults play the lottery regularly,

and some 94% of those eligible to do so have played at one time or another [35].<sup>1</sup> Over the seven years of the first licence Camelot raised £10.6 billion for the Good Causes [34].

In 1997, the average expenditure on the Lottery per household was £3.70 per week [2, p. 4]; Camelot reports that the average spend on the Lottery in 2006 is £3.00. This represents approximately 1% of household expenditure, a similar amount to that spent on biscuits and cakes. The pleasure people gain from the Lottery has been calculated by the Institute for Fiscal Studies at 71p per week per adult, in total £1.8 billion per annum [85]. This is the equivalent of a 1p reduction in the rate of income tax. Although its macro-economic impact is “modest”, the use of hypothecation – the directing of its revenue into specific “good causes” – has meant that it has become a significant source of income for many organizations. Further, the effects of the Lottery income multiply and “ripple” outwards; capital projects have received a huge boost from such funding. Cambridge Econometrics calculate that an extra £1 billion per annum has been generated by the increase in construction demand as a result of millennium projects associated with the Lottery, some 5% of all construction output in the country (cited [2, p. 8]).

There has also been a huge growth in other forms of gambling. The most recent large-scale study of gambling in the UK, the 1999 *British Gambling Prevalence Survey* [209] found that 90% of those interviewed had gambled in the the last year, 50% in the week before they were interviewed, with an average weekly expenditure of £3.50. In the UK, the gambling industry has been estimated to be growing at the rate of 3% per annum [151]. Most notably, gambling on the Internet has become big business; companies such as PartyGaming, 888, and SportingBet have seen 50% growth on earnings per share since 2005.

Alongside the commercial growth of gambling in recent years, there has been a corresponding growth in social-scientific literature and research on the subject.

1. There had been a drop in consumption in the early part of the twenty-first century, but this seems to have been reversed recently. Lotteries are notorious for the need to keep fuelling the fires of consumption (creating “thunder” in marketing parlance) [50], [49], [114]. Camelot seems to have achieved this recently with a proliferation of new games and new ways of playing using media such as the Internet and text-messaging.

This has tended to concentrate on problematic gambling, notably compulsive gambling, and addiction. The plot in figure 1.1 demonstrates this growth.<sup>1</sup> In

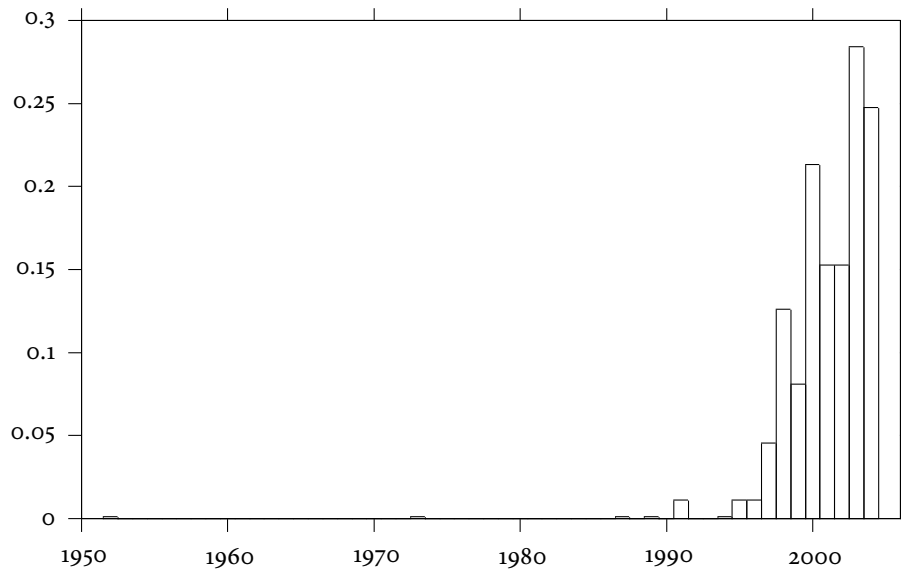


FIGURE 1.1: Yearly proportion of gambling articles whose subject is pathological gambling (data from IBSS).

2004, almost one-third of all articles about gambling were concerned with pathological forms. The proportion of such articles would be all the higher were it not for the preponderance of publications from economics, where gambling is very frequently used in analyses, particularly within game-theoretical models.

Several commentators have noted that the approaches taken by gambling research are heavily influenced by the ideology of the researcher. McGowan, for example, notes that the USA National Commission on the Impact of Gambling classifies its members according to whether they are in support of or against gambling [155, p. 279]; research sponsored by anti-gambling bodies tends to stress the effects of gambling and the risk of addiction, while that sponsored by pro-gambling bodies stresses its revenue-generation capability [p. 284]. The effect of this, he suggests, is that the costs and benefits of gambling tend to be

1. Derived from an analysis of data from a search for all gambling articles up to 2004 in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences on-line bibliography (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/IBSS/Default.htm>). Records were classified using all subject description keywords related to pathological gambling.



over-estimated, since the position of the researcher (or of the research) tends to underplay the one or the other [p. 285].

McMillen takes this point further, suggesting that theories of gambling are shaped by normative and ‘culturally specific’ theories of liberal social science. She suggests, in particular, that “there has been too much of an emphasis on individual behaviour rather than a broader understanding of the changing gambling phenomenon” [157, p. 8], and calls for a probing of the “complex social relations lying beneath the surface data of legal gambling”. The “individualism” against which she sets her store is that kind of sociology which concentrates on what gambling means for its participants; gambling, she says, “is as much an expression of capital-state relations and political-legal decisions as of individual behaviour” [p. 9]. While agreeing with the sentiment that gambling should be understood politically as well as individually, I would contend that, at least with respect to lotteries, there is little evidence of such an individualistic bias in sociological research. Outside of studies of addiction and compulsive gambling, most research, in fact, pays little if any attention to the meanings attached to gambling. And within studies of addiction and compulsive gambling, the “meaning” is always sought with respect to the question of how individuals become compulsive gamblers.

There is, in fact, very little research that even approaches an attempt to understand the meaning of lottery playing for its players in any sociologically interesting way. Devereux’s *Gambling and the Social Structure* [60], discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, is one work on gambling that does so. As a structural-functional analysis of gambling, and one which takes lotteries as one of its principal topics, it is, by definition, concerned with the culture and hence the “meaning” of gambling. But, as such it is, of course, also concerned with the complex social relations underlying those meanings, and especially with their social function. The canonical charge against *this* sort of view is that meaning here is taken to be a bearer of structure for the norms and values of society itself.

It is sensible to take note of McMillen’s assertion that meaning is always to be studied in relation to historical and political forces. And it is also sensible to

heed the problems of reading characteristics of gambling as functional elements serving a hypostatized conception of society. Thankfully, gambling has much to offer as a sociological subject within these parameters.

Texts from Devereux's 1949 text onwards have drawn attention to the paucity of sociologically rigorous attempts to understand gambling activities. The 1976 US Commission on the Review of the National Policy on Gambling [46] discovered less than one page's worth of references to gambling related research in social sciences literature [88, p. 108]. A similar situation holds in the UK. In its final report the 1978 Royal Commission on Gambling [189]<sup>1</sup>, whose support for a "national lottery for good causes" led eventually to the introduction of the National Lottery, recommended strongly that a body be set up to conduct research into the social and psychological effects of gambling since little was known about its effects, and hence of any new responsibilities that the state would gain with its further involvement in gambling. The practical measure it called for was the setting up of a gambling research centre which would monitor the actions of gambling bodies and conduct research into the effects of gambling on its participants. This call has been echoed by the medical and psychological professions [83, p.8], [156]. So far this has not been realized. The National Lottery Commission, the Lottery monitoring 'watchdog' only fulfils one half of this role and many critics have claimed that it has even failed to live up to this more restricted mandate. Furthermore, the next and most recent Select Committee report on gambling, published in 2001, remarks that

As with the Rothschild Commission, more than two decades ago, we were struck by how little is known about either normal or problem gambling. We had very little in the way of hard evidence to guide our discussions. [92, §1.30]

In the following section, it goes on to recommend that "research be carried out to understand the nature of normal, responsible, gambling behaviour and to understand the development of, and risk factors for, problem gambling". This neglect of gambling research is of a piece with the historical ambivalence of

1. The Rothschild Report.

the state in matters of gambling and its predominantly piecemeal attempts to get to grips with it. There is clearly a recognition that allowing the setting up of state-run public lotteries is potentially problematic in as much as the state becomes implicated in moral issues of encouraging activities that many hold to be more or less deviant, and in the *consequences* of its encouraging people to do so. On the other hand, the attractions of lotteries – extra revenue and, perhaps, ‘bread and circuses’ for the masses – seem to carry greater force.

This emphasis on the ‘positive’ aspects of gambling in the state’s policies for the Lottery has its mirror image in the key texts of the sociology of gambling: they are by and large centred around the deviant aspects of gambling (with the exception of Goffman and Geertz), under-emphasizing or even ignoring its everyday normal aspects. And where gambling is examined from the standpoint of normalness, it is often understood privatively, as something that is distinguished by the absence of some quality or property; this becomes especially problematic when one looks to the roots of conceptions of gambling in conceptions of play, as I show in each chapter of this thesis, for the understanding of gambling and play as the negative space of normal aspects of life, such as work, always carries with it an implied separation of “normal” gambling from normality itself.

The development of sociological theories and research into gambling would be of much use if the calls for better understanding were ever taken seriously and at times other than the occasional moral panic about the addictiveness of scratchcards, but there are more sociologically homely justifications for its study as Frey points out:

If we know anything at all about gambling, we know that its popularity cuts across all class, racial, and ethnic lines; and that in many cases a greater proportion of any society are gamblers than non-gamblers. Thus gambling behavior is a perfect example of what sociologists seek to study: it is a persistent and institutionalized form of behavior. To make it even more attractive, it is often classified as deviant behavior – more specifically, a victimless crime, long a stronghold of sociological attention [88, p.108].

Although it is true, as he claims, that gambling is universal, widespread and persistent, this is not in and of itself an adequate claim for its importance. What needs to be shown is that it is socially and historically embedded in significant and non-trivial ways. Only in certain kinds of strongly religious societies, such as those governed by the Muslim Shar'ia law which explicitly forbids it, is gambling both formally and informally, *de jure* and *de facto*, absolutely forbidden rather than either morally deprecated but grudgingly accepted or wholeheartedly embraced. In most societies, and especially capitalist western ones, it occupies a liminal space somewhere between 'good' and 'bad.' This ambivalence, bundled up together with its persistence and the entwinement of the strong threads of its history with those of the development of capitalism, of secularization, and of leisure is what makes for its richness as a topic.

### 1.3 RESEARCH STYLE AND METHODS

The extreme ends of lottery play may attract the sociological eye most readily: the jackpot winners and the scratchcard addicts. But, I suggest, the real meaning of the Lottery is to be found in its "ordinary" players: those who play regularly with little return on their expenditure. This is not because of their relative strength in numbers, but because it is within them that aspects of the Lottery are the most densely textured. For a jackpot winner, questions of playing the Lottery are resolved into questions of how to spend the money; for the scratchcard addict, the main meaning of the Lottery is how to get the next "fix". For the ordinary player, on the other hand, these sorts of questions remain unresolved: the questions "what would I do with the jackpot?" and "why do I play when I stand little chance of winning?" have greater degrees of freedom of response than "what shall I do with all this money?" and "where can I get my next hand-full of scratchcards?". Because of this, it is possible to think of the Lottery within its everyday world and amongst its ordinary players as a sort of interface between the ordinary and the extraordinary. It sits at once in the world of fantastic escape from the burdens of everyday life and in the everyday world of budgeting, shopping, and casual conversation. Furthermore,

the Lottery may allow its players access to what Simmel, in *The Adventurer* calls “the great forms in which we shape the substance of life”, namely “the syntheses, antagonisms, or compromises between chance and necessity” [205, p. 191]. Gambling, which takes for its substance the relation between chance and necessity, is a good place to seek out the articulations of such forms in contemporary society. Rather like Simmel’s handle, it may be seen as a kind of “mediating bridge” [203, p. 271] between the life of the individual and large scale social processes. And, what Simmel notes of the handle is also true of the “ordinary” lottery play: “precisely because of its superficiality, it reveals the range of the category to the fullest” [p. 274].

In order to satisfy McMillen’s assertion that gambling is as much about political, economic, and social processes as it is about “meaning” for individuals, this thesis aims not merely to be a report on the data, but to balance the three dimensions of the research: empirical, historical, and theoretical. It seeks to come to an understanding of the Lottery as an unusual, and indeed possibly unique, “bridge” between the concrete business of playing week after week and historical tendencies, social processes, and fundamental forms that govern our lives.

The empirical work consisted of 31 unstructured interviews<sup>1</sup>, mostly with players of the Lottery who had not won anything more than small amounts, but including some with people who had won significant amounts. There were no especial issues of sampling for these, since the aim was not to establish representativeness. The interviews were conducted in London, Bournemouth, Manchester, and Bury. For some interviews, I made the initial contact using posters in the workplaces of friends and relatives, others were introductions sought from the initial interviews, and a few were opportunistic: I came across the Manchester jackpot winners, for example, through a friend who worked in the same department.

The historical work involved a systematic examination of literature on lotteries from Gataker’s 1627 *Of The Nature and Use of Lots: A Treatise Historical and Theological* [93] onwards. Ashton’s 1893 *A History of English Lotteries* [4]

1. See appendix A for the topic guide and a sample interview.

and Ewen's *Lotteries and Sweepstakes: An Historical, Legal, and Ethical Survey of their Introduction, Suppression, and Re-establishment in the British Isles* [84] are mainstays of introductions to texts on lotteries, but neither of these texts may be taken as a reliable historical record. Hence, for the historical dimension of this thesis I returned to the primary texts, with a particular emphasis on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Furthermore, lotteries share their history with the histories of insurance, financial markets, and probability theory, and while this is often remarked upon, there is no analysis that brings them together in quite the way that I do in chapter 2, and in chapter 3, where I show the historical links between these and the development of rational capitalism, their connexions to sociological theories of gambling and their relevance to contemporary lottery play.

#### 1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY I examine the uses to which lotteries and the idea of lotteries have been put, from biblical times to today. In particular, I look at two periods of state lotteries: the eighteenth century and the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. I describe how the history of lotteries is bound up with, among others, the histories of the institutions of capitalism (financial markets and insurance), of charitable giving, of mathematics, and of jurisprudence. More generally, I find in the history of lotteries affinities between their uses, social meanings, and technologies and the development of what Max Weber styled rational ascetic capitalism.

CHAPTER 3: THEORIES OF GAMBLING A review of sociological theories of gambling: following on from the historical work of the previous chapter, this one concentrates on those theories that are specified in terms of the relation of gambling to modernity: the relationship between rational calculativeness and pleasure-seeking, the relationship between self-interest and the interests of the collective, and the relationship between an ethic of acquisition and an ethic of welfare. Thus, I principally examine:

- Thorstein Veblen's analysis of gambling in *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, in which he finds in gambling an atavistic nostalgia for the pre-capitalistic period, one which is inappropriate for modern society.
- Edward Devereux's *Gambling and the Social Structure: A Sociological Study of Lotteries and Horse Racing in Contemporary America*, in which, unlike Veblen, he finds in gambling something that is capable of satisfying the value tension of modern societies between prudence and risk-taking. The moral ambivalence ascribed to gambling leads him to his conclusion that gambling is well-placed to relieve this tension because of the peculiar way that it straddles economic activity and leisure. Gambling is stigmatized because it runs counter to the ethic of working hard to earn one's living; gambling is accepted because it allows a playful release of tensions unresolvable by other means; hence, gambling occupies a sort of moral 'grey area': it is a covertly tolerated "institutionalized deviant pattern".
- Clifford Geertz's work on gambling in *Deep Play: A Description of the Balinese Cockfight*, a critique of both utilitarianism and functionalism, he claims to find in gambling an interpretative "meta-social commentary" on the structure of society. I note some problems with this theory, but draw from it the, in my view, more interesting point, that gambling is able to account for the stratification of society because it is a form of play: something happens in the Balinese cock-fight precisely because nothing much really happens at all.

CHAPTER 4: PLAY The theories of gambling discussed in chapter 3 all attempt to understand gambling in terms of its broad macro-sociological significance. What they all find in gambling that is central to its special rôle or function is that gambling is a form of play, and that as such it can temporarily suspend the usual norms and values, replacing them with the 'rules of the game'. But none of these theorists go very far in distinguishing what it is about play that allows this to happen. This problem is of particular relevance for the Lottery,

since it is difficult to determine a context for it that is in a clear sense “separate” from everyday life.

In this chapter, I critically examine the concept of play in order to develop a means of understanding this peculiar quality of the Lottery. The main purpose of the chapter is to probe the concept of “separateness”, an idea that is central to Huizinga’s and Caillois’s theories of play, and Goffman’s idea of the “focused gathering”. A central problem with these theories is the problem of framing. Play seems to be defined by its boundaries with work and with other non-playful activities, but these boundaries provoke uncomfortable paradoxes. Using Simmel’s concept of sociability, and Vaihinger’s As-If, I find in the Lottery a particular form of play bounded not by its own form, but by the forms of interaction within which it takes place.

CHAPTER 5: TIME, NARRATIVE, AND THE LOTTERY One important aspect of the Lottery’s confounding of conceptions of gambling and play is its unusual relationship with time. In this chapter I explore some of the implications of the relationship of gambling to time. I draw upon Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* and Franco Moretti’s analysis of the affinity between the form of gambling and new forms of narrativizing of modern metropolitan experience. The Lottery has some similarities with the characteristics of gambling that give it this special relationship, but in some important respects it manages to supply something entirely different: the absence of any real chance of reversal of fortune in the Lottery, and its disappearance from and displacement into everyday life allow it, perhaps paradoxically, a greater range of narrative possibilities than do other forms of gambling.

CHAPTER 6: THE LOTTERY AND CHARITY This chapter deals with the charitable aspect of the Lottery, which seems to be in contrast to the Lottery as gambling because the altruistic impulse seems to be fundamentally opposed to the acquisitive spirit of gambling. I show how the Lottery is, by its nature and by its use, able to arbitrate between these apparently contradictory pulls. Thus, in the case of the Lottery, one may add to Devereux’s list of ways in which



gambling is able to serve as a mediator between irreconcilable value strains in capitalism a capacity to offer either a release or, indeed, a rapprochement between those values.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY

A Lottery is a Taxation Upon all the Fools  
in Creation  
And Heaven be prais'd It is easily raised,  
Credulity's always in Fashion:  
For Folly's a FUND, Will never lose  
ground,  
While fools are so rife in the Nation.

—Henry Fielding, *The Lottery* [86]

Among those interviewed for this research, there was very little knowledge of the depth of history of lotteries in the United Kingdom. Nor are today's players encouraged by the National Lottery's marketing to be aware of it, perhaps for fear of drawing attention to lotteries' chequered pasts. One interviewee, for example, said of the Lottery that it was "very much of its time... very 1990s" [interview: Peter N]. If there was any awareness of the Lottery's history or interest in it, it was the immediate history of the National Lottery itself that was mentioned: controversies over the selection of Camelot, Richard Branson's not-for-profit bid, fat cat directors, and historical similarities and differences between the Lottery, football pools, and premium bonds.

Nevertheless, many of the attitudes and beliefs expressed about the Lottery carry traces of its past. To understand the Lottery of today requires a general sociological and historical understanding of changes such as the development of mature capitalism, and a sociological theory of gambling. But it also requires an exploration of the history of the lottery *as an idea*: what it came to mean at different times in history. The basis of this idea may be found in the early

history of uses of the lottery; its crystallization into a form more recognizable today took place during the first wave of state lotteries in the eighteenth century, when the history of lotteries was bound up with the emerging differentiation of the institutions and classes of capitalism; it was re-formed in the period when lotteries were banned; it lost some of its moral edges during the twentieth century, and those that remained were reconfigured as secular, psychological, and medical issues.

## 2.1 EARLY HISTORY

In their earliest forms, lotteries had very little to do with gambling. The Bible, for example, contains some 70 references to lots, excluding references to Lot and his children. Many of these refer to the allocation of resources; in the Old Testament stories of the tribes of Israel they are largely for the allocation of land:

And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. [Numbers, 33:54]

And lots were also used for other kinds of selection. One of the Apostles was, in fact, chosen by lot: "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" [Acts, 1:26]. The book of Joshua contains a description of what amounts to a lottery draw with land as the prizes:

And the second lot came forth for Simeon... And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun... And the fourth lot came out to Issacha,..., etc.. [Joshua, 18:11]

The word 'lot' is also extended metonymically such that it comes to mean the allocated resource itself:

This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin southward was the uttermost part of the south coast. [Joshua, 15:1]

And this sense, in turn, becomes a metonym for fate:

This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood [Jeremiah, 13:25]

Passages such as these express what may be called the providential view of the use of lots: that the lot is a sign, not of randomness<sup>1</sup>, but of the will of God. It is interesting to note that the metonym has as its basis the allocation of resources. This relationship between figure and ground is a hint that the use of lots carries both a material and a transcendent significance; this theme carries through much of this chapter and the rest of the thesis.

Some have suggested that it was the ancient Romans who invented the lottery as we know it [117, p. 1530]. Because, perhaps, of their complicated cosmology, the Romans were enthusiastic users and ingenious inventors of all kinds of providential decision-making devices. If such writers as Livy, Tacitus, and Suetonius are to be believed, almost every major event in Roman history was given a prior imprimatur by some augury.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in some cases, a prophetically determined set of necessary prior conditions – events that had to occur before a favourable outcome was a sure thing – were brought about by ‘brute force’, Burnham-Wood style. Livy, for example, says that during their long wars with the Veii, the Romans consulted the Delphic Oracle, which said that they would never gain victory until the Alban lake was dry. After some setbacks, and after the election of Camillus as Dictator, the lake was drained, and the victory was won [144, §5.15–19, p. 123]. Thus, the sign of a favourable outcome, something for which one would expect to have to wait, was actually produced by the recipients of the providence themselves.

1. For, as Lorraine Daston notes, randomness as an idea did not and could not exist in pre-Enlightenment societies [55, p. 10]. Probability, in its earliest usage of the term, meant “an opinion warranted by authority” [99, p. 6].

2. And if they are not to be believed, some similar conclusions may be drawn about the world-views they express at the time of their writing.

With the Romans it seems that the casting of lots was not used predominantly as a divinatory tool. The most direct appeals to the gods were by other means, usually involving examining the disposition of the viscera of a sacrificed animal, or studying the flight pattern of flocks of birds.<sup>1</sup> Cicero's *De Divinatione* discusses in much detail the use of such auguries. He concludes that it is a superstition that should be "torn up by the roots". Or, at least, that it should be retained only for "reasons of political expediency, and in order that we may have a state religion" [42, §xii, p. 28]. And later, he says:

Out of respect for the opinion of the masses and because of the great service to the State we maintain the augural practices, discipline, religious rites and laws, as well as the authority of the augural college. [42, §xxxiii, p. 70].

Lots, however, were used for allocative purposes. They were used extensively for sortition, the selection of officers of the city by random means. But they also had other uses, both political and frivolous. In his 1826 *Every Day Book* [117], Hone remarks that the lotteries of Augustus were "mere bagatelles", those of Nero costly<sup>2</sup>, and those of the (much later) emperor Heliogabalus plainly ridiculous. Little is known of this last emperor but for his lotteries, whose tickets were handed around in vases, and whose prizes included both gifts and hazards, as Thomas Gataker reports:

... a pound of beef, or a dead dog, or ten beares, or ten camels, or so many pounds of leade, or as many pounds of silver, or gold, &c. And others againe were to receive the like, as their lot came: which made many rich that were before, and others as poor that were rich before. [93, p. 117]

To the Romans is also credited the invention of the lottery ticket. As a means of distribution of favours (called *congiaria*), small tokens were distributed, each

1. This was how the struggle between Remus and Romulus was decided: Remus on the Aventine saw six vultures, Romulus, on the Palatine, saw twelve, so Rome was his [144, §1.6, p. 24].

2. Suetonius says that Nero's lotteries had slaves and villas as prizes.

with an inscription naming a gift. Initially, these *tesserae* were handed out in a more or less orderly fashion, but later they were simply thrown to crowds, introducing an element of luck into the proceedings, and later still they were drawn out of vessels, much as lotteries are conducted today.

Ewen suggests that the earliest lotteries expressly for gambling were those of Venetian and Genoese merchants. These were, however, not primarily for raising money, but for the dispersal of stale or unwanted goods [84, p. 30]. The first recorded lotteries whose purpose was to raise money for public projects took place in the Netherlands in the fifteenth century, when the Duke of Burgundy allowed municipal lotteries in cities within his ducal control: Bruges, Ghent, and Utrecht; the first of these was in 1444 [84, p. 25]. In Bruges, a lottery was held in 1446 to raise money to improve the city's fortifications. In the same year and the same place, a lottery was held by the widow of the painter Jan Van Eyck, for which there are records in the town archives [4, p. 4].

From then onwards, one can trace a gradually ascending gradient of lotteries. In 1521, a lottery was held in Osnaburg; in 1595 one was held in Amsterdam to raise money for a new church steeple; and another was held in Delft in 1595; in 1592 in France lotteries were permitted under taxation by Francis I.

This steady growth of lotteries across Europe is also a story of their convergence around a particular form. Early lotteries had many different kinds of prize. In 1572, for example, a lottery was established by Louis de Gonzague, Duc de Paris, "for the purpose of giving marriage portions to poor virtuous young women on his estates" [117, p. 1531]. The prize tickets were inscribed "Dieu vous a élue" or "Dieu vous console", the former, inscribed on a winning ticket, insured to the young woman who drew it 500 francs on her wedding day, the latter, inscribed on the blanks, extended the hope of better fortune the following year. Hone notes that "no lottery was ever drawn with so much ceremony and parade". Indeed, Pope Sextus V promised those who promoted it remission of their sins, and a special mass was said at the beginning of the draw. Other lotteries offered as prizes "marvellous rich and beautifull armor" [117, p. 1411] and books (the first prize of one consisting of an Imperial Bible, all of Virgil, Homer's Illiad and Odyssey, and Aesop's Fables) [117, p. 1418].

The lotteries of the time were not based on the selection of numbers. The ‘number lotteries’ that are popular today were first introduced in 1623 in Genoa [84, p. 30]; it is, however, only in the late twentieth century that this form of lottery has become prevalent. The earlier lotteries were closer in form to a raffle, but a very elaborate one. The 1771 *The Lottery Display’d* [147], an “adventurer’s guide” to lottery speculation, describes the organization of such lotteries in great detail. For every number in the draw, there was a ticket for the buyer, one reserved for the draw, and one that was held in safe-keeping to resolve any claims of fraud or error. When all the tickets had been sold, another set of two tickets was drawn up. One set of these, again, was held in a safe place, the other set were the prize tickets. One ticket in both sets was allocated for each prize, the value of which was inscribed on the ticket itself. For each number in the lottery there were, then, actually five tickets: three with numbers, and two with prizes.

At the draw, there were two boxes: the one contained a set of buyer’s tickets with numbers, the other contained all the prizes, and a number of blank tickets such that the total number of tickets in this box equalled the number of buyer’s tickets. The draw itself involved drawing a ticket from each box, matching each bought ticket with a prize or a blank. Figure 2.1 on the following page shows a typical prize structure.

The drawing of these lotteries, with their tens of thousands of tickets, took a long time. What is considered to be the first lottery held in England (1569) was drawn at the west gate of St Paul’s, which came to be a favourite site for lottery draws. It lasted for 54 days with the drawing taking place continuously, day and night [84, p. 63]. The first large-scale lottery in England – conducted in 1612 to fund the colonization of Virginia – lasted for just under a month, but could well have taken longer: it was delayed because not enough tickets were sold, and eventually 60,000 blank tickets had to be discarded [84, p. 74]. *The Lottery Display’d* supplies data for all lotteries drawn in England between 1694<sup>1</sup> and 1771: the average length of the draw was 42 days [147, p. 33], the typical total amount of prizes ranged from £500,000 to £1,000,000, and the

1. When the first *state* lotteries, rather than private ones, were introduced [162, p. 373–374].

number of prizes	prize value	total value
2	£20,000	£40,000
3	10,000	30,000
5	5,000	25,000
10	2,000	20,000
15	1,000	15,000
30	500	15,000
100	100	10,000
250	50	12,500
16,275	20	325,000
16,690		£493,000
First ticket drawn for first six days: £1,000 each		6,000
Last ticket drawn (after all prizes won)		1,000
For the use of government and expense of drawing		150,000
33,310 blanks		
50,000 tickets at £13		£650,000

FIGURE 2.1: Lottery Prize Structure

average cost of a ticket was £5.00. The lengthiness of the draw allowed the lottery to become something of a public spectacle. Often, a blindfolded child, and sometimes even a blind one, drew the tickets. Not only did this make a public display of fairness, but it also had a symbolic intent: since all were equal before her, Fortune, like justice, was always represented with a blindfold. Often, the owners of a ticket would inscribe little verses – posies – on the counterfoil. These allowed the owner to remain anonymous, but they were also read out at the draw as part of the entertainment. These scraps of text included “wise saws, witty verses, even vulgar abuse, comprising truth and fancy, In English, French, Latin, Dutch, besides more or less unknown tongues, which added to the gaiety of the reading” [84, p. 56]:

Cast the grapple over the bote,

If God wil, for the great lot

[84, p. 42]

As salt by kind gives things their savour,



So hap doth hit where fate doth savour.

Blowe up thou trumpette, and sound for me,

For good lucke comes here I do see [84, p. 57]

As foulers mindes are fedde with every right redresse,

So fouler I, least fortune faile, do seek for some success.

(T. Fouler, Lon. 270,413, 2s. 1d.) [84, p. 58]

Aut mihi aut nihil

In God I hope, and a f – t for the Pope [84, p. 59]

There is good ale

At St James Chignele [4, p. 60]

Such features meant that the lottery was a spectacle very different from today. It happened in public, out on the streets; there was a drama about it of altogether a different order and kind to the televised draws of today's National Lottery; there were torch-lit processions, songs and plays were written about it; they were associated with other events such as the display of freaks.<sup>1</sup> It was also very much a metropolitan phenomenon, as is revealed in the following observation from the *Adventurer's Guide*:

Were this essay to fall into no other hands than those of the Metropolis, it would be needless to relate the manner of the drawing, as it is to be supposed there are few in London who have not seen it performed. [123, p. 12]

Lotteries of this kind reached their heyday in the late eighteenth century. Between 1698 and 1776 they were organized on an ad-hoc basis to raise money for the general needs of the state or for some specific project such as the building of Westminster Bridge (1739), or the founding of the British Museum (1753). By 1755 such ad-hoc demands meant that they were occurring annually; by 1776,

1. See, for example, the hand-bill: *This is to Acquaint Gentlemen and Ladies, that, that Prodigy in Nature, the Living Colossus, or Wonderful Giant from Sweden, is now to be Seen at the Lottery Office* [146].

state lotteries had become a regular financial instrument, and were voted annually by Parliament [189, p. 213–214], between 1769 and 1826 126 state lotteries had been held [199, p. 2].

## 2.2 LOTTERIES, RELIGION, AND RATIONALITY

Alongside the growth of gambling lotteries, providential divinatory practices continued well into the Reformation, but with a distinctively protestant cast. The protestant belief was that God might choose to intervene in earthly affairs, and that the follower could obtain benefits through prayer. This was not only a possibility, it was also a commandment:

It was a Christian duty to ask each day for one's daily bread, as a reminder that even in the most material context man could not hope to be sustained by his own efforts alone. In their visitation articles the officers of the Church called upon the parochial clergy to remind their flock that they should give thanks to God in times of plenty and call upon his mercy whenever scarcity threatened. [216, p. 112]

Although petitionary prayer was commanded, it was, of course, by no means certain that the prayer would be answered. It was always possible to explain the apparent failure of the prayer. Ultimately, however, the outcome depended upon divine disposition, and that disposition, while it may have offered clues through signs in the world, was finally unknowable.

As a means of gaining some insight into this unknowability, extensive use was made of what we now consider randomizing devices, but what were then *sortes sanctorum*: the classical practice of *sortes vergilianae*<sup>1</sup>, was reworked as a method of biblical consultation. These practices were condemned by the clergy, but were widely adopted by the congregation. Lots were a natural tool for this sort of divination. Thomas's *Religion And The Decline Of Magic* [216, p. 118-]

1. Divination by randomly selecting passages of Virgil.

offers many examples spanning a period from the 12th and 17th centuries.<sup>1</sup> In the 12th century, pilgrims would use lots to decide which shrine to visit, in the 16th, patronage was allocated by lot by Wells Cathedral, in the early 17th century, three maid-servants cast lots annually for money left by a benefactor [p. 119]. These examples may be understood in a material sense as ways of achieving a clear and binding decision when other means would be clouded by self-interest. But a greater significance must be attributed to the practice of a whole congregation casting lots to determine such matters as the most propitious time to sow crops, which regiments to send to Ireland, which condemned man to pardon, and so forth. In these cases, the decision of the lot may only be understood as a having the imprimatur of divine approval. William Perkins<sup>2</sup> said of the lot that it was

an act of religion in which we refer unto God the determination of things of moment that can no other way be determined... We are not to use lots but with great reverence, in that the disposition of them immediately cometh from the Lord, and their proper use is to decide great controversies. [174, p. 141].

Lotteries were, in this view, grave and momentous devices, and the use of the lot as a game of chance was entirely forbidden: such uses were an affront to god, a frivolous call upon his providence. Because of this, the only legitimate uses of lots at the time were 'divinatory' or 'divisory' (for the purpose of resolving disputes over property). They could certainly not be 'lusory', for mere pleasure or self-interested material gain, and their use for such purposes was roundly condemned.<sup>3</sup>

It is, however, no surprise that despite condemnation of such a use, the main object of lots should eventually pass over from the divinatory to the lusory, for the lot contains a special affinity with any kind of speculative enterprise. Just as they might allocate some resource on the basis of providence, they might also

1. See also Csikszentmihalyi and Bennett's *An Exploratory Model of Play* [52, p. 47–49], and Devereux's encyclopedia entry on gambling [58, p. 53].

2. 1558-1602, a prominent Puritan, exponent of Calvinism, rector of St Andrews, Cambridge.

3. See, for example, Balmford's *A Short and Plaine Dialogue Concerning the Unlawfulness of Playing at Cards or Tables, Or Any Other Game Consisting in Chance* [6].

allocate those resources at the service of purely chancy speculation. Furthermore, the particular relationship of protestantism and the spirit of capitalism allows a direct translation of the providential into the causal and calculable. What may be found, therefore, is a threefold affinity between a technology, a religious world-view and an emerging economic and social formation. It is also, surely, not by accident that speculative lots were first used to support the great imperial adventures of the major geopolitical actors of the time – England, Holland, and France – at home, for the development of large-scale capital projects, and abroad, in the establishment of the colonies in the New World. Indeed, it may well be the case that the military adventures of English Civil War and the Thirty Years' war were decisive in introducing a spirit of gambling into the populace of England. Rescher [182, p. 134] suggests that “Whenever life is cheap and hard – as it certainly was for seventeenth century soldiery – gaming and gambling becomes a prospect whose attractions follow only a short distance after those of drinking”, and that the soldiery brought a pursuit of gambling to the citizenry.

The intellectual turning point in favour of lusory lots was provided by the hugely influential, if controversial, protestant Divine Thomas Gataker.<sup>1</sup> His work *Of The Nature and Use of Lots: A Treatise Historical and Theological* involves the careful and, for the time, innovative separation of the casual (by which he means something close to random), the contingent, and the determined. He rejected the providential view of lots, asserting that there was nothing especially divine about the casual:

The casualtie of an event doth not simply of itself make it a work of God's special or immediate providence. It is apparent: for there is oft times a more special providence in many things that are not casual but contingent only, than in the most things that are casual. [93, p. 29]

1. In his history of the spirit of rationalism, Lecky said: “The first writer, I believe, who clearly and systematically maintained that lots were governed by purely natural laws, was an English Puritan minister named Gataker... a well-reasoned and curious book, teeming with quaint learning” [136, p. 307]. It would not be too far-fetched to compare his role in this history with that of Benjamin Franklin in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

There is neither ‘casualty’ nor contingency, he says, with God, but only necessity [p. 42]. Lotteries are determined not by divine will but by the laws of nature:

In the blending of scrolls or tickets together, the motion of the vessel wherein they are blended causes some to lie this way and some to lie that way...No man can say certainly that there is ordinarily any special hand of God, in the shuffling and the sorting of them, crossing the course of nature. [93, p. 46]

Casualty is a property only from the human perspective, it is “founded, and dependeth upon man’s ignorance” [p. 118]. As such, it is not endowed with any special significance, to endow it with any is to believe God to be frivolously capricious:

Than an ordinary Lot there is nothing more uncertain, ready upon every new shaking of the Lot... Is it not frivolous, if not impious, therefore to say, that upon every second shaking or drawing God alters his sentence, and so to charge Him with contradiction or contrariety? [93, p. 159]

Indeed, he says, it is more likely that such a significance is to be found in contingent events: as we may know the causes of such things, so we may come to know the divinity behind them [p. 29]. Perkins held that lots were not for trivialities but to be used solemnly and infrequently and only when there were no other means available: “When a man hath other means to try by, then it is a tempting of God to use lots” [174, p. 120]. Gataker, on the other hand, asserts that lots are only to be used “in things indifferent only” [p. 128]: when there is nothing of moment involved. All other recourses to lots are a confounding “of the act of the Creator with of the work of the creature” [p. 25], they can only reveal ignorance where the rational pursuit of knowledge might allow understanding. He gives examples of the sorts of indifference that warrants the lusory lot: a student in his study with many books to read “is indifferent to choose one, this or that, refusing the rest, for present employment, there being

no special occasion to urge the use of one more than another”, a man with a pair of knives is indifferent to draw and use either when occasion requireth” [93, p. 128]. As long as the principle of indifference applied and no one took the result as divinely ordained, any secular use of lots was justified and free from impiety. Divisory lots could be used to divide up property and games of chance became acceptable.

By reasoning in this way, Gataker opened himself up to the charge that he favoured games of chance.<sup>1</sup> That he was attacked in this way is, as Rescher notes, evidence of the rising concern with gambling amongst religious people [182, p. 121]. It also says much about the resistance put up by most theologians to the idea that chance occurrences exist at all. This long-standing resistance is represented in Boethius’s *Consolations of Philosophy* where “sober Dame Philosophy warns that only when Fortuna ‘shows herself unstable and changeable, is she truthful’, and preaches against the very existence of chance, conceived as ‘an event produced by random motion and without any sequence of causes’ ” [99, p. XIII]. This attitude persists through the middle ages up to the time of Gataker, and it is his differing from it that is the most significant effect of his work, for it gave a theological justification for the view that chance events may be understood rationally without reference to the divine, and that they might be susceptible to law.<sup>2</sup> Alongside the emergence of other explanations competing against divine providence, early sociology and economics for example, there was a growing awareness of the mathematical basis of chance events. Probability was a state of the art theory in the 18th century. The first texts on probability were Pacioli’s *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioni e Proportionalita* of 1494 and Cardano’s 1550 *Liber de Ludo Aleae*. This book was only published in 1655, during the first flourishing of the mathematical study of games of chance. In 1654 Pascal and Fermat essentially created probability theory in correspond-

1. An example of such an attack can be found in Increase Mather’s *Testimony Against Profane Customs* [152].

2. While the view that there is no such thing as chance may have waned, it is still visible today, and not only amongst religious fundamentalists. In August 2006, for example, Pope Benedict sacked his chief astronomer who favoured evolution over the “theory” of intelligent design. Central to this controversy was the astronomer’s opposition to the intelligent design view that random variation is not compatible with a belief in divine purpose [31].

ence about how to win at dice games. But texts on the subject in the seventeenth century were concerned exclusively with games of chance. Huygens's 1655 *De Ratiociniis in Ludo Aleae* was the first printed account of the calculus of probability. In the eighteenth century, probability was put on a more general footing in the works of the Bernouillis, De Moivre, Bayes, and Laplace. The Genoese number lotteries attracted the attention of mathematicians such as Euler [81] and Jean Bernoulli [19], both of whom not only subjected them to a thorough analysis, but also offered advice on how profitably to run them. While it may have held great interest for the development of combinatorics, the promoters of such lotteries did not follow their advice, for "they had no need for probabilities while the money kept coming in" [55, p. 145], nor, presumably, were the players versed in the new theories of probability enough to make informed choices about whether to play or not. This growing sense of the existence of randomness and its susceptibility to rational analysis allowed a new attitude to fortune entirely familiar today:

No doubt few of us today are capable of stoical acceptance of the random caprices of misfortune, but it is the awareness that they are indeed random which distinguishes us from our ancestors. [182, p. 656]

### 2.3 LOTTERIES AND FINANCIAL SPECULATION

The new lusory quality found in the lot and legitimated by Gataker and the mathematicians is of a piece with the governing spirit of almost all other forms of financial speculation in the eighteenth century: until their reining-in by legislation in the latter quarter of that century, insurance and stock trading were essentially anarchic enterprises far closer to gambling than they are today. This was the time, after all, of not only the South Sea Bubble débâcle, but of a myriad of other bubble schemes. Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*<sup>1</sup> lists some 86 proposed bubble schemes [149, 58–63]. These

1. A fascinating text from 1852 that serves as enough of a *memento* of the human potential for folly that it is, apparently, required reading in some Wall Street financial houses.

include: for improving of gardens; for insuring to all masters and mistresses the losses they may sustain by servants; for the transformation of quicksilver into a malleable fine metal; for a wheel for perpetual motion – Capital, one million; and, most intriguingly, for carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody knowing what it is.

The appearance of what was to become the London Stock Exchange owes itself to the growth in joint-stock companies in the late seventeenth century, particularly to the emergence of such businesses as the East India Company, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Royal African Company [159, p. 15]. Initially, the embryonic stock market was formed in the Royal Exchange by a group of traders who were essentially commercial renegades [213, p. 3]. In 1698, they were expelled from the Royal Exchange for rowdy behaviour, and started to deal out of the nearby coffee-houses, eventually settling upon Jonathon's Coffee House.

It was not until 1801, when it became regulated by Act of Parliament, that the stock exchange was put on a fully legitimate footing. As well as trading in stocks, there was a very active insurance market at Jonathon's, competing with that at Lloyd's Coffee House. Insurance, at that time, did not hold the same legitimacy as it does today. Indeed, it was considered to be another form of gambling. John Weskett's 1781 *Complete Digest of the Theory, Laws, and Practice of Insurance* says of Lloyd's and Jonathon's:

It would be highly improper, on occasion of these animadversions, to let another great evil, which by far too much prevails in Lloyd's Coffee House, and, sometimes, fatally for those who are concerned in it, escape remark: I mean, what is called Speculation, or gaming policies; often set on foot and promoted, for many thousands of Pounds, even by merchants, insurers, and brokers, who in other respects stand fair in the eye of the mercantile world, as men of rank, and reputation. These things are, undoubtedly, not only disgraceful to the otherwise respectability of the characters engaged in them; but are of very hurtful *example*; tend to sap, and do really much affect, not only the solidity, and credit, of private



persons in the commercial class, but the national interest: for, they render insurers suspected, foreigners apprehensive, and the security of commerce precarious, contaminate probity, create ill-will, as amongst other gamblers, produce lame ducks, and may in time introduce, at Lloyd's as well as Jonathon's, such apposite and polite appellations as Bull and Bear. [229, lv–lvi]

Life insurance policies, in particular, were both adopted enthusiastically by speculators and criticized by commentators as a wager on life itself. The mortuary tontine, for example, was in everything but name a lottery on lives.<sup>1</sup>

According to this novel form of organization, members paid set fees to the society on a quarterly basis. At the end of the year, the beneficiaries of all those members who had died in the preceding year shared equally from the accumulated fund, with the amount of the payout varying inversely with the level of mortality prevailing each year. [43, p. 76]

The tontines may have been a kind of wager, but it was at least made amongst a group of interested parties. Other forms of life insurance were even less scrupulous. There are many astonishing examples of what are essentially wagers masquerading as insurance. A significant proportion of these involved betting on third parties, so, for example, a policy was taken out that “Lady Lake has not a Son who lives to the 1 May 1762” [43, p. 44] (note here that the policy is not that she does have a living son at that time, a policy that would perhaps have somewhat greater propriety). There were also many wagers on the lives of prominent public figures: Robert Walpole's life was much insured at the time of the Excise Crisis;<sup>2</sup> during the Jacobite Rebellion, the price of policies on the

1. Richard Jackson, author of the enthusiastic *A Guide to Adventurers in the Lottery*, which details the aims, methods and rules of his “Amicable Society of Lottery Adventurers”, attempts to justify adventuring by comparing lotteries with tontines: “What is a tontine? but a *lottery of lives*, wherein no adventurer can expect to amend his circumstances but by the *deaths* of his competitors; and, as naturally as he wishes for success, *must wish* that a certain number of human beings be swept away by plague or conflagration” [p. 1]. This suggests that, in his mind at least, a tontine was more acceptable than lottery speculation.

2. In 1733, Walpole decided to check smuggling and customs frauds by imposing an excise tax on wine and tobacco. This was a very unpopular imposition, and Walpole eventually had to withdraw the measure, with a great deal of political loss [135].

Pretender and the rebel lords rose or fell with each new report of their military advance [43, p. 49].

As Zelizer points out in *Morals and Markets*, the association of gambling and insurance was sanctioned to some extent by law under the category of the aleatory contract – *actus quo fortuna praedominatur* – where the contract depends upon some uncertainty [239, p. 70]. Both gambling and insurance contracts have as their basis just such a risk of a fortuitous event. The idea of an aleatory contract was introduced by jurists to distinguish certain kinds of speculative financial activity from usury. While the charging of interest on a loan was acceptable because it was compensation of the lender for the loss of the capital loaned,<sup>1</sup> the lending of money for the sole purpose of claiming the interest was strongly deprecated. This distinction and condemnation goes back at least as far as Aristotle [134, p. 15], and is a strong theme in Christian ethics up to the Reformation and beyond. Without the element of risk, both gambling and insurance are indistinguishable from a usurious loan, so the risk inherent in both gambling and insurance actually becomes a redeeming feature. Daston observes in her book on probability theory in the Enlightenment that the early mathematical probability theorists drew heavily upon the jurisprudential concept of the aleatory contract, and their researches paved the way for a normative model of market activity based upon systematic calculation of actuarial risk [55, p. 114]. But at this time, no such analysis was possible, and, therefore, while the Scylla of usury was plainly in view, and might be avoided by casuistic appeals to the aleatory, the Charybdis of gambling was clouded in a fog of confusion about chance, which allowed much ambiguity about what counted as an unacceptable wager and what as a legitimate financial speculation.

There was, then, from the late seventeenth century and most of the eighteenth a certain kind of ludic capitalistic ferment that explains, to some extent, the extraordinary popularity of lotteries at that time. If there was ever a period deserving the epithet ‘The Age of Chance,’ it was then. Daniel Defoe, writing in 1697, said “Necessity, which is allow’d to be the Mother of Invention, has so

1. “*Interest mea*, that is to saye, it behoveth me, or it belongeth to mee, or it is for mine avail, or it is reason, that I shall bee answered in all losses and dammages”. [134, p. 5]

violently agitated the Wits of men at this time, that it seems not at all improper, by way of distinction, to call it, *The Projecting Age*” [56, p. 1]. The “projects” to which he refers are such things as “the Original of Banks, Stocks, Stock-jobbing, Assurances, Friendly Societies, Lotteries, and the like” [p. 8]. Roy Porter writes eloquently on the new eighteenth-century passions for what Samuel Pepys called ‘deep gaming’ [160, p. 110]:

England was gripped by gambling fever. Bets were laid on political events, births and deaths – any future happenings. For a few pounds challengers galloped against the clock, gulped down pints of gin or ate live cats. A common wager consisted of taking out insurance on *other* people’s lives. When George II led his troops against the French in 1743, you could get four to one against his being killed. Cards were the opium of the polite... Gambling itself became nationalized. [176, p. 238]

This age of projects, gambling, and chance had its impact on the lives of commoners as well, as Dorothy George suggests in her classic *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*:

The dominating impression of life in eighteenth-century London, from the standpoint of the individual, is one of uncertainty and insecurity. It was a time when trade was expanding more rapidly than population, yet the Londoner was threatened with casualties of various kinds. [96, p. 262]

She illustrates this with, among others, the history of the Place family who went through no less than three cycles from relative prosperity to penury, because of gambling and drink. This tale was not unusual, indeed, it was told, so Francis Place, the son of the family, says to show that such stories were “by no means uncommon in this time” [p. 304].

The ‘projects’ of lotteries, speculation, and insurance, moreover, did not exist in isolation from each other. One of the great bugbears of the 1808 *Report of the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to Lotteries* [196], a report instrumental

in the banning of lotteries, was not so much the lotteries themselves as the evils attendant upon them. These evils were insurance schemes: ostensibly a prudent indemnification against losses incurred by drawing a blank with one's comparatively expensive ticket, in reality these were a kind of second-order speculation on the draw itself. The 1808 Committee report even went so far as to claim that the lottery insurance schemes were what actually sustained lotteries.

Advertised as 'policies' [84, p. 256], the most prominent schemes offered insurance against a ticket drawing a blank and against drawing a prize (betting that one would not win a prize on a given day, thus hedging against winning a less valuable prize). But there were many other schemes. The 1808 Select Committee Report describes the Bars contract: "buying or selling the probable gain or loss per Ticket in a Lottery where the Contractors do not get any Capitals among the unsold tickets, above the Thousand Pound Prizes", comparing it to stock-jobbing. [196, v. II, p. 323]. Another, highly creative, development, which became fashionable at the sporting houses in St. James Street in 1799, was "Running of Lottery Houses": a kind of meta-insurance policy on the success of lottery houses themselves [84, p. 260].

It is estimated that there were more than 200 illegal insurance offices operating in the heyday of the state lotteries [162, p. 375]. Their schemes, parasitical upon the lotteries themselves, were the principal way that less affluent people could participate in state lotteries. Lottery tickets were too expensive for the poor, and while they could buy shares in a ticket, this required organization and the trust of a shareholder who held the ticket in his name. They became the central cause for concern for critics of lotteries. Patrick Colqhoun, a London Magistrate, said, for example, that he was

greatly concerned about the social evils associated with the lotteries and observed that when they were being drawn, 'tens of thousands' of people would absent themselves from work and congregate around the Guildhall where the drawing would take place. Here the insurers would cash in on the ready willingness of the poor to pawn their goods to take out insurance.[162, p. 376]

The “little goes” – small illegal lotteries run when state lotteries were not being drawn – were largely a pretext for insurance [162, p. 376].

With one early exception in 1697, no serious attempt to control these rampantly flourishing schemes was made until the early nineteenth century, in 1809 [14 Geo. III c.94 s.40], when it was enacted that the lottery should be determined in one day, and that “no seats should be built for the convenience of clerks taking down the numbers”; this order, however, was not acted upon [84, p. 257]. In none of these schemes was it a requirement that the policy-holder have an interest in the ticket itself. One could even hire a ticket for an hour or a day (known as “riding a horse”) [147, p. 36]. This separation of interest reveals a connexion between insurance schemes and usury: while the schemes may have the necessary element of risk, they lack any real interest, for the holder of such a ‘policy’ does not even own the ticket they are backing.

In 1774, an Act of Parliament was enacted whose purpose was to clean up life insurance in this respect. The Act was to a large extent a response to the Chevalier D’Éon case, which involved a speculation that the Chevalier was in reality a woman, and that this truth would come to light within seven years. The premiums on this policy totalled £60,000, with shares ranging from 15 guineas upwards [229, p. 582]. At the end of the term, several cases were brought to court with witnesses claiming to have seen the Chevalier’s genitals.

The Life Assurance Act<sup>1</sup> was brought in to do away with such frivolous and undignified scenes [43, p. 48]. The Act begins:

It hath been found by experience, that the making insurances on lives, or other events, wherein the assured shall have no interest, hath introduced a mischievous kind of gaming.

The main provision of the Act is that no insurance may be taken out where there is no interest of the benefiting party in the insured event. That this act has the alternative title of The Gambling Act reveals how closely bound up life insurance was with gambling. And it was not long before gambling and lotteries would come under the same sort of scrutiny from moralists and reformers.

1. 1774; 14 Geo. III c.48

## 2.4 1808: EVILS ATTENDING LOTTERIES

A CAUTIONARY TALE Published as part of the Cheap Repository, to be sold by hawkers to common people, The 1796 religious tract *The Wonderful Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery!* tells a cautionary tale of the dangers of playing the lottery. One day, while on his way home, John Brown walks past a lottery office, and his mind is seized by the idea of buying a ticket:

‘Why may I not get a prize as well as any other?’ said he to himself; ‘and if I get the twenty thousand prize, or even one of the ten thousands, I shall be as great a man as my master.’ It was a woeful moment for poor John, when this imagination fastened upon him. [236, p. 3]

His wife, Molly, is alarmed by his fixation:

Trying our fortune, as you call it, is no better than tempting God, who is the real giver of what men say fortune gives them. Our blessed Saviour refused, you know, when he fasted in the wilderness, to act in an extraordinary manner, in order that God might give him riches and other things, for he said that would be tempting God, for would it be taking an extraordinary course in order to try whether God would make us rich? [236, p. 4]

But John Brown’s fascination with the lottery renders him immune to his wife’s pleading and theological reasoning. Intending to buy just the one ticket, eventually he buys six, to spread his luck. When two of these numbers come up blank, and one at a mere ten pounds, John Brown becomes drawn into an insurance scheme offered by a well-heeled broker who leads him to believe that he can not lose. He loses everything. From then he is plunged into greater losses, into deceit, and into drunkenness. One evening, John Brown, drunk after yet more gambling losses, falls into an ad-hoc alliance with another man with whom he conducts a botched robbery, resulting in their shooting dead the victim. The accomplice, a known villain, is eventually arrested, turns King’s Evidence against John Brown, who is arrested for the murder. His wife dies of a broken

heart. Sentencing him to be hanged, drawn and quartered, the judge addresses John Brown:

You might have lived long, useful, and respected, had you been content with what you acquired by honest industry; had not the desire of hasty and unrighteous gain taken possession of your heart. I mourn over the existence of such a public nuisance as appears to have been the first occasion of your fall: and I cannot help declaring that I have never sat upon this bench after the drawing of the Lottery, but I had reason to think it had proved the ruin of many of the unhappy culprits who appeared before me. I would earnestly exhort the crowds that hear me to abhor the thoughts of adventuring in it, and to fly from it as from a plague, which will destroy happiness and inward peace, and bring upon them every kind of distress. [236, p. 16]

It is not the lottery tickets that are the principal villain in this story, it is the insurance scheme that leads John Brown down to greater depths of vice and indigence. This view – that the main problem of lotteries was in what attended them – was the principal finding of the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to Lotteries, which published its findings in two reports of 1808.

The first report [195], published 13 April, recommended: (1) limiting lotteries to 2 per year; (2) licensing lottery ticket sellers; (3) the minimum number of tickets needed to entitle someone to hold a licence should be raised from 30 to 150; this was intended to prevent persons from setting up a lottery office as a front for illegal insurance schemes; (4) limiting the hours of business of lottery offices (5) large penalties for persons hawking lottery tickets, distributing hand-bills, illuminating lottery offices so that they might draw people to them, exhibiting schemes on billboards, carts, or carriages; (6) that lottery office keepers should no longer be exempt from the jurisdiction of Justices of the Peace and Police Magistrates.

These findings suggest an optimism that some of the excesses of lotteries could be reduced, but the committee had not yet taken evidence from various people

involved in the promotion and regulation of lotteries. After this consultation, the confidence of the Committee was completely lost that lotteries could be cleaned up. The second report comes out strongly in favour of the banning of lotteries. Insurance schemes were found to prevail to a much greater extent than was previously thought. Lottery office keepers and, presumably to protect their jobs, some state-employed Lottery Inspectors affirmed that the evils arising from the Lottery had been done away with [196, p. 7], and promoters such as Thomas Bish that insurance schemes were not so usual. But it was the committee's view that:

It has been represented to Your Committee, that the Lottery and illegal Insurances are inseparable; that the former cannot exist without the latter for its support; that a system of connivance in those Acts which the Law prohibits pervades all ranks concerned, from the Persons contracting with Government under the Law, down to the meanest wretch employed under violation of the Law, and its most ordinary victim. [196, p. 10]

The recommendations of the first report reveal much about the preoccupations of the Committee: broadly speaking, the problem of lotteries was one of their tendency to be unregulated and unruly. Lottery Offices were places of great bustle and activity, they attracted people by extraordinary means<sup>1</sup>, and they were the site of many illegal unchecked insurance schemes. The regulation of lotteries and the attempt to proscribe lottery insurance schemes followed the same path as regulation of life insurance and of the stock market: all were in some degree instigated because of the fear of the mob, the rowdy behaviour of the coffee houses and farcical cases such as the Chevalier D'Éon affair. The eighteenth century was dominated by this preoccupation. The author Henry Fielding was highly critical of the folly of lotteries, which he satirized in many of his works.<sup>2</sup> As a Justice of the Peace, he founded, with his brother John, the first

1. One advertisement promises that Gentlemen and Ladies of Quality could see in the office "That Prodigy in Nature, The Living Colossus, or Wonderful Giant From Sweden" [146].

2. Including *The Lottery* [86], from which comes the epigraph to this chapter. Battestin's *A Henry Fielding Companion* [8] contains a comprehensive list.



police force in London. He was also deeply concerned about the power of the mob: “None of our political leaders take notice of...”. In London people had discovered the power of taking to the streets during the final years of Charles II and the reign of James II.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Riot Act was passed in 1715. But it had little effect: in 1719 there were riots by weavers; in 1736, the Rag Fair Riots against the Irish; in 1736 riots followed the introduction of the Gin Act; The Gordon Riots saw an resurgent anti-Catholicism on the streets, culminating in a full-scale assault on the Bank of England; the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and the French Revolution had installed a strong fear of public uprising amongst the ruling élite. In this context, the exuberance of the lower classes was considered dangerous by such figures as Wilberforce, of whom E. P. Thompson says:

In every manifestation of moral indiscipline he saw the danger of Jacobin revival... his conviction as to the intimate correlation between moral levity and political sedition among the lower classes is characteristic of his class. [217, p. 442]

The large crowds and the moral levity at the drawing of lotteries were viewed with considerable trepidation by the propertied classes as the breeding ground of political unrest [162, p. 377]. The behaviour the lower classes at the draw was associated with drunkenness [160, p. 116], and hence with the wave of moral panics over the consumption of gin [226].<sup>2</sup> As well as providing an opportunity for a dangerous collective effervescence, gambling, once the domain of concern had shifted to the lower classes, was also seen to have sedition in its kernel, for it undermined the proper attitude to work, as the 1808 Report stated in a passage reminiscent of the judgement of John Brown:

The mind is misled from those habits of continued industry which insure the acquisition of comfort and independence, to delusive dreams of sudden and enormous wealth which must generally end in abject poverty and complete ruin. [196, p. 10]

1. See Roy Porter's *London: A Social History* [177, p. 190–193].

2. Braudel says that “By the early eighteenth century, the whole of London society, from top to bottom, was determinedly getting drunk on gin.” (cited in Rybczynski's *Waiting for the Weekend* [191, p. 98]).

Gambling was dangerous not merely because it was immoral, but also because it could be politically destabilizing: the promise of unearned luxury undermined the station of the lower classes to such an extent that John Fielding warned that it “bid fair for the total overthrow of subordination” (cited [162, p. 377]).

For these kinds of reasons, the *Second Report of the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to Lotteries* [196] was greatly exercised by the activities peripheral to lotteries, such as insurance schemes, and their consequences. It asserted in this colourful, often-quoted passage:

By the effects of the lottery, even under its present restrictions, idleness, dissipation and poverty are increased, the most sacred and confidential trusts are betrayed, domestic comfort is destroyed, madness often created, crimes subjecting the perpetrators of them to the punishment of death are committed, and even suicide is produced... Such, have been the constant and fatal attendants upon State lotteries, and such Your Committee have too good ground to fear will be their invariable attendants so long as they are suffered, under whatever checks or regulations to exist. [195, p. 11]

This was, as Miers and Dixon note, the first time that an official opinion expressed the view that state lotteries carried such dangers of moral dissipation, albeit dissipation *attending* lotteries, that “no system of regulation could be devised which would both guarantee them as efficient sources of revenue and prevent their attendant mischiefs” [162, p. 378]. The second report found resonances amongst moralists – who drew from it evidence of the immorality of public leisure – and amongst law-reformers – who took it as grounds for campaigning for the removal of an unsound instrument of government [162, p. 379]. Despite the robust tone of the report and its adoption by moralists and reformers alike, the abolition of lotteries was not enacted until 1823, the delay due to the financial needs of fighting the war against France, and the last official lottery was conducted in 1826.

## 2.5 LOTTERIES IN THE 20TH CENTURY

### 2.5.1 1916–1976

The Committee's resounding judgements became the Ur-text for growing criticisms of gambling from a moralistic perspective, and there was a great increase in such attacks later in the nineteenth-century.

The striking phrases of the 1808 Select Committee's Report appear regularly both in moralists' propaganda and in parliamentary debates. The dire social problems of the state lotteries were taken both as a precedent and as a warning of what would result if gambling were not suppressed. In such circumstances, the reintroduction of public lotteries could not be a matter for serious consideration. Lotteries, with their evocation of corruption, dissipation and mass urban participation, represented the past: their attractions were few to the new 'civilized' world of Victorian Britain. [162, p. 380]

The basis of gambling debates and legislation became bound up with the appearance, problematic for many, of working-class leisure. Downes asserts that the growth both of gambling and of opposition to it can only be understood in this context, for it fostered the sense that work, far from being something natural, was an imposition upon a natural state of idleness: the discipline of the factory "had to be rigorously imposed upon recalcitrant material, and must not be allowed to break" [70, p. 37]. Working-class leisure had, therefore, to be controlled; it could also be exploited by the newly emerging gambling industry. As I have described, gambling had already been separated out from legitimate forms of financial speculation.<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent period upper- and lower- class gambling underwent a similar separation, and gambling legislation became increasingly concerned with morality and the working classes:

Victorian parliaments were interested in the control and reformation of working-class leisure, rather than in providing new opportunities for gambling which, in its waste of time and money,

1. See also Downes [70, p. 33-].

its alleged links with crime and idleness and its perceived irrationality, contradicted the sacred canons of Victorian bourgeois morality. [162, p. 380–181]

Despite this upsurge in the moral opposition, gambling was steadily securing a foothold both as an industry and as a culture. The proscription of lotteries was only partially successful: small-scale private lotteries flourished in the absence of those organized by the state. In particular, “specs” – illegal, privately run sweepstakes on horse races – enjoyed a great deal of popularity [162, p. 379]. At the same time, a gambling industry began to emerge organized around bookmakers [70, p. 39], taking up some of the infrastructures of the old state lotteries [162, p. 379].

In the twentieth-century there was a growing interest in lotteries amongst legislators, charities, and those seeking extraordinary sources of funds. The first indication of this was in 1916, when “bonus bonds” were to be introduced as a means of fiscal recovery after the First World War. This plan was subject to a Select Committee prior to its implementation. Many in the 1918 Committee were in favour of introducing a lottery, but fear of controversy meant that the Bill was defeated in the Commons on its second reading [162, p. 383].

The first wide-ranging debate about the possible benefits of lotteries came in 1932. It came in response to the the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes: not only was this successfully raising significant revenue, but it was also attracting illegal entrants from the United Kingdom. The Royal Commission of 1933 suggested that two kinds of lotteries, in addition to Art Unions lotteries<sup>1</sup>, should be permitted: “small lotteries” such as those held at church fêtes, and “private lotteries” such as those held at working men’s clubs. Both of these had been taking place anyway, but they were largely ignored as harmless [160, p. 383].

From 1933 onwards the history of lotteries is one of the growth of these small-scale and charitable draws. Its main themes are the growing reliance of charities on such lotteries and uneasiness about the illegality of some of these. In 1951 a Royal Commission addressed this problem. Many sports and charitable or-

1. These had been permitted since 1846 for the distribution of works of art by lot.

ganizations had been conducting lotteries based on the 1934 provisions, but which were, in fact, illegal. The Commission recommended extending and generalizing legal forms of lotteries such that any society registered for charitable, sporting, or cultural purposes would be permitted within financial limits: 1 shilling tickets, £100 in prizes, and a maximum turnover of £750. By the late 1960s, these constraints seemed trivial when compared with large lotteries abroad, and particularly the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes, which many in the UK were still entering illegally. This created some pressure on charities to increase revenue from their lotteries; it also pushed them into the fringes of illegality. In chapter 6 I will indicate some remarkable and possibly counter-intuitive affinities between the charitable and the gambling impulses, but this strange association between legitimate charities and illegal, or at least not unambiguously legal, gambling is, perhaps, one of the most surprising aspects of the association of gambling and charity. The most common explanation of how it came about is that the need for revenue found in the law a complexity and lack of clarity that meant that “neither promoter nor police could say with certainty when a competition was unlawful” [162, p. 385].

By 1970, however, there were indications that the ambiguity would be resolved at the cost of the charities. There had been a judgement that a particular competition run by a promoter on behalf of the Tenovus medical charity was an illegal lottery [162, p. 384]. Several other large charities such as the Spastics Society were also using the same kind of competition. The Tenovus case generated fears of prosecution and of damaging the reputation of such charities. These fears generated, in turn, pressure to revisit, once again, the question of charitable gambling. The pressure to do so was increased by cultural and political figures who had seen the benefits of lottery funding in other countries. The television interviewer Robin Day took up the cause of lotteries in a letter to *The Times* on 25 November 1967. Having seen the successful funding by lottery of the building of the Sydney Opera House, he suggested that something similar could be done to build a National Theatre, and that if this were to be done, it would show how a national lottery could be used for the funding of arts that would never receive public funding [207, p. 28]. He went on to champion national lotteries through

the 1970s.

In response to these pressures, the 1971 *Report of the Gaming Board* (The Witney Report), proposed the extension of societies' lotteries to local authorities, the raising of the financial limits, and a provision for "large lotteries" to be run by charitable organizations under licence from the Government; these recommendations were enacted in 1975 and 1976. But these Acts proved unequal to the task of regulating a burgeoning lottery industry. Between 1977 and 1978, there were 347 lottery schemes registered by local authorities, generating £26 million in receipts from ticket sales. The sum of receipts from *all* lotteries was £65½ million: under the predicted turnover of £100 million, but enough to indicate that the current legislation was not up to the task of regulating a burgeoning multi-million pound industry [162, p. 389].

#### 2.5.2 1976: THE ROTHSCHILD COMMISSION

The Rothschild Report [189] was the outcome of a Royal Commission set up in 1976 to review the provision in law for gambling in the face of these legislative difficulties.<sup>1</sup> It marks a turning point in attitudes to lotteries, and to gambling generally. Where 'normal legislation'<sup>2</sup> in the twentieth century had been a series of piecemeal adjustments to render legitimate gambling for acceptable causes within a framework of general proscription, the Rothschild Report's conclusions suggested and instigated a decriminalizing of gambling activities, and the realization of a new regulatory principle for their control. The 1808 Commission, it will be recalled, began with the hope of regulating lotteries but lost confidence in the face of evidence about the scale of the problems attending lotteries. The Rothschild Committee found similar grounds for scandal:

Despite the good work being achieved through many lotteries, the situation we have discovered is scandalous. There is wholesale disregard of the law which is inadequate and confused, commercial

1. It had an interesting membership, including, amongst others: an international banker as chair (Lord Rothschild), a newspaper agony-aunt (Marjorie Proops), a sports journalist (David Coleman), and a philosopher (Bernard Williams), author of *Moral Luck*

2. My coinage, following Kuhn's 'normal science'.

exploitation to a totally unacceptable degree, gross lack of security and, we strongly suspect, a good deal of plain dishonesty. [189, §12.134]

While the committee – a looking-glass counterpart to the earlier one – did not dissent from the conclusions of the 1808 report that lotteries were not the most efficient way of raising money for the state. It also agreed that, at time of the earlier report, the harmful social effects of state lotteries were very real, that these were derived from the activities attending the lotteries, and that these activities had become so bound up with state lotteries that they could not be entangled. Citing as proof the evidence from lotteries abroad, it asserted, however, that

It would be absurd to accept today the [1808] Select Committee's conclusion that the 'evil and calamities' they describe so eloquently are forever inseparable from large lotteries, in whatever way they are run. [189, §13.10]

In this passage, the report reflects on the difficulties of “drawing a line between what some may call paternalism and the ‘it's their own business’ attitude”. Because of this attempt to find a middle ground, it has been described by Dixon as working “within the perimeter of an explicitly liberal, social-democratic consensus” [66, p. 340], and by Downes as “distinctively British... basically liberal, though aiming to preserve a mixed economy rather than classical *laissez faire*” [69, p. 236], carrying an “almost casual” [p. 235] acceptance that the legalization and decriminalization of gambling was justified. Where commissions and other bodies prior to this one had taken for their basis matters of principle about gambling, the Rothschild Report was largely concerned with with essentially pragmatic matters of “the regulation of gambling, concentrating on the gambling market itself, the elimination of abuse, and on bureaucratic control” [162, p. 399].

The main principles that the Commission derived were: (1) *minimal intervention*: restrictions on gambling should only be imposed where there was danger of socially damaging excesses or of the incursion of crime into gambling;

(2) “*unstimulated demand*”: the principle that facilities should only respond to demand for gambling, they should not create such demand; (3) *information*: “gamblers should be invariably be made aware of what they are letting themselves in for when they gamble – in other words what they may lose (Gamblers usually know, or think they know, what they may win).” [§1.8].

The real centrepiece of the Report is its recommendations for the introduction of a National Lottery for Good Causes. The most recent parliamentary debate on national lotteries had taken place in 1968 on the reading of a Private Member’s Bill (The National Lottery Bill). This debate witnessed the usual objections: that a lottery would add to the social evils resulting from a gambling habit, that the state should have no part in gambling, and so on. But there were two more unusual points that the Rothschild Commission saw fit to address in some detail: (1) if there were a national lottery to which people subscribed voluntarily, none of the profits should go into the general revenue; it should all be used for good causes; (2) objects of national concern should not have to depend on a national lottery; they should be paid for out of general taxation [189, §13.36]. Influenced, perhaps, by the campaigning of Robin Day, who submitted a seven-page proposal [207, p. 31], the Committee found it inconceivable that taxation would be able to bear the costs of objects that were not essential [§13.37].

The notion of objects desirable but not essential is the basis of the ethos of the National Lottery. It is reiterated later in the report,

In practice, a Government of any party, subject to day to day public and political pressures, finds it impossible to devote more than meagre resources to good causes of the kind which are desirable rather than essential. [189, §13.62]

Here, though, it becomes elevated from a matter of expediency to a more political view of the importance of “desirable objects”, and indeed of their necessity:

[T]he paradox is that while each individual cause may not be essential, it is essential for the health of our community that some resources are devoted to such purposes. There is a crucial need in



our society for a source of substantial funds to provide support of a kind with which any Government experiences great difficulty.

Philanthropists might previously have fulfilled this need, but it was the Commission's belief that the accumulation of private wealth had become so difficult that "there will be no new Nuffield Foundations".

Such exigencies rendered the arguments against a national lottery "feeble, under modern conditions" [§13.63]. For a small cost, lotteries, found to be mostly harmless in earlier sections of the report, could be used to allocate funds "to deserving good causes unfettered by short term political and public pressures". As long as its harmlessness could be maintained by adequate regulation and information to the consumer, and as long as government could be kept out of its workings, a national lottery would be a sort of virtual philanthropist, which would provide "a rare opportunity to improve indirectly, of not directly, the quality of British life".

It took rather a long time after the report's findings were published for them to gain strong enough political appeal. It was only with John Major that the Government had a leader who was not disposed to consider the Lottery a "squalid raffle"<sup>1</sup>. It is not surprising that Margaret Thatcher was entirely opposed to a national lottery, for it would have been anathema to her Methodist background. It is, therefore, ironic that the grounds for the Lottery were laid by the social and political ethos that her administration espoused. A state lottery came late to the UK. But its immediate historical referent is not other lotteries in other countries. Rather, as Douglas suggests, it finds its ground in developments in public administration that came about because of the deep economic problems of the 1970s [68, p. 1]. In this period, there was a breakdown in the post-war consensus over how economies should be run: a broadly social-democratic and Keynesian consensus. New institutional forms began to appear in the mid-1970s that led to privatization and the disaggregation of public administration by the state into private and market-led bodies and regulatory 'watchdogs'.

1. Harold Wilson's description of premium bonds on the announcement of their introduction: "Now Britain's strength, freedom and solvency apparently depend on the proceeds of a squalid raffle" [Budget debate 1956].

In accord with the general adoption of the mixed economy model, twentieth century lotteries across the world had been placed under government control on a “safety first” principle [68, p. 2]. The British National Lottery on the other hand, established after the collapse of the Keynesian consensus in the 1970s, was the first privately run national lottery; it remains the only one to date. This decision has created an interesting regulatory terrain for the lottery. With respect to its gambling aspect, its privatization reflects a move to free gambling in some degree from its historical constraints. The basic principle of regulation is consumer-oriented – “player protection” – the player must be given adequate information about the odds and therefore the risks involved in playing, about how to play the game, and about the disbursement of funds raised by the lottery. There is, however, much evidence of the susceptibility of players to many ‘heuristics and biases’<sup>1</sup> in their evaluation of gambling odds: in the bounded rationality of their gambling. The strength and pervasiveness of these errors suggest that no amount of information could render playing the lottery transparent and, therefore, that the player can never make a truly informed choice even if the information is available and were they to be interested in seeking it out.

If one could be confident in the effective transmission of information and of players’ rationality, the lottery (or lotteries) would be run on a competition model, much as privatized utilities and telecommunications are. But the National Lottery is a regulated monopoly. It is so, not only to allow for a necessary economy of scale and “critical mass” of revenue [68, p. 4], but also to allow the regulator to limit ticket prices, the size and frequency of rollovers, and the licensing of interactive lottery machines. In this respect, the regulation of the lottery retains some of the paternalism of previous gambling legislation, but for significantly different reasons:

Whether information flows are or are not sufficient there are some areas of social policy in which government will intervene, on the pretext that decision-makers in the marketplace will continue to make irrational and/or wrong decisions. [68, p. 40]

1. For more on this, see Chapter 3, page 75.

The principle of “unstimulated demand” – the ostensible grounds for the existence of such strong regulatory measures as those governing the lottery – is, however, rendered irrelevant: the very introduction of the National Lottery does away with such a principle by definition.

### 2.5.3 2001 GAMBLING REVIEW

The latest major review of gambling in the UK was published in July 2001 [92]. The review body also commissioned a survey of attitudes to gambling in Great Britain [170]. The Chair’s introduction notes that gambling has become a “rather more complex world” since the Rothschild Report was introduced. This new complexity is due in some degree to the introduction of the National Lottery and the growth of on-line betting. But rather more is due to the “drift” from the outright and moral condemnatory tone of the 1808 report to the more conciliatory tone of the Rothschild Report. When gambling is seen as inherently evil, conclusions are simple; when gambling is seen primarily as an attractor, so to speak, for evils, and not an evil itself, the problem is how to reduce the likelihood of attendant evils occurring. This is broadly the conclusion of the Rothschild Report. The introduction of the idea of “Good Causes” is perhaps of a piece with this approach: their existence itself a kind of moral hedging. One consequence of this approach, not merely confined to the Rothschild Report, but rather a tendency of gambling reviews and legislation in the 20th century, is an ad-hoc and piecemeal handling of gambling: specific forms of gambling have specific deleterious attendants requiring specific remedies.<sup>1</sup> The 2001 review attempts to reduce this fragmentation, at least at the level of policy, by recommending the unification of regulation of gambling under one body the *Gambling Commission*.<sup>2</sup>

The Rothschild Report, it will be recalled, found “absurd” the conclusion of the 1808 Select Committee that gambling was radically evil. The 2001 Gambling Review similarly distances itself from what it describes as the “intolerably

1. See Downes [70, p. 29].

2. It is interesting that the one exception to this is spread-betting, which the report recommends should remain under the *Financial Services Authority*.

paternalistic” view of the Rothschild Report [§3.25]. Despite the ostensible liberality of the earlier report, its central theme was the issue of “unstimulated demand”, and its underlying and question-begging idea of “social excess”. The Review suggests that behind this attitude lies the idea that “liberalization of gambling might produce a state of society which was undesirable, even if those who were gambling were not unhappy” [§3.26]. If gambling were completely liberalized then the liberalizers would approve of the new freedoms people had to spend time and money as they see fit, while the moralists would disapprove of a perceived decline in the quality of social life.

A further cause of the new complexity in the world of gambling is the growing recognition that gambling is a sociological problem as much as it may be a social problem, the chairman notes in his introduction:

The Report is unanimous and it is being published to schedule. We wait to see how it will be received. It was no doubt naïve to hope that it would be an easy matter to establish widely acceptable principles. It soon became apparent that gambling is an activity where individual values about such matters as the nature of society and the role of the state quickly become paramount. We know where the limits are – complete prohibition or complete deregulation – but there are no widely acceptable principles which tell us where we should stop between the two limits.

The way the report sets up the limits is revealing: “complete prohibition” is not opposed to its logical opposite, which would be something like ‘complete freedom to gamble’. Likewise, and more importantly, the logical opposite of “complete deregulation” is ‘complete regulation’, and not “complete prohibition”. Complete freedom to gamble is a *corollary* of complete deregulation, but the subtle displacement of this end of the continuum is telling.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

It is tempting and not unwarranted to find similarities between the ebullient nascence of organized capitalism in the eighteenth century and the aftermath

of its rise to maturity today. The recent dot-com bubbles<sup>1</sup> are the counterpart of those of an earlier period. The complexities of financial markets defy current abilities to model and, therefore, to regulate them. Derivatives markets, for example, have abstracted value away from any actual concrete fundamentals to such an extent that the model used in the regulation of such markets – the Black-Scholes model – does not and can not serve neutrally as an instrument to assess reasonable risk, but has actually “altered the world in a general way that made itself true” [150, p. 110]. Since the model is a kind of bricolage or “creative tinkering”, the commodity highly non-substantive, and the marketplace a massively complex global network of financial markets, there is a sense of a return to the eighteenth-century ambiguities that confounded the boundaries between financial speculation, insurance against risk, and gambling.

Alongside this return to uncertainty in the post-Keynesian economic sphere, there has been a gradual softening of attitudes to lotteries and to gambling in general, which has been complemented by a movement away from moral objections. Some have described attitudes to gambling as following a trajectory from sin to vice to disease.<sup>2</sup> The idea of the gambling as a pathology appears in literature and psychoanalysis, but it was only in 1980, on the publication of the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* that it acquired full recognition as a form of mental illness [45, p. 69]. Since then the idea has come to dominate the literature on gambling.

It has also become current in everyday life. The *Times* newspaper of 15 June 1995, for example, featured a front page story which described lottomania: “a delusional illness triggered by publicity surrounding the UK’s National Lottery”. My interviewees spoke freely and without prompting about addiction. The notion of an “addictive personality” appeared frequently. Some spoke of their playing of the lottery, particularly of buying scratchcards, as “getting a fix” [interview: Bob W], or in terms of its “buzz” [interview: Gary H]. Some,

1. More recently, the high-valued flotation of some on-line gambling companies has generated speculation that a new bubble is forming.

2. Rose in *Compulsive Gambling and the Law: From Sin to Vice to Disease* [187], Rosencrance in *Compulsive Gambling and the Medicalisation of Deviance* [188], Dixon in *The Discovery of the Compulsive Gambler* [65], and Castellani in *Pathological Gambling: The Making of a Medical Problem* [38].

indeed, celebrated their various – holisms:

Kathy P I'm addicted to these syndicates... I smoke, so that means I've got an addictive personality... As I say, I get a buzz out of going shopping... I'm sort of a shopaholic, a spendaholic.

And others were concerned not to encourage their own perceived “addictive personality”:

Mary O I never buy scratchcards. Never have done, never would do, and one of the reasons for that is that I think I probably have a mildly addictive personality and I'd probably become of those people that become totally... you know, I have some friends who when they do their groceries they treat themselves to two scratchcards, two one pound scratchcards, but I know that if I once scratched off 5 pound or 10 pound I'd think “Whoah”, you know, the temptation of easy money, it'd be a bit like cigarette addiction and all those other things.

There are some notable properties of this shift, for, while moral opposition to gambling implies a basic ethical suspicion about it, the pathology model is also a normalizing model, since for any pathology there must also be a corresponding normal condition. The interview passages above suggest that there is also a sort of cheerful, celebratory normal pathology of addiction: shopaholism is not used here as a clinical condition, but as a ‘harmless’ form that has as its correlate ‘harmless’ forms of gambling. Where it is not celebrated, the notion of addiction, particularly when it appears in the idea of the addictive personality, is used as a means of defining the boundaries of conduct.

But this is a highly individualized kind of a boundary: the personality and the self. And this tendency is an indication of one of the most important differences between state lotteries past and present. In the past they were thoroughly public affairs: they took place on the streets, and those considered victims of its corruption suffered their fates on the streets; they were directly run by the state; and their condemnation was from the standpoint of public religion. The current

state lottery, on the other hand, takes place in the private sphere. If it can be said to “take place” at all. There is no equivalent to the West End of Saint Paul’s Cathedral for the National Lottery. Today the lottery “happens” across a large computer network, its draw lasts for fifteen minutes on the television, not for six weeks. If it may be said to take place in something resembling an actual location, it is in sites intended for other purposes: in shops and supermarkets in the buying of tickets and in the workplace in the running of syndicates. The use of a Genoese number lottery is of a piece with this sense of disembodiment of the Lottery: despite the spectacle of choosing one of the machines, the independent auditor, and the celebrity pressing the start button, Guinevere, Arthur, Lancelot, and the other machines could be replaced with any randomizing device that selects 6 numbers from 49 without replacement.

In its charitable aspect the Lottery remains public; indeed, it is more public in this respect than it was before since there seems to be no debate about where the money went in eighteenth-century lotteries. In its gambling aspect, its moving into the public sphere should not be understood as a retreat or as a loss of significance. Nor should the apparent disappearance of the religious roots of the uses of lotteries and debates be taken as final. In all its dimensions, the current lottery contains in reworked or vestigial form past ideas of ideas of what lotteries are, what they mean, and what they do. In the following chapters I show what forms its relations to the most important of these dimensions – to the rational, to the lusory, to the providential, to work, and to the economic sphere – have taken and the relationship of these forms to contemporary modern society.

## CHAPTER 3

# THEORIES OF GAMBLING

Comment oser parler des lois du hasard? Le hasard n'est-il pas l'antithèse de toute loi? [*How dare we speak of the laws of chance? Is not chance the antithesis of any law whatsoever?*]

—Joseph Bertrand, *Calcul des Probabilités* [20, p. vi]

The history of the introductions and bannings of lotteries, of their protagonists and antagonists, is highly suggestive of sociological theories of gambling. It is even possible to maintain that the work done by some in condemning and abolishing lotteries and by others in supporting them constitutes a nascent theory of gambling, so strongly does it refer to the most profound forces that shape social organization and social change. For the preoccupations of those involved in debates about the lottery may be attributed, in some degree at least, to responses to the rise and subsequent maturation of modern society. One can find in these debates, as I have indicated, more than a trace of some of the most central and most compelling problems of modernity, and in particular those of the relationship between rational calculativeness and pleasure-seeking, the relationship between self-interest and the interests of the collective, and the relationship between an ethic of acquisition and an ethic of welfare.

Of particular sociological note is Gataker's distinction between divinatory and lusory lots, discussed in the previous chapter, which involved a separation of providential thinking into two distinct ideas:

... God's morally opaque disposing will on the one hand, which controlled the outcome of particular events, and His directing will



on the other, which generally concerned the operation of the world in terms of right. [43, p. 36]

Some claim that Gataker, notwithstanding that he was received with scepticism by most of his contemporaries and with robust outrage by some [43, p. 35], was a leading force in the development of rationalism.<sup>1</sup> This is borne out when one compares the distinction that he proposed, and its general correlative indicated above, with the social and intellectual moment that is to be found in Max Weber's account of the development of rational ascetic capitalism: the "opaque" God of the Calvinists became transformed through a peculiar turn in the logic of predestination into an expectation that there was some underlying rationality to events in the world. Where before one might believe that one's fate was administered by God personally and opaquely, now providence, while ultimately a manifestation of God's will, seemed mediated by earthly natural causes, and, increasingly, by causes that may be determined rationally by calculation and the scientific method, by causes that may, in fact, be rendered transparent.

In the prior world, divinatory lots made sense: the act of casting the lots allowed God to determine how they might fall, and how the lots fell was a sign of how God had determined events would fall.<sup>2</sup> In the latter period, the divinatory aspect of lots held less of a sway. Lusory lots, on the other hand, became increasingly relevant by way of an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the fundamentals of probability. With this new relevance, they also became more of a danger to virtue, and the nature of the hazards involved also changed. Divinatory lots involved the player in the act, perhaps even a blasphemous one, of appealing "on trivial matters to the adjudication of the Deity" [136, p. 307]. The hazard of the lusory lots, however, was more earthly, for it involved personal loss and the risk of squandering one's life in fecklessness. Most fundamentally, the lusory lots incorporated the morally hazardous possibility of gaining something for nothing, a possibility entirely at odds with the puritanical ethos of hard work in one's calling. Thus, a satirical epitaph to the lottery on their banning in

1. See page 36, note 1.

2. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" [Proverbs, 16:33]. On this point, See Lecky [136, p. 307]

1824, spoke of the “series of tedious complaints” that brought about the ban:

As they increased, it was found that their continuance corrupted the morals, and encouraged a spirit of Speculation and Gambling among the lower classes of the people. [4, p. 239]

These traces of modernity in attitudes to the lottery, coming to fruition even while opposition to lotteries was mounting, may be found in the later life of the lottery. In her study of the introduction of lotteries to Sweden in the late 19th century, for example, Husz shows that lotteries were perceived as just such a distinctly modern phenomenon. Certainly, there were objections to the lottery, but these objections took a rather different form. One critic said:

The lottery romanticism comes from America; it is surely the outcome of the same spirit as the worship of money, which was brought to Europe by movies. And it is spreading like a mental contagion. [122, p. 57]

Here, we have no trace of the religious argument that lotteries are inherently wicked. Rather, the referents are: “romanticism”, implicitly counterposed to rational realism; the worship of money, perhaps here there is something of the religious, but it is not about providence; and “mental contagion”, the very metaphor of gambling as a disease. One might also add to this list of new aspects the danger of introducing or making worse a compulsion to gamble [25, p. 50]. In some respects the debates about the lotteries here refer back to the early period of lotteries, when, as the satire mentioned previously put it, “the family [of the lottery, that is] flourished under the powerful protection of the British Parliament; The Minister of the day continuing to give them his support for the improvement of the revenue”.

This is very different from the earlier condemnations of the lottery which had a marked religious cast. The change, in sum, is a shift from emphasis on ‘evil’ to an emphasis on ‘danger’, and from a deontological morality that stresses the importance of correct action irrespective of the consequences<sup>1</sup>, to a consequen-

1. As captured in the expression *fiat justitia et pereat mundus* [let justice be done though the world may perish].

tialist one that would weigh up the possible outcomes of an act. There is an interesting historical parallel here with changes in approaches to other aspects of life, and particularly economic life, that involve the quantification of chance and contingency, that attach a value to some good on the basis of an account of the individual's degree of responsibility for events. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the connexion with charity, which I explore in chapter 6.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.1 VEBLÉN: GAMBLING, WASTE AND CONSUMPTION

Conceptions of leisure may be divided into two categories.<sup>2</sup> The one, which may be dubbed the Aristotelian, is the view that leisure is the condition where activity is undertaken as an end in itself. The other, characteristic of Thorstein Veblen, is that leisure is a kind of waste, a “non-productive consumption of time”. The distinction separating the two seems slight, but it is directed at a very large difference in the understanding of leisure. In the ‘Aristotelian’ point of view, leisure finds its apotheosis in contemplation:

Pure contemplation is...leisure's most sublime form. In order to engage in contemplative activity, individuals must possess the ability to both reason logically, that is, generalize from the particular, and intuitively understand the good. But knowledge is to be used not for personal or material gain but for self-illumination. Its purpose is self-actualization not social aggrandizement. [218, p. 104]

Veblen's approach to leisure, by contrast, finds in it something rather less lofty:

Time is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of the unwor-

1. Another area where this affinity may be found is in the growth of the life insurance industry, as documented by Zelizer in *Morals and Markets: The Development of Life Insurance in the United States* [239], and by Clark in *Betting on Lives: The Culture of Life Insurance in England, 1695–1775* [43]. On this connexion, Husz notes that lotteries and insurance are similar not only in that they are “practices of objectification oriented towards the future” [122, p. 67] (objectifications, that is, of contingencies), but at the time of the widespread introduction of insurance policies to Sweden, the advertising of the two industries was remarkably similar, with images of the Goddess Fortuna, of cornucopia with money, and of the Goddess of Liberty [p. 70].

2. This classification is derived from Tilman and Tilman's *Veblen's Leisure Class Theory and Legalized Gambling* [218].

thiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness. [221, p. 46]<sup>1</sup>

Leisure time is either an escape from alienated labour or, if one is in the happy position of not needing to labour, is a demonstration of that fact. Where the one view dignifies leisure with the possibility that it might realize virtue, that through generality and rationality one may come to know virtue, the other view is that there is something negative about leisure, not merely conceptually, by way of the privative definition, but also morally. The first view finds in leisure something that holds out the promise of the sublime; the second view always finds an invidious abjection, either in the subject or in the subject's conspicuous freedom from abjection.<sup>2</sup>

It might seem, therefore, as though Veblen is a Marxist of sorts; but this is not so. He is not so much a theorist of production and of alienation from the process of production;<sup>3</sup> he is rather more a theorist who starts from the principle of *decorum*: that there should be a congruity between the cognitive style demanded by modern society and the actions and beliefs of actors. Much of his work sets itself against “crackpot realism”, a phrase coined by C Wright Mills<sup>4</sup> to capture Veblen's belief that

...the very Men of Affairs who everyone supposed to embody sober, hard-headed practicality were in fact utopian capitalists and monomaniacs; the the Men of Decision who led soldiers in war and who organized civilians' daily livelihoods in peace were in fact crackpots of the highest pecuniary order. They had “sold” a

1. Note also the notion of ‘consuming time’, a metaphor that has become, as Veblen would note with disapproval, dead, or at least lifeless enough that it passes almost unnoticed.

2. This discussion follows similar lines to Arendt's discussion of the distinction between labour and work in *The Human Condition* [3].

3. Although Marx, in the later period of his work substituted exploitation for alienation, in an attempt, perhaps, to render his work more scientific, it is, I would argue, undeniable that the idea of *homo faber* is the premise of all his work, and that the dialectically necessary loss involved in production is the structuring principle of history, even in *Capital*. For Veblen, on the other hand, the key problem of capitalism was that people were captivated by a “manic desire for status” [26, p. vii].

4. In his introduction to *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

believing world on themselves; and they had – hence the irony – to play the chief fanatics in their delusional world. [221, p. vi–vii]

For Veblen the “delusional world” is the world of consumption. Consumerism, as expressed in conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption, is a kind of false consciousness; it is false, not because it hides the underlying facts of production, but because it runs counter to the formal-rational spirit of the times. In more traditional periods it may have been appropriate to have a reified, or ‘animistic’ in Veblen’s parlance, understanding of causality. In modern society, however, it is not appropriate to impute “a quasi-personal character to facts...conceived to be possessed of volition.” [p. 184]. A correct understanding of cause and effect is a requirement for the individual, who “must be endowed with the aptitude and the habit of readily apprehending and relating facts in terms of causal sequences” [p. 186].

He considered, therefore, gambling to be a stupid act unbecoming for members of advanced industrial modernity. In his *Theory of the Leisure Class* [221] he inveighs against the atavism of a belief in luck, a propensity that, for him, underlies the attraction of gambling, and which is, for him, a world-view out of place:

...an archaic trait, inherited from a more or less remote past, more or less incompatible with the requirements of the the modern industrial process, and more or less of a hindrance to the fullest efficiency of the collective economic life of the present. [221, p. 183]

It is not only the belief in luck that he finds distasteful, but also the inherent agonism of gambling. Betting on contests implies that one wants one side to win at the expense of the other. Veblen claims that this actually involves a sense that one is trying to bring about a favourable outcome, a sense that “the animistic congruity of things” will mean that the one who has propitiated the most “by so much conative and kinetic urging” [p. 184] will be the one who will prevail. This is bad enough for Veblen, but he also determines that it leads to a sort of favouritism. The fact that the bet seems to propitiate good outcomes means that one is led to believe that one’s betting will actually influence the outcome.

This is not only animistic, but also “unmistakably a predatory feature”, for one is projecting one’s desires into a support of one person at the expense of another.

Veblen’s characterization of gambling, and leisure in general, is as an *ideological* activity which generates “invidious comparisons”, and hence a sort of *ressentiment*, between people who, under the egalitarian formal rational principles of capitalism, should be equals. This idea, encapsulated in the concept of conspicuous consumption, has been richly fruitful in the sociology of leisure and consumption.<sup>1</sup> But it does not really say enough about gambling in itself. Hampered by an almost obsessive moralism about the lack of fit between gambling and capitalism’s ethos, it bears a curious resemblance, albeit an inverted one, to the religious condemnation of gambling: the one complaining of not enough faith, the other of too much.

### 3.2 DEVEREUX: GAMBLING AS A SAFETY VALVE

A properly sociological theory of gambling cannot but entertain the assumption that gambling somehow is part of society, that there is some good, at least a public good, to gambling, whose nature is in some sense derived from its morally problematic character. This approach is exemplified by Edward Devereux’s work *Gambling and the Social Structure* [59], an orthodox piece of structural-functionalism<sup>2</sup>, with a strong flavour of the Max Weber of the *Protestant Ethic*. In Weber’s account, salvation anxiety generates a psychological pressure that may not be relieved by religious means. Worldly activity in one’s calling is the sole means of release, and then it is only a partial means and one subject to diminishing returns.<sup>3</sup> The worldly ethos of puritanism eventually secularizes the god-given *Beruf* and renders it meaningless, since the formal-rationality engendered erases the ultimate value upon which the *Beruf* rests. Vocation, in the fullest sense of the term, becomes a mere occupation.

1. Despite the unquestionable influence of Veblen on the sociology of consumption, his work on gambling does not gain much mention in texts on gambling.

2. It may, in fact, be the *only* extensive example of this kind of analysis.

3. Significantly, in the second edition, Weber uses the psychoanalytic phrase ‘Abreagieren’ (abreaction) [227, p. 97, 106]; this nuance is lost in Talcott Parsons’s translation.

It is this reconfigured tension that is the basis of Devereux's theory of gambling. In general, he examines the function of recreation and avocational activities in a world in which vocation itself does not fully satisfy the needs of the individual. Recreational activities, Devereux suggests, are one kind of institutional device for solving some of the inherent value strains of capitalism [p. 954]. They are not, he adds, expressions of human nature; they are products of social structures with which they stand in a functional relation.

Gambling has a privileged position amongst these kinds of activities; its privileges are derived from the peculiarities of its straddling of the economic and recreational domains of life. Unlike most if not all other forms of recreation, gambling is unethical; it is not even *anti*-ethical, but *non*-ethical. This feature explains, Devereux suggests, the *sub rosa* quality of gambling [p. 955]. It is an activity that takes place covertly within the value system: under the counter, so to speak, rather than outside the door. So, the questions he asks are:

Why has gambling been assigned its persistent social stigma? And in the face of this, why is it so perennially popular? Why do we make and maintain laws only to break them? And since we do, what kinds of structural accommodation are made to maintain a façade of legitimacy? How are these deviant behaviour patterns and sub rosa organizations fitted into the general frameworks of social structure, and how is a tolerable condition of equilibrium established and maintained? [59, p. 4]

The broad answer to these questions is that gambling involves a “playful recombination” of the values of the dominant institutional pattern; it is “a particularly convenient mechanism in which the psychological consequences of economic frustration, strain, conflict and ambivalence may be ‘worked out’ ”.<sup>1</sup> He indicates several kinds of motivations<sup>2</sup> for gambling where this ‘working out’ may be found.

1. Or, one might say, ‘abreacted’.

2. Devereux himself indicates [p. 957] that some care needs to be taken when the idea of ‘motivation’ is invoked; perhaps, as he suggests, ‘motivational pattern’ is a more appropriate phrase.

ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS The most immediately available explanation of gambling binds it to economic processes: gambling allows a short cut to gain that by-passes work. But there is more to gambling than mere gain, and the economic aspects of gambling are not reducible to gain itself. Another economic motivation is what Devereux calls the “protest against the tyranny of the budget” [p. 958]. The need for budgeting draws attention to one’s economic constraints. A budget symbolizes the need to economize and the need to weigh up the costs and benefits of any potential expenditure. The budget is a continual reminder of the limitations of income, and of the institutional values of frugality, rationality and caution. More generally, it dramatizes the tension between constraint and freedom, and between pleasure and the deferment of pleasure.

One of my interviewees, while talking about when and how he plays the lottery, said:

Gary H Umm. I think it’s probably because if you’re anxious about money and you’ve gone over the bills and we realized that we haven’t got enough to meet our requirements, then I suppose then the whole idea of money suddenly saturates your being and you think how can we respond to it? well of course you can’t, unless you go out and get a better job, but then suddenly you think, well perhaps we’re going to win the lottery, or perhaps we might have a good chance of doing that. So we usually rush out and buy a ticket. Of course we never get anywhere, but that’s not the point... I mean we realize that the odds are so few and far between. But, as an anxiety lessening ritual to go through it tends to work.

I mean we may have, say Friday... I mean, we’re grown up about it, but, say a Friday night we go through the money and we get worried about it and then we think, right we’re going to buy the lottery ticket, and just, just chance our arm really.

This introduces an interesting temporal aspect to the dramatization of which Devereux speaks. The “anxiety lessening ritual” of thinking about the constraints



of the budget, of shuffling and re-shuffling the finances, and of deciding to buy a lottery ticket happens on a Friday evening: in the space between the ‘managed’ time of the work week and the ‘free’ leisure time of the weekend. It is noteworthy here and elsewhere in this part of the interview – for he spoke extensively on this point – that he speaks always of buying a lottery ticket in terms of haste – “rush out and buy a ticket” – in contrast to his talk about careful budgeting.

Petty gambling – gambling, that is, within budgetary constraints – is not likely to end the tyranny of the budget for once and for all, but it does represent a “satisfactory channel of protest and escape” from this tyranny. Any money gained from any such small-scale betting constitutes a type of what Viviana Zelizer calls ‘special monies’ [240]. Because the money was not earned, and hence not ‘deserved’ in some sense, this kind of money is freed from institutional values of thrift. Devereux notes that in his studies winnings are almost never assimilated into the budget, they are always ‘blown’ on frivolities. This sort of attitude appears in my own interview data. The winner of a small, but substantial, amount said:

Norman S Each of us, each of us in the family had a little bit to do something ridiculous with.

Indeed, winnings might even be spend on further gambling:

Elaine D... we had thirty pounds in winnings, and it would have worked out that if we'd shared it out we'd have only got a few pounds each. So we said what shall we do, and the verdict was we should blow it all on scratchcards.

It is only when the amounts involved are in the scale of a yearly income or above that the possibility seems to appear of doing something closer to “sensible” budgeting such as paying off the mortgage.

Conversely, I found that money gained outside of work is more readily available for gambling. A particularly interesting form of money in this respect is the ‘bottle money’, the small change that falls into the interstices of budgeting,

and ends up in containers until it reaches a spendable amount. For several of my informants, this money was hypothecated for gambling, for example:

Helen S If my purse gets a bit heavy I think ‘Oh I’ll get rid of some of these coppers’ and throw them in the bottle. And I’m not sure that I would be able to happily justify, you know, taking ten pound, you know proper ten pound from my purse and just thinking. . . [I’ll spend it betting] on a horse.

For one couple that I interviewed [interview: Neil and Lesley K] the question of what counts as spare change, and therefore what would count as gambling money, was the source of lively discussion and disagreement between the two.

One does not even have to win and to squander one’s winnings on “flash consumption” to benefit from this kind of protest. Lotteries are particularly interesting on this point, for the minuscule glimpse they give of almost absolute freedom from the budget allows a kind of relief in the fantasy of such an escape.

PROTESTS AGAINST RATIONALITY    Gambling’s especial usefulness as a form of “protest” against economic constraints finds an equivalent in the sphere of rationality. It is this aspect of gambling that Veblen highlighted and demonized in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. As with the protest against economics, Devereux, unlike Veblen, finds a place for gambling’s relation to rationality *within* both the psychology of the actor and the institutions of society. The actor, constantly reminded of the impositions of reality, must find a way of understanding “an indifferent and sometimes hostile universe animated by causes independent of his will” [59, p. 961]. The principal means for doing so is rationality. Reason, however, entails a disciplining constraint to knowing the world, the kind of constraint that, ultimately, assumes the form of a Weberian “iron cage”: rationality, a means of knowing, predicting and controlling the world, presents itself to the actor as an external and dominating force. Psychologically, the reality principle<sup>1</sup>, conveyed by and embodied in reason, is at odds with the

1. In the Kantian and broadly Enlightenment sense of an epistemologically necessary congruence between reality and reason, rather than the ontological, Heideggerian, sense of reality as Being prior to reason.

freedom and pleasure-seeking aspects of personality. Hence, the association of the lottery with “romanticism” in an earlier quotation.

Institutionally, the “structural imperatives” of capitalism [p. 960] encourage a heavy stress on rationality in culture. But events always seem to fall short of the strong promise that rationality makes:

In addition to the inevitable psychological constraints that rationality imposes, the objective consequences of this discipline are often deeply frustrating. Because of the grave inadequacies of even the best available knowledge and technique, man is continually called upon to face the consequences of events he cannot predict, or control, or understand. [59, p. 962]

The consequences of this are, Devereux says, a latent resentment against the reality principle, and an accompanying mistrust of the capabilities of reason to orient and adapt to circumstances.

All societies, therefore, require some way of making up for the shortcomings of the “narrow dictatorship of reason”; they do so either by filling in the gaps, so to speak, of reason, or by allowing the actor to release the emotional pressures induced by these frustration.

Once again, gambling is ideally placed to fulfil this functional requirement. Chance, central to gambling, and the source of fascination for the gambler, flies in the face of reason, “makes a mockery of . . . the orderly, meaningless world of cause and effect” [p. 963]. Furthermore, gambling’s entanglement of chanciness and economic activity is a “barb at the heart of all the institutionalized logics of the legitimate sphere”. Gamblers might use rational and quasi-rational schemes to ‘beat the game’, but, Devereux notes, they also, often even wilfully, fail to make full use of the facts available about the game.

There is strong support for this view in the prospect theorists’ experimental work on economic rationality. The exemplification *par excellence* of ‘making full use of the facts’ in economic action is the expected utility model. The work of Kahneman, Tversky, and others tests, largely by experiment, the empirical validity of this model, which is so central to economic theory. From von

Neumann and Morgenstern's *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* [223] onwards, thought experiments involving gambling, especially lotteries, have been used extensively in economic theorizing on questions of choice when the possible outcomes can only be expressed as probabilities. The models derived assume, however, that the actor has perfect knowledge of the probabilities involved and that, in possession of this knowledge, the actor will make the objectively correct choice. The prospect theorists have shown, however, that gambling decisions are made not with any thorough-going calculation, but with a set of heuristics that ignore some of the information necessary to make a fully rational decision.<sup>1</sup> Some examples of these are: *availability*: the recall of specific instances where one has been successful over those where one has not; *confirmation bias*: neglect of regression to the mean; *illusory correlation*: the priest at the football game ensures the team's victory because he was there when they last won; and *justifiability*: preference for a rule with a justification over one with none.<sup>2</sup>

These example heuristics go some of the way to helping us to accept the thesis put forward by Devereux. But not all the way. In the inaugural paper on prospect theory, Kahneman and Tversky conclude that gambling is attractive because of cognitive biases that give too much weight to low risk probabilities [130, p. 286]. This would have little relevance to Devereux's point if the actors merely believed erroneously that they were maximizing their expected utility; if this were so, the "protest against rationality" would evaporate leaving a residue of mere error. What needs to be shown is that some kind of a *virtue*, however ambivalent, is made of these errors, that actors have something to gain. That they *enjoy*

1. This is not to say that they have shown the economists to be wrong, but merely that there are some problems actualizing their ideal-typical model. Indeed, such an actualization is, arguably, not the purpose of the model, as Binmore notes: "Economists are very careful *not* to claim that people *really* have utility generators inside their heads. It is true that the brain contains pleasure and pain centres, but what is known about these is too slender to form the basis of a viable theory. When economists discuss utility maximization, they therefore only claim that rational individuals will behave *as though* their aim were to maximize a utility function" [21, p. 98] (emphasis in the original).

2. There are many other such heuristics; an extensive list (as well as a critique of the heuristics model) may be found in *Paradoxes of Gambling Behaviour* [224]. Prospect theory is described in *Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decisions Under Risk* [130]; other relevant texts on the subject of gambling are *Judgement Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* [129] and *Propensities and Counterfactuals: The Loser that Almost Won* [131].

employing such heuristics and biases, for example. Wagenaar and Pleit-Kuiper's research detailed in *The Multiple Objectives of Gamblers* [225] provides this kind of evidence. Using principal components analysis to disaggregate the complex bundle of motivations of gamblers, they show that although the tendency has been to assume that maximization of expected value is the prime motivation of gamblers, there are other significant factors, such as excitement ("I like doubling and splitting because it makes the game more exciting" [p. 173]), sociability, and entertainment ("more important than winning"). The analysis of responses to a range of stimulus statements such as these shows that there are two interpretable dimensions other than expected value: the perceived game objective and risk attitudes [p. 167]. Thus, they conclude that these other factors contribute significantly to the utility structure of gambling situations [p. 176].

The other aspect of gambling that allows a "protest" against rationality is as a means of flight from reality. In this respect, there is an affinity between gambling and the state of mind that Csikszentmihalyi calls *flow*:

We shall refer to this peculiar dynamic state – the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement – as *flow*. In the flow state, action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He experiences it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future. [51, p. 35]

The attractive qualities of flow are its sense of total involvement, its autotelic<sup>1</sup> nature, and, importantly, the fact that it is avocational:

Although it would be ideal to enjoy one's work, and in a few fortunate societies this might indeed be the case, it is generally true in our society that most people do not find deep involvement and enjoyment in their productive work, but seek it instead in leisure activities. [163, p. 36]

1. An end in itself.

Flow allows a degree of completeness that, in Devereux's analysis, is not achievable under the background ethos of capitalism:

When everyday activity is constraining, routinized, invariant, overly structured, when experience of the world is one of excessive regulation and oppressive discipline, then people seek variety and personal challenges in their recreation. [163, p. 45]

This completeness may be either an escape from the stifling demands of rationality, or it may be a means of satisfying rationality's unsatisfiable demands:

In short, those who experience a surplus of certainty in their daily lives, that is, those who are alienated, will seek uncertainty in play. On the other hand, those who view the world as mainly uncertain, that is, anomic persons, will seek certainty in recreation. [163, p. 46]

PROTESTS AGAINST ETHICS The pattern of Devereux's thought should be clear from the preceding account. Some aspect of the motivation for gambling finds a place within some fundamental psychologically and socially hard-wired tension. At the most general, these tensions are the basics of being, acting and knowing: freedom and constraint, the reality principle and the pleasure principle, reason and intuition. They become institutionalized in specific historical forms. The dominant historical formation – rational ascetic capitalism – attaches a premium to the most rational of these forms, but it can not completely evade the others. It can not do so for two reasons: first, because it needs the wild-cards of risk-seeking and innovation to sustain itself as a dynamic system;<sup>1</sup> second, because reason is not a sufficiently resonant principle for the individual that it compensates for the losses that it incurs. Social forms are derived from these tensions, realizing them in institutionalized deviancies. The purpose of these forms is to redirect the psychological pressures generated by these strains. Gambling has a special place because it actually works as an interface between

1. A point acknowledged, incidentally, by the 1808 *Second Report of the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to Lotteries*: "A spirit of adventure must be excited amongst the community, in order that Government may derive from it a pecuniary resource" [196, p. 11].

rational action, specifically rational *economic* action, and some antagonistic counterpart of such action.

In the sphere of ethics, it is the puritanical economic ethic that fails to satisfy the individual's needs entirely. Some aspects of it are in fact "peculiarly abhorrent to the less ascetic components of human nature" [p. 963]. There are many other ethical values embedded in culture that just do not fit, and the ascetic economic ethic is not even internally consistent. There is, therefore, much scope for ambivalence, strain, guilt, and a sense of injustice.

Gambling, yet again, is an ideal channel for "ethical escape, protests or rebellion". And again, this is because of its central involvement with chance. Chance is, by disposition, non-ethical. The allocation of resources on the basis of chance involves no value judgement, save, of course, for the decision to use chance in the first place. Lotteries have often been used or proposed to free up otherwise impossible "solomonic judgements" [79]: the Betaseron lottery to allocate an expensive treatment for multiple sclerosis is a celebrated example, another instance is Dickens's suggestion that lotteries would be fairer than ethics committees in choosing organ transplants [62], and a more gruesome one is told by Tacitus, that to punish a battalion for cowardice, Lucius Apronius revived an ancient practice of having every tenth man flogged to death, using lots to choose the victims [214, p. 126]. To introduce, as gambling does, this non-ethical element into economic affairs...

...defies not merely the logical imperatives of cause and effect but also the fundamental ethical imperatives regarding the relationships between effort and reward. With respect to these values, chance is deliciously and spitefully irrelevant. [60, p. 966]<sup>1</sup>

The inherent anti-ethical property of gambling is further bolstered by the existence of social and legal disapproval and sanctions. So gambling is a fertile ground to stage defiant protests against ethics: "the recreational setting of gambling fosters a permissive attitude of irresponsibility; since it is 'all in fun', one may 'do as one pleases'" [p. 966].

1. This echoes Caillois's assertion that chance is an "insolent and sovereign insult to merit" [section 4.2, p. 102].

### 3.2.1 CRITICISMS

There is a direct and, in my view not very satisfactory, criticism of Devereux that stems from his theoretical (or perhaps methodological) standpoint. His adherence to structural-functionalism makes him easily susceptible to the canonical criticisms of reification of social structure and teleological explanation. There has been much debate about the extent to which any propositions<sup>1</sup> generated by such totalizing grand theories may be disaggregated from the theory itself, or how the different “logics” of different modes of theorizing may be integrated the one with the other.<sup>2</sup> But such criticisms, interesting as they are, seem like the gnawing of mice in the face of the extraordinary scope and the highly productive insights of his work:

The charges commonly made against structural-functionalism as a doctrine seem rather irrelevant when, as here, its utility as an organizing conceptual framework paid such rich dividends. [70, p. 20]

Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see what might be done with a theory of gambling that sets its store against functional explanation. And the most exemplary of this kind of approach is Geertz’s analysis of gambling that seeks to understand it not in terms of its functions, but in terms of its capacity to generate meaning, to see gambling as an inherently interpretative act.

### 3.3 GEERTZ: GAMBLING AND DEEP PLAY

Geertz’s *Deep Play: A Description of the Balinese Cockfight* [94], is a description and analysis of the sport of cock-fighting in Bali, and the gambling activities that surround it. The central point of the piece is sociological: to find the connexions between a cultural activity and the society in which it takes place.

The cockfight has two aspects: on the one hand it is a “fact of nature”, expressed through the very real fighting to the death of the cocks, on the other hand, it is

1. In Yin’s sense of propositions as predicates derived from a theory [238, p. 30].

2. See, for example, Mouzelis’s *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong* [166].



a “fact of culture”, a social form that is structured by and structures the social order of Balinese society [p. 661].

The critical analytical work that needs to be done to understand the link between the cockfight and Balinese society is, Geertz suggests, an analysis of how the betting works. As Devereux notes time and again, gambling would seem to be the example *par excellence* of activities that encompass the ambivalences of modern society. The explanation that comes most easily to hand for betting, lottery playing, cockfighting, and all other forms of gambling is that in one sense or another they appeal to something that is missing, to the parts of us that are not fulfilled or structured by norms and values. Explicitly directed against *both* utilitarianism’s deprecation of gambling *and* the kind of functional account offered by Devereux, Geertz’s study is an attempt to show that there is something altogether more constructive taking place in the cockfighting ring, and, by extension, in other arenas of gambling in other societies.

He makes much of the observation that ‘play makes nothing happen’<sup>1</sup>, but arrives at the paradoxical conclusion that precisely because play makes nothing happen it is actually capable of making a great deal happen. As well as being a classic and exemplary piece of ‘thick description’, the text is also a critical engagement with utilitarianism, the philosophy that stresses, above all, the formal-rational value of ‘making something happen’.

There are actually two kinds of betting at the cockfight, the bets that take place in the ring amongst the players, and those taken up by the onlookers, Geertz calls the one ‘deep’ and the other ‘shallow’ (table 3.1). The two systems of betting seem to be at odds with each other: what would count as “fair coin” at the centre would be biased on the side [p. 662]. But the two are, in fact, economically interrelated. The play in the centre has a tendency to be balanced and even-money; and this means that the side-betting is drawn to shorter odds, since no-one will buy at the long odds. In order to make the side-betting interesting, therefore, there has to be a greater volume of single bets. The higher the stakes in the centre, the more likely it is that the cocks are evenly matched,

1. An allusion, presumably, to Auden’s *In Memory of W B Yeats*: “ For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives / In the valley of its making where executives / Would never want to tamper.”

<b>deep</b>	<b>shallow</b>
central	peripheral
official, rule-governed	informal, unregulated
single	multiple
principal players	audience
collective	individual
large	small
quiet, deliberative	noisy, impulsive
even money	never even money

TABLE 3.1: deep and shallow betting

and, therefore, the more likely it is that the side-bets will be short-odds and high in volume. In Geertz's words: "the centre bet 'makes the game', or perhaps better, defines it, and signals... its depth" [p. 666].

This idea of *depth*, Geertz borrows from Bentham's idea of "deep play":

The loss of a portion of wealth will produce, in the total happiness of the loser, a defalcation greater or less, according to the proportion of the part lost to the part which remains.

Take away from a man the fourth part of his fortune, and you take away the fourth part of his happiness, and so on.

[In deep play] though the chances, so far as relates to money are equal, in regard to pleasure, they are always unfavourable. I have a thousand pounds. The stake is five hundred. If I lose, my fortune is diminished by one-half; if I gain, it is only increased by a third. Suppose the stake to be a thousand pounds. If I gain, my happiness is not doubled with my fortune; if I lose, my happiness is destroyed; I am reduced to indigence. [16, p. 386]

This is classical utility theory with an added moral dimension: for Bentham, deep play is irrational and therefore immoral; indeed, he suggests that it should be banned by law.

In the Balinese cockfight, the 'shallow' bets are closer to the marginal utility model, since it is possible for the utility of winning to outweigh the disutility of losing (if the odds are long enough). It is precisely the high status, high stakes

and even-money betting that corresponds to deep play. So why do the most prestigious actors act in the most irrational, and for Bentham immoral, way?

Economists, psychiatrists and lawyers may be puzzled by this, but a part of the answer is already suggested by the observation that the central bets are the ‘centre of gravity’ of all betting. It is the “solid citizenry around whom social life revolves” [p. 668] who are involved in the big matches and the deep bets: those who dominate and define their society, those of whom, indeed, one would make greater moral demands, also dominate and define the play in the cockfight. What is staked is not merely money, but status:

What makes the cockfighters deep is not the money itself, but what the money causes to happen: the migration of the of the Balinese status hierarchy into the body of the cockfight. The more money is involved, the more things happen. [p. 669]

What happens in the cockfight is a “simulation of the social matrix”. This happens, in a sense, because nothing actually happens. No real changes in fortunes occur, and it is not possible to achieve social mobility in the game itself. So, the cockfight, by virtue of its separation from everyday life, is actually deeply embedded in the socio-moral order.

There are other areas where the cock is embedded in Balinese society. As they are in British society, the word ‘cock’ is always subject to “tired jokes, strained puns, and uninventive obscenities”. The whole of (male) Balinese society is “shot through with roosterish imagery” [p. 657], and in the cockfight itself, there is a peculiar intimacy between men and their cocks. Indeed, Geertz, following Bateson and Mead, suggests that that cocks are viewed as “detachable, self operating penises, ambulant genitals with a life of its own” [p. 656]. The successful cockfighter is a type, denoting the hero, the champion, or the warrior. Indeed, one of the greatest heroes in Balinese mythology is ‘The Cockfighter’, who managed to thwart an attempted coup because he was away at a cockfight when the assassination attempt took place [p. 670].

The structure of the play, the meaning of the cock, along with other aspects such as the temporal structure of the fight [p. 672], root the cockfight within the

broader Balinese culture. Geertz attributes its power to its separation from the context of everyday life, to the fact that it is a Goffmanesque 'focused gathering'. Although it might be taken as such, Geertz maintains that he is not offering a functional explanation here, because the role of gambling is interpretative and not integrative. His analysis, he says, is not, as the functionalists would have it, that the cockfight reinforces status discrimination; it is rather an act of interpretation:

It provides a meta-social commentary upon the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment. Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: it is a Balinese reading of Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves. [p. 674]

### 3.4 GAMBLING, A VIRTUE MADE OF CHANCE?

It is debatable whether the distinguishing characteristic of functional explanation is, as Geertz seems to suggest, that it explains activities such as gambling in terms of the reinforcement of social stratification. It is not an implausible claim that his explanation is itself a brand of functionalism masquerading as interpretivism. The phrase "Its function, if you want to call it that..." in the preceding quotation hides a multitude of methodological complications. For what, after all, does it mean to say that the cockfight is a way of explaining the hierarchies of Balinese society to its members if it is not an explanation of the function of the cockfight? Ironically, his work is far more concerned with social stratification than Devereux's explicit functionalism (but less so, of course, than Veblen's).

Nevertheless, there is something very different to be found in the approaches of Devereux and Geertz. Their theoretical works move in opposite directions; the one starts from norms and values and finds these in the processes of gambling; the other starts from the processes and works outwards. And there are profits and losses involved in both routes. The dramas of these profits and

losses have been rehearsed many times in debates between functionalism and interpretivism so often that they do not require reprising here. The more interesting and compelling question to ask is: what would a satisfying theory of gambling look like? Downes makes the following suggestion:

Any adequate theory of gambling should provide *homologous* accounts of the dynamics of gambling as a phenomenon, the dynamic of the social reaction to gambling, both as expressed by different groups and as institutionally based, and of the relationship between the two phenomena. [70, p. 21]

The key to finding such homologies in all three theorists is the relation of gambling to economic life, and to its institutionalization as a more or less problematic set of norms and values. In Veblen and Devereux, gambling is understood as standing in opposition to economic life; in both, gambling rubs against the grain, producing an expressive wastefulness for the one and a means of relief for the other. It is interesting to note that Geertz's theory takes the economic as its starting point too, but that it does so in a very different way. His analysis begins with the minutiae of the economic activity within the cockfight and argues that the characteristics of betting patterns may only be explained in terms of something other than economic values, hence the discovery that it is status that is staked, but that this staking may only be understood as a provisional 'dramatization' of staking.

Lotteries have their own special characteristics that need to be considered. For one thing, state lotteries such as the UK National Lottery involve an extra charitable dimension that complicates its relation to the economic. One question that needs to be asked of the Lottery is how this dimension relates to the ethical problems – sociological problems, that is – engendered by gambling. More generally, as I have indicated in the introduction, so little is known at the level of the player about the practices of playing the lottery that to derive meanings for these in the style of Devereux would, in fact, be a form of theorizing by fiat. In particular, reading values off from societal norms and values would make it all too easy to recapitulate extra-sociological debates about the morality of the

lotteries. And taking such a path would lead, perhaps inevitably, to Veblenesque accounts, to diagnoses of invidiously “selling hope” [44] and to a fascination with jackpot winners and gambling addicts. All of these would be at the expense of an understanding of the core of ‘ordinary’ players who play regularly but never win large amounts. The lottery for them is not experienced as a drama in any straightforward way: when playing becomes habitual and routinized, when the stakes are so small and the chances of winning so slim, when it is difficult to determine the location of the lottery (where *does* it take place?), and when it is even possible to entertain the thought that the lottery is *not* gambling at all, then there appears to be much less upon which to gain a purchase.

The best way to approach an adequate understanding of gambling and the lottery, therefore, is in the spirit of Geertz: to look at what is actually involved in playing the lottery. But this approach needs some kind of conceptual priming. Clues to a useful theoretical ground may be found in Devereux’s idea that gambling ‘playfully recombines’ the values of the dominant institutional pattern, and Geertz’s assertion that “play makes nothing happen”. There is something about play, the superclass of gambling, that means that it may be consequential by virtue of its inconsequentiality. But the question remains begged in both of just how this ostensible paradox is actualized in contexts of play. This problem is of especial importance to the lottery, for as I have indicated nothing much at all seems to happen. The second phase of the theoretical work of this thesis is, therefore, to examine in more detail theories of play, to understand how a virtue may be made of the absence of consequences and necessity, and, in the case of gambling, how a virtue may be made of chance.

# CHAPTER 4

## PLAY

Play as a special form of activity, as a ‘significant form’, as a social function – that is our subject. We shall not look for the natural impulses and habits conditioning play in general, but shall consider play in its manifold concrete forms as itself a social construction.

—Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* [119, p. 22]

In 1983, Clifford Geertz responded, somewhat ambivalently, to a trend he saw in the analogies of social-scientific thought: away from the mechanical and organic, and towards the cultural:

In the social sciences, or at least in those that have abandoned a reductionist conception of what they are about, the analogies are coming more and more from the contrivances of cultural performance than from those of physical manipulation – from theatre, painting, grammar, literature, law, play. What the lever did for physics, the chess move promises to do for sociology. [95, p. 22]

The three analogies he singles out as making an especially strong showing in recent times are *game*, *drama*, and *text*. Within the game category, Geertz finds three distinct kinds of analogy [p. 24]:

1. Wittgensteinian conceptions of forms of life as language games, from which is derived the “notion of intentional action as following a rule”
2. Game theory, after von Neumann and Morgenstern’s *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, looking at “social behaviour as a reciprocative manoeuvring toward distributive payoffs”

3. Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, with its idea of “play as a paradigm form of social life”

Of the three broader categories, *game/play*, *drama*, and *text*, the most general is the game/play analogy. Drama is a kind of gaming, and is even more obviously a kind of play. The relation of text to games and play is less straightforward, but it may be placed either under the Wittgensteinian category of language games or, in the post-structuralist move towards textuality, under the aspect of play. This ordering of categories serves to suggest the importance of the concepts of game and play, and their significance as analogies for social-scientific work. In this chapter, I will discuss one of the three types of game/play, ‘play as a paradigm’, as a Geertzian “lever” for the rest of the thesis. I conceive of play here not in terms of its “social function” nor as a “social construction”, as Huizinga does in the epigraph heading this chapter, but as a *social form*. After moving through some of the key theorists of play as a social activity I indicate a central problem with these conceptions, that they depend too much on the static boundedness of play, and I suggest a more flexible conception of play better suited to the task of understanding the National Lottery.

While the Lottery may be approached from other directions – as a social problem or as a form of charitable giving – taking the line through play itself is the most productive way of proceeding. A social problem approach, or, more broadly, one which looks to the *deviant* aspects of the Lottery and of gambling is too limited in possibilities. I have indicated these issues as they appear in debates over the introduction of the Lottery in chapter 2. The theories and their limitations are discussed in chapter 3, where I critically discuss Devereux's thesis that gambling is a “institutionalized deviant pattern” [59], deprecated but somehow accepted as necessary in a *sub rosa* fashion. An approach through charitable giving, the best line for a different thesis, is not appropriate for the question asked by this research: what are the beliefs and practices of the ordinary Lottery player? Issues of deviance and charity do have a significance in the analysis, but any discussion of these must follow a shaping up of an understanding of play.



Two texts discussed in chapter 1 demonstrate the importance of the idea of play for this research. Gataker's [93] distinction between 'providential' and 'lusory' lots, between on the one hand those that attempt to access divine will as a means of either determining the future or demonstrating through luck the gift of grace, and on the other hand those that are pure play, indicates what is at stake in the definitions of gambling and work and play. The decision arrived at by the *Rothschild Report* [189], that lotteries are 'harmless fun', albeit a kind of fun particularly susceptible to criminal and psychological harm, suggests that it is possible to find in the lottery some kind of 'pure' play, and that its 'harmlessness' hangs upon this purity.<sup>1</sup> In its analysis, the lottery is a 'soft' form of gambling because it is less *consequential* and hence closer to Gataker's 'lusory' category. Both of these have a strong moral investment in the purity of play, but both beg the question of just what play is, and how it manages this purity. Theories of play tend to hang upon similar notions of purity and they tend to see it as somehow embattled by history: the 'spirit of play', often associated with childhood and innocence<sup>2</sup>, rubs up against and is abraded by the spirit of capitalism.

A natural first move in a discussion of play is, therefore, to oppose it to work, the most radical theorist of which is perhaps Marx, for whom the capacity and desire to produce is the defining characteristic of human species-being. Huizinga, by all accounts the inaugural anthropologist of play<sup>3</sup>, counters Marx's *homo faber* with the assertion that civilization "does not come *from* play like a babe detaching itself from the womb: it arises *in* and *as* play, and never

1. On this issue, the *Gambling Review Report* of 2001 observes that "It is difficult to judge how far current regulations are based on a moral disapproval of gambling but it is hard to escape from the sense that gambling, even if harmless, is at best an unworthy activity. The comments of the Rothschild Commission are quite revealing and show how they struggled with the issue." [92, §3.23]

2. See Margaret Carlisle Duncan's *Play Discourse and the Rhetorical Turn* [37] for a semiological analysis of *Homo Ludens* which discusses this theme.

3. While many writers apply this epithet, his work receives cursory attention in their works, warranting only a few lines of commentary.

leaves it” [119, p. 198].<sup>1</sup> As the title of his text suggests, Huizinga substitutes *homo ludens*, man the player, for *homo faber*, man the producer.

Work and play at odds; this is one of the main tensions lying behind gambling, and one which resonates strongly within the moralizing debates discussed in chapter 2. In the current chapter, I examine the concept of play as it is worked up by Huizinga, Caillois and Goffman, and Simmel. A common theme for these four is a conception of play as a distinctive *enclave* of experience whose boundaries are defined by some quality of ‘separateness’<sup>2</sup>. A key difference separating these theorists is how they place play in relation to ‘life’, and especially everyday-life. Huizinga and Caillois see the two as in some sense opposed, while Goffman finds in play a part of the process of constituting self and society in everyday-life.

The strongest claim for play’s ‘separateness’ may perhaps be found in Gadamer, for whom the removal of play from the sphere of utilitarian goals was so marked that it was only proper to find in it a distinct mode of existence: “the player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him” [91, p. 89]. There are problems with this heightened idea of separateness, and the lottery brings these problems to the fore. Briefly, while it is certainly a kind of ‘play’, it is not clear where the Lottery’s boundaries lie: where and when its players find separateness. At first glance, it would seem obvious that this is something to do with escapism and fantasy, and with freedom from work, or at least that the moments of the lottery, buying a ticket and checking the numbers, are the moments within which the Lottery ‘happens’. But the evidence from my interview data suggests that the picture is more complicated, and that playing the lottery is much more embedded in everyday life, even while it retains many of the qualities of play and gambling. This embeddedness gives form to the thematic chapters to follow, all of which take their lead from the conception of play developed in this chapter, and specifically from the problem of boundaries, which the lottery highlights.

1. I should point out that he doesn’t actually discuss Marx in his text, although he does criticize the banal economic reductionism of Marxism (see section 4.1.2, page 98). It would be interesting to bring together into some kind of discussion Marx and Huizinga (or at least the idea of playfulness as a different kind of action (*ludic rationality?*)). Habermas could come along too. And Rorty.

2. Gerda Reith’s word [181].

Prior to this issue there is a problem in the conceptual relation between play and gambling. Theories of gambling may shadow theories of play, but gambling has its own specificities. The conception of play developed here will be used as an ideal-type to interrogate these specific qualities of gambling, and the specificities of the Lottery will be used to bring some finesse to both the more general and the more specific theories.

#### 4.1 HUIZINGA: HOMO LUDENS

Huizinga's philosophical anthropology draws upon what was originally a Platonic connexion between play and culture.<sup>1</sup> For Plato, *paidia*, the play of children, is a fundamental category that is the template for *paideia*, the 'serious' ritual play of the fully formed adult personality:

Play is the starting point for the choric education of children, on which is grafted, in due course, the content of communal culture – from the proper participation in the choric rituals of the community to the insight into the aesthetic, moral and religious values which they embody. [222, p. 181]

Play and ritual are one and the same thing, but this does not reduce the magic of ritual, and rather implies the sacredness of play itself. Play does not lose its playfulness in the transition, it becomes social.<sup>2</sup> Huizinga is, in this way, interested in an affirmation of the status of play as a category *sui generis*. Where other theories against which he sets his store tend to find in play something else, Huizinga attempts to define it as if it were a fundamental category with

1. For a discussion of Huizinga's use of Plato, see Voegelin's review of *Homo Ludens* [222].

2. There is an echo of this in George Herbert Mead's distinction between play and games in *Mind, Self & Society* [158]. The transition from the one to the other is, for Mead, the "genesis of the self" [p. 144]. When play moves away from animalistic play, it does so through 'playing at' something, and thus involves taking on roles of others. A child playing at "Indians", for example, "has a set of stimuli which call out in itself the responses that they would call out in other, and which answer to an Indian" [p. 150]. While children *can* play like animals "running away, when chased, as the dog does", they have the capacity to play by putting themselves in the place of the other. This is carried forward and generalized in the game, where the child "must have the attitude of all the others involved in that game" [p. 154]. Thus play is a vehicle for the realization of the self, which for Mead is *always* a social self. See also John Dewey on the "play theory of art" in *Art as Experience* [61, p. 277–280].

which the traditional oppositions, play and seriousness, play and work, do not hold. As George Steiner notes in his introduction to the second edition of *Homo Ludens*, “its only opposite is the negative category ‘non-play’ ” [119, p. 10]. This is a problematic and productive move. Problematic because it tends either to reify play or to handle it as a transcendental signifier, and also because, as I show in section 4.3, he does not manage to sustain the purity of this conception of play. Productive because it allows his conception of play to be used as a heuristic angle into the construction of such oppositions.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1.1 HUIZINGA’S CONCEPTION OF PLAY

Huizinga begins his argument by pointing out that play precedes culture: culture presupposes society, but play is something which humans share with other species, and is, therefore, prior to both culture and society. Where human play differs, however, from animal play is in its *significance*, significance being something distinctive to human societies.<sup>2</sup> Play is, therefore, in some degree a *sociological* phenomenon, and not reducible to physiological or psychological reflexes. Accounts which make such a reduction also hold to the assumption that play serves some other purpose and is not an end in itself.<sup>3</sup> Thus, play is often explained as a “discharge of superabundant vital energy”, the fulfilling of an “imitative instinct”, or the manifestation of a “need for relaxation” [p. 20]. Other theories, Huizinga notes, find in play a training for adult life, or the expression

1. Although this was hardly Huizinga’s intention in setting up play in this way.

2. One might say, following Durkheim, that play is necessarily “rich in social elements” [73, p. 9].

3. He does not name the authors he has in mind here. An example of this kind of thinking, roughly contemporary with Huizinga, is Gillin’s *Sociology of Recreation*, where play is equated with an emotional “spree” [101, p. 803]. Herbert Spencer’s *Principles of Psychology* [208] puts forward a “surplus energy” approach to play, while Groos sees play as a preparation for life in *The Play of Man* [109]. One might also add to this list Freud’s work on play, where it is seen as a kind of wish-fulfilment in the face of the reality principle, healthy for children but pathological for adults (see [183]). Piaget finds something more positive in a similar structuring of work and play. For him, intelligence lies between the poles of accommodation to reality on the one hand, and assimilation of reality to the self on the other. Play is marked by the “primacy of assimilation over accommodation” [175, p. 87]. Erikson suggests yet another role for play, symbolic repetition of traumatic experiences “to turn what was passively suffered into a theme of active mastery” [80, p. 42]. For a succinct summary of these various perspectives, see Sage’s *Sport and the Social Sciences* [192], and for a more extensive discussion, albeit one from the perspective of the behavioural psychologist, see Ellis’s *Why People Play* [78].

of innate desires to compete and dominate. A final set of explanations that Huizinga mentions is of great relevance to the theory of gambling: play as a safety-valve, as a kind of wish-fulfilment, or as a “fiction designed to keep up the feeling of personal value”. These final categories reappear in many of the sociological theories of gambling, and they will be dealt with in succeeding chapters.

All of these theories carry some truth, but they push to the margins the more interesting question: what is play *in itself*?<sup>1</sup> While play involves the emotions, a biological or psychological account does not sufficiently cover the phenomenon. There is simply *too much* going on in play for this to be an adequate explanation. If play is a superabundance, it is a superabundance of practices over and above those which are necessary for its ostensible purpose:

The intensity of, and absorption in, play finds no explanation in biological analysis... Nature... could just as easily have given all her children all those useful functions... in the form of purely mechanical exercises and reactions. But no, she gave us play, with its tension, its mirth, and its fun. [119, p. 21]

In fact play, for Huizinga, is a transcendent category, a totality which “cannot have its foundations in any rational nexus”, and as such it is a category that must be understood on its own terms, and not as a supplement to some other property of human nature. Moreover, Huizinga claims that play holds a privileged position in the hierarchy of abstractions: “you can deny, if you like, justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play”.

The proper analysis of play, then, takes it seriously as an entity in its own right, looks to the social aspects of play, to its articulations in cultural practices, and, since play as culture is all about its significance, should be centred around meaning. The appropriate style for such an analysis is, therefore, broadly phenomenological, and for the purposes of this thesis hermeneutical. Such an analysis requires an heuristic, and Huizinga offers this model of play:

1. See also Csikszentmihalyi's *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, for a similar point [p. 7].

Summing up the formal characteristics of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious’, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or to other means. [119, p. 32]

Caillois, whom I discuss in section 4.2, makes several criticisms of this model; here, however, I will give an account of the elements of Huizinga’s model as the basis of a more adequate conception of play. These elements all depend upon the superfluousness of play, upon the way it entails an “overflow of the spirit beyond the level of necessity” [222, p. 183], and upon the actor’s recognition of this surplus. This conceptual stem calls up some of the debates on additionality described in 2.5.2: the idea that money raised by the Lottery is somehow special and should be earmarked for ‘extras’, and that it should not simply be folded into the general exchequer.

#### 4.1.1.1 FREE

It is an essential property of play that it is freely entered into; “play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it” [p. 26]. Precisely because of this, play is held apart from “the course of the natural process”, is an addition, “spread out over it like a flowering, an ornament, a garment”. Huizinga considers the objection that people *must* play because instincts compel them to do so, but rejects this on the grounds that this merely begs the question of instinct itself; the calling up of ‘instinct’ is nothing but “a makeshift, and admission of helplessness before the problem of reality” [p. 35]. What is important is that some choice is involved in play, the consenting adult can take it or they can leave it at will. He goes on to add that the urgency of play is driven by the pleasure of the play itself, and, further, that this pleasure may be deferred, is

never imposed “by physical necessity or moral duty”.

#### 4.1.1.2 EXTRAORDINARY

From the contingency of play, and its interruption of the flow of “natural processes” comes the idea that play is defined by its separateness from everyday-life. Play, for Huizinga, is a “stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own”. Play is always understood as ‘only pretending’ [p. 26–27].<sup>1</sup> That it is *mere* pretending implies that it is secondary to reality, but, as Huizinga suggests, this does not undermine the seriousness of play that comes from the players’ absorption in its internal dynamics. In fact, while play may be inferior in so far as it is a moment of departure from everyday-life which entails a return to the real world, its stronger sense of a focus and its clarity of form allows for a purer and hence deeper sense of seriousness: “The inferiority of play is continually offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. Play turns to seriousness, and seriousness turns to play”. Play, then, is *not* opposed to seriousness; indeed, Huizinga claims that play is capable of reaching “heights of beauty and sublimity that leave seriousness far beneath” [p. 27]. These interrelations and inversions of the serious and the playful are developed in Huizinga’s discussion of the relationship between play and ritual.

The fluidity of the serious and the non-serious indicates the permeability of play. While play is defined as outside of everyday-life, and as a kind of interruption of its “appetitive processes”, this quality itself allows it some purchase upon the life it interrupts. Play is a kind of *tnesis*, an interpolation of a different set of desires and satisfactions as an end in itself, “an *intermezzo*, an interlude in our daily lives”. But play, *apart* from ‘life’, becomes an integral *part* of life through repetition:

It adorns life, amplifies it, and is to that extent necessary both for the individual – as a life function – and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its

1. Riezler discusses the ‘mere’-ness of play in his article *Play and Seriousness* [184].

spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function. [119, p. 27]

It might seem that there is a contradiction here: play is defined by its freedom and disinterestedness, yet Huizinga is claiming that it is necessary and, in a sense, ‘interested’ in the life within which it carves out a space. He works around this by making a distinction between the needs of the individual as individual and of the individual as social being: play’s purpose as a social activity is external to its servicing of individual needs, biological and psychological. Looked at in this way, Huizinga’s angle on play resembles Durkheim’s conception of social facts as external to and constraining of the individual. As such, it is open to the same charge that it tends to reify the social: Huizinga slips easily into a reification of play as an entity that has its own needs, he talks often, for example, of ritual serving a general social ‘play instinct’. But, of course, Durkheim’s concept of constraint is not entirely negative, and allows for the individual’s positive engagement with the moral order. Never the less, there is a clear *tendency* towards a hypostatization of play in this work.<sup>1</sup> The interactionist perspective of Goffman discussed in section 4.4 is an important corrective to this, and Giddens’ theory of structuration, brought to bear upon the topic of play in chapter 5 finesses this further.

#### 4.1.1.3 SECLUDED IN TIME AND SPACE

That play is an interruption implies its third characteristic: its “secludedness” and “limitedness” in time and space. There is a clear beginning and end within which play is ‘played out’. In the play, there may be all kinds of dynamics, “movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation” [p. 28], but this is always finite, always involves a return to the time of the life from which it departs. Huizinga finds here a “curious phenomenon” of play: while impermanent, it assumes a kind of fixity as a form. Reproduced in memory, and eventually tradition, and folded into life through repetition and difference, play

1. For a general discussion of these issues in relation to structural-functionalism, see Mouzelis’s *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong?* [166].



supplies rhythm and texture to life; “the elements of repetition and alternation (as in the *refrain*) are like the warp and woof of a fabric”.

As with time, so too with space, and more so. All play has its playground marked off, materially or ideally, within which “special rules obtain” [p. 29]. Huizinga is quick to assert that this marking of the spaces of play is the same as that of ritual’s ‘consecrated spots’:

The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., all are in form and function play-grounds, i.e., forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. [119, p. 28–29]

Because play involves “special rules”, it is, claims Huizinga, the ideal grounds for ritual. Its superposition of an “absolute and peculiar order” upon the otherwise imperfect world [p. 29] lays the grounds for a “*stepping out* of common reality into a higher order. The representations of childish play-acting, the prince or the wicked witch or the tiger, may be found also in sacred performances. But with one key difference. Where play-acting is ‘false’, in as much as the players pass themselves off as someone or something else, ritual makes things real and makes things happen: “the action actualizes and effects a divine beatification, brings about an order of things higher than that which they customarily live.”

#### 4.1.2 CIVILIZATION SUB SPECIE LUDI

As noted, Huizinga thinks history *sub specie ludi* – through the category of play [p. 198]; he asserts that play is prior to and constitutive of the fundamental forms of social life. It is not, however, simply a stage that societies go through in their evolution, but exists in society as an ever-present form, a “veritable ferment” pervading life. So, Huizinga is not merely mapping a model of human development, play as a phase in growing up, onto social development. In fact, he contests the claim that play is just a phase in the life of the individual as strenuously as he does for the role of play in history. Although play is ever-

present, Huizinga seems to be saying that the degree and depth of playfulness is variable across history, and that the forms which play takes tend to become more sophisticated. Thus, the central questions he asks about the role of play in history are:<sup>1</sup>

[Does] civilization in fact never leave the play sphere? How far can we detect the play-element in later periods of culture which are more developed, refined, and more sophisticated than the early ages...?

He notes that in the preceding discussion he has made much use of examples from the eighteenth century, a period that was, for him, “full of play-elements and playfulness”,<sup>2</sup> and wonders where all the play has gone in contemporary society; “how then”, he asks, “should we have lost all spiritual affinity with so recent a past?”. His criticism of Marxism sits within this historical purview. Marxism emerges at a period in which play is being submerged under the instrumental rationality at the heart of the industrial revolution, where ‘life’ is reduced to productivity:

The nineteenth century seems to leave little room for play. Tendencies running directly counter to all that we mean by play have become increasingly dominant. Even in the eighteenth century utilitarianism, prosaic efficiency, and the bourgeois ideal of social welfare – all fatal to the Baroque – had bitten deep into society. These tendencies were exacerbated by the Industrial Revolution and its conquests in the field of technology. Work and production became the ideal, and then the idol, of the age... As a result of this... the shameful conception of Marxism could be put about and even believed, that economic forces and material interests determine the course of the world. [119, p. 218]

1. He seems to use civilization and culture interchangeably; an imprecise elision, perhaps, of a useful and historically real distinction: Elias’s (later) work in *The Civilizing Process* [77], describes culture and civilization at odds with each other. Huizinga’s short-circuiting of the distinction is, however, not a problem for the current discussion.

2. This observation echoes the discussion in 2.3 of the eighteenth century as the heyday of lotteries in the UK.

The Baroque period, for Huizinga the height of playfulness, is marked by a “tendency to *overdo* things” [p. 208], and this “style of the times” made its mark to an unprecedented extent upon all spheres of life.<sup>1</sup> The outward manifestation of this style is a tendency “to deviate further and further from the simple, the natural, and the practical until, about 1665, the high point of deformation is reached” [p. 209]. As an example of this, he discusses the history of the wig, whose history, so he claims, is a chapter not only in the history of fashion but in the history of civilization itself. Citing the evidence of paintings, he points out that the wig became the “obligatory head-gear” [p. 210] for any member of the well-heeled classes, or for any aspirant to such a class. In the 1660s, the wig reached its peak of sumptuousness and bizarreness, “*chic gone mad*”. Where before it had served an almost practical purpose, covering up baldness, by the sixties the wig had shifted into the field of pure play, had become “a true element of style”. The index of this is its ‘deformation’ in appearance. Where the early wigs were mimetic devices, designed to emulate the appearance of hair, later wigs became increasingly stylized until the connexion between the signifier and the signified – the wig and a naturally full head of hair – became completely severed: “every pretence of imitating nature is abandoned; the wig has become the complete ornament” [p. 211].

All of this changed in the industrial period. Where in the Baroque playfulness was worn like Baxter’s ‘light cloak’<sup>2</sup>, in the later period it became increasingly constraining, rule-bound and contaminated by productivity. This may be seen, Huizinga claims, in the growth of organized sports such as athletics and football, and also in the elaboration of card games into complex variants of which bridge is the best example. In a similar vein, Rybczynski notes that “people used to ‘play’ tennis; now they ‘work’ on their backhand” [191, p. 18].<sup>3</sup> Ironically, Frederick

1. Walter Benjamin found a similar spirit of playfulness in the literature of the time: “It is common practice in Baroque literature to pile up fragments incessantly.” [14, p. 51].

2. See Weber’s *Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism*, and section 4.1.1.1 of this chapter.

3. See also Guttman in *From Ritual to Record* [110, p. 69]: “Sport is not an escape from the world of work but rather an exact structural and functional parallel to the world of work. Sport does not offer compensation for the frustrations of alienated labour... It seduces the luckless athlete and spectator into a second world of work more authoritarian and repressive and less meaningful than the economic sphere itself.”

Taylor, deviser of Scientific Management, also won the USA Men's Doubles championship in 1881 – after systematically working on his backhand technique (and designing a special racquet) [116, p. 197].

For Huizinga his shift is regrettable. Gataker deprecated 'providential' lots on religious grounds and Huizinga shares this sentiment. For both, pure play is privileged over play whose boundaries extend beyond the play itself. Gataker's argument is religious, Huizinga's secular. The similarities and the differences between the two call up the Weberian narrative of the shift from the Protestant Ethic to the Spirit of Capitalism. But the connexion between Gataker and Huizinga introduces a twist in this narrative thread. While Gataker's thought sits well with the ethos, Huizinga's sets itself against the spirit of instrumental rationality.

#### 4.2 CAILLOIS: AGÔN AND ALEA, LUDUS AND PAIDIA

Caillois' *Man, Play and Games* [30] goes along with much of what Huizinga has to say. Indeed, he is still more ambitious than Huizinga in his handling of play, claiming that his work is not merely a sociology of games, but a laying of "the foundations of a sociology *derived* from games" [p. 67]. But he is critical of Huizinga on the grounds that his definition of play is "at the same time too broad and too narrow" [p. 4]. It is too broad because he draws too much into the sphere of play. It is not plausible, for example, to flatten the distinction between play and ritual, and in a sense Huizinga reduces *all* of culture to play. If all culture is playful, then the need to separate play from culture disappears; Huizinga might just as well undertake a study of culture or of civilization *tout court*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Huizinga makes much of the non-productive quality of play, yet some play is productive in a simple sense – gambling – and *all* play produces something, involves utility, even if this is mere pleasure. What is needed, therefore, is a theory of play that takes up the ideal-typical qualities supplied by Huizinga, but which finds in instances of play – games – specific

1. Game theory, inaugurated by von Neumann and Morgenstern in *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* [223], and elaborated in rational choice theory, is guilty of a similar reduction.

articulations and configurations of these qualities. This is what Caillois sets out to do in *Man, Play and Games*. This schema is more useful in its own right as a more subtle articulation of a base definition of play than it is as a correction of Huizinga's conception of play, for it has to be said that there is not much of a conceptual difference between them. Caillois' list of the qualities of play is remarkably similar to Huizinga's, and, while he claims a difference in the area of productivity, his own thoughts about productivity in play arrive at roughly the same point as Huizinga by way of a somewhat circular detour. For Caillois, games which involve an economic interest only do so within the game itself, any attempt actually to make money out of gambling, for example, makes of the player a 'professional' player or an entrepreneur, and hence not a player at all. What's more, Caillois claims, play makes nothing new:

A characteristic of play, in fact, is that it creates no wealth or goods... Nothing has been harvested or manufactured, no masterpiece has been created, no capital has accrued. Play is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money for the purchase of gambling equipment or eventually to pay for the establishment. [30, p. 6]

Having established play's importance and its general contours, he develops a fourfold typology of its characteristics which he names, using somewhat arcane language, *agôn* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation), and *ilinx* (vertigo).

*AGÔN* is all about competition and the surmounting of obstacles, about discipline and perseverance. It is where; "equality of chances is artificially created, in order that the adversaries should confront each other under ideal conditions" [30, p. 14].

*ALEA* from the Latin for "die", is where the outcome is outside of the control of the player where "destiny is the sole artisan of victory" [p. 17]. Competition exists only in as much as "the winner has been favoured by fortune more than the

loser”. He draws attention to the passivity of the aleatoric player who can only wait “in hope and trembling” for the casting of the die. Like *agôn*, there is a kind of fairness to *alea*: where the former uses rules to level the playing field, the latter uses chance. Unlike *agôn*, however, *alea* negates work, patience, experience, qualifications, and, in fact, history *tout court* since the past is meaningless and “in one instant, all winnings may be wiped out”.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Caillois describes *alea* as an almost carnivalesque “insolent and sovereign insult to merit”.

MIMICRY or simulation. Of this Caillois says “one can escape himself and become another, this is *mimicry*” [p. 19]. It is a kind of escape thorough alternation of identity; he notes, with a somewhat arbitrary etymology, that the word ‘illusion’ has as its root the phrase *in lusio*, ‘in the game’.

ILINX “pursuit of vertigo” [p. 23] these are the kinds of activities which “momentarily destroy stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind” examples would be whirling dervishes, Mexican *voladores*, or a child spinning until s/he becomes dizzy.

#### 4.2.1 FROM TURBULENCE TO RULES

Caillois adds another schema which overlays these categories: *ludus* and *paidia*. These are “not categories of play but ways of playing” [p. 53]. *Ludus* is the turbulent, chaotic, emotive aspect of play, *paidia* the organized, rule-bound and dispassionate. This pairing, Caillois claims, is a basic opposition in ordinary life:

[*Ludus* and *paidia*] pass into life as invariable opposites, e.g., the preference for cacophony over a symphony, scribbling over the wise application of the laws of perspective. Their continuous opposition arises from the fact that a concerted enterprise, in which various expendable resources are well utilized, has nothing in common

1. This is reminiscent of the National Lottery scratchcard catch-phrase “Forget it all in an Instant!”.

with purely disordered movement for the sake of paroxysm. [30,  
p. 53]

There is, for Caillois, a basic force behind play: a spirit of joyful improvisation. He names this power *paidia*, a borrowing from the Greek that has a slightly different intent from the Platonic idea of *paidia* mentioned earlier;<sup>1</sup> here, it is the connotation of childishness that is important. *Ludus* is a kind of disciplining force to *paidia*. In its strongest form, it represents the institutionalization in rules of the impulse to play. In this way, it corresponds in some degree to *paideia*, and to Huizinga's concept of play as rule-bound. It would also seem that the concept *ludus* steps on the toes of *agôn*, but there is, in fact, a nice distinction between the two, and one which makes Caillois' theory of play much subtler and richer than Huizinga's. The distinguishing characteristic of *agôn* is that it involves opposition to others. With *ludus*, on the other hand, it is simply the existence of laws or rules that counts. The simplest forms of *ludus* are games such as yo-yo, which make use of natural laws, Caillois also mentions kite-flying, which makes use of specific atmospheric conditions [p. 29]. Flying a kite is a step up from yo-yoing because it involves a kind of projection of the self, or, as Caillois has it, "a kind of auscultation upon the sky from afar. [The kite-flyer] projects his presence beyond the limits of his body." This progression moves through simple puzzles to crossword puzzles, and reaches its heights in such activities as chess and bridge problems.

Although *ludus* is not the same thing as *alea*, there is certainly an affinity shared by the two. And this affinity is not accidental. Lying behind Caillois' play scheme there is a progressive historical narrative. The couplet *mimicry* and *ilinx* are the kinds of play typical, for Caillois, of simple societies with their ecstatic and fetishistic practices. The other pairing, *agôn* and *alea*, are the distinctive modes of play in advanced societies. Behind this there is clearly some sense of a qualitative historical shift in play styles, and, by implication, of a shift in

1. He considers and rejects two other phrases, the Sanskrit *kredati* is found promising, but rather too closely associated with gamboling and gaiety, and the Chinese *wan* is too restrictive [p. 27]. Caillois' work is marked by a creative use of words and phrases worked up through such articulations of the niceties that separate them, and by an unusual sensitivity to the relation of the connotative and denotative planes of language.

the sensibilities of different ages. For one thing, both mimicry and *ilinx* are 'physical' while *agôn* and *alea* are abstract. Mimicry involves the taking on of a different guise, *ilinx*, at least in its purest form, is a simple physical sensation. *Agôn* and *alea*, on the other hand, are about form rather than content, they replace the normal rules by which players live with their own, for the one it is with chance that this substitution is made, for the other, it is rules. Mimicry and *ilinx* are, in a Durkheimian sense, expressive of mechanical solidarity, and *agôn* and *alea* of organic solidarity. The purpose of games in contemporary society is the equalization of chances, the governing principle of the game flattens any inequalities that may exist outside of the game. Caillois suggests that play is a kind of simplification and purification of the complexities of the demands of a given society. It is *agôn* that is the defining principle of modernity, corresponding to the formal-rational demands of ascetic capitalism. But while we live in an agonistic society, we are confronted with difficulties because life is not a game:

[Nothing] in life is clear, since everything is confused from the very beginning, luck and merit too. Play, whether *agôn* or *alea* is thus an attempt to substitute perfect situations for the normal confusion of contemporary life. [30, p. 19]

No matter what is done, politically or individually, there are inequities in society. The rules cannot be kept pure, as they may in a game of chess. Play is a compensation for the powerlessness people experience in the face of the impurity of the real rules of life:

[There] arises the nostalgia for crossroads, for immediate solutions offering the possibility of unexpected success, even if only relative. Chance is courted because hard work and personal qualifications are powerless to bring such successes about. [30, p. 114]

This is possible with *agôn* as well as *alea*, but as *agôn* bears the strongest affinity to the spirit of the times, so *alea* is its natural Other. Agonistic skill may come from hard work, or from the (lucky) circumstances of one's life chances. *Alea* is



skill-free. Anyone can win the Lottery; “the unskilled and the indolent may be equal to the most resourceful and perspicacious as a result of the miraculous blindness of a new kind of justice” [p. 114].

### 4.3 PLAY VERSUS LIFE

While Huizinga and Caillois differ on some crucial points, a similar set of oppositions underpins their works. These common paradigmatic oppositions are summarized nicely in Ehrman’s table [75, p. 41] reproduced in figure 4.1. The main difficulty in Huizinga is that of begging the question: while he wants

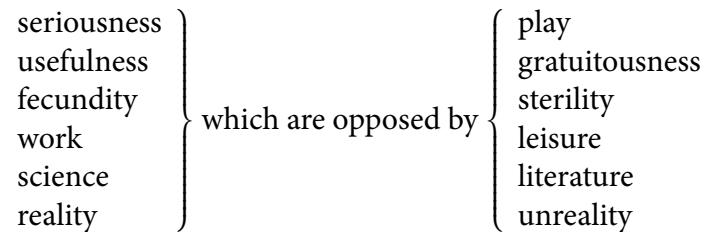


FIGURE 4.1: play and its opposites

to allow for the serious in play, his assertions about this hang upon a prior distinction between the two. In ritual, the sacred game, play and seriousness may only be said to become one and the same only if the prior separation of the two is assumed.<sup>1</sup> But the most significant problem with both Huizinga and Caillois is that their idea of play relies upon some idea of everyday life, but there is not much of an account of just what ‘everyday life’ means. For Huizinga it seems both full and empty of meaning. It is empty because it is the frictionless sphere of “natural processes”, interrupted by play and embattled by instrumentality. It is full because it is the locus of all meaning for the individual. It is possible to argue that processes such as play lend definition to the ineffability of the everyday in much the same way that the ethnomethodologists assert that the tacit assumptions that constitute ‘doing’ are only observable in their breach. A corollary of this would be that such processes in a sense *produce* the everyday dialectically.

1. Ehrman makes this point well [75, p. 41].

Huizinga and Caillois, then, have much to offer for analyses of play, they give sharp definitions of its basic qualities, and Caillois has a good classificatory scheme for *kinds* of games. Where they both fall down is in the foundations of their arguments: those elements which are simply taken as essential truths. Their historical naïveties are troubling, but not especially problematic, since these may be bracketed off from the conceptual parts of their arguments.

Their glossing of the idea of the “ordinary” is, however, much more damaging to the validity of their conceptions of play. An interesting way out of this problem is indicated by Novak, who turns the work/play – real/unreal distinction on its head: “Play is reality. Work is diversion and escape” [168, p. 40]. The reason why play is more real than work, Novak claims, is because it is about the present: play is “pure nowness”, while work is about the future, about the deferral of pleasure in the Weberian account of the ethos of rational ascetic capitalism. Where Huizinga holds that play is surplus, for Novak it is work that supplements play.

In its most exaggerated form, the here and now of play becomes what Csikszentmihalyi calls *flow*: “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” [51, p. 36], and one could classify play and games in terms of their nearness to such a form.<sup>1</sup> But there are problems when what is going on in a play activity departs from this type, when play becomes purposive, for example. And even when it becomes purposive within its own sphere, that is, when it has a goal and a set of means to that goal. Goffman’s analysis bears some similarities to Novak’s emphasis on the ‘nowness’ of play, but it has some more interesting elaborations which, to some extent, overcome this problem.

#### 4.4 GOFFMAN: PLAY AND FRAMING

Huizinga and Caillois both attempt to radicalize play, to find in it something deeper and more intrinsic to psychology and social being than a mere supplementary activity or impulse. For the one, play is found at the base of civilization; for the other, sociology may be entirely rethought through the category of play.

1. See Figler’s *Sport and Play in American Life* [87].

There is something of this second ambition in Goffman's work too. Although he characteristically places a great deal more emphasis on the workings of play in "focused gatherings" [105, p. 17], in *Where The Action Is* [102] he also follows Caillois' lead, by developing a general model of action, in his case from an ideal or pure moment of gambling.

'Action' is, of course, a key concept in sociological theory, but it also has a privileged place in the lexicon of gambling:

A decade ago among those urban American males who were little given to gentility, the term 'action' was used in a non-Parsonian sense in reference to situations of a special kind, the contrast being to situations where there was 'no action'. Very recently, this locution has been taken up by almost everyone, and the term itself flogged without mercy in commercials and advertisements. [102, p. 149]

These "situations" are the ones that offer the possibility of a gamble. In *Where The Action Is*, Goffman is interested in bringing the everyday idiom and the sociological concept together in an exploration of the meaning of *action itself*: "wheresoever action is found, chance-taking is sure to be" [p. 149].

Action, he claims, is evident when there is deliberate risk-taking. It is to be found "whenever the individual knowingly takes consequential chances perceived as avoidable", whenever, that is, someone does something non-trivial whose outcome is not absolutely determined, and when they could have done *otherwise*. This has some similarities with the Weberian concept of action, and with Weber's methodology. Ringer, for example, characterizes Weber's methodology as the probabilistic analysis of singular causes: "an image of causal relationships – and of causal analysis – that deals in *courses* of events, in counterfactuals, and in *divergences* between alternate paths and outcomes" [185, p. 77]. 'Action' in Goffman's specification encompasses all kinds of action, but in a face-to-face encounter, and especially one that involves an activity such as gambling, the sequence of decision, action and outcome happens "in the same breath of experience" [p. 156]. Two boys tossing a coin decide to do so, throw it

in the air, and the one choosing the right face wins.<sup>1</sup> The two key characteristics of action are that it is consequential and that it is fateful. Goffman remarks that;

We still believe that the truest record of an individual's character is his or her reaction to fateful activities sought by choice. It is these activities that constitute action. Gambling is an archetype of action of fateful activity. [p. 194]

Gambling is not just a model for action generally, it is a privileged kind of activity where the individual may demonstrate *characterful fatefulness* in ways that life outside of the brackets of the game do not allow:

By virtue of the fact that they are solely responsible for their own actions, that they *make things happen* in the consequent unfolding of a game, gambling confers a degree of autonomy on players, and... it is this that affirms gamblers' self-worth and makes gambling a site in which one's existence can be confirmed. [181, p. 134]

#### 4.4.1 TAKING FUN SERIOUSLY

*Where the Action Is* is mostly interested in gambling because there Goffman is interested in fatefulness, consequentiality, and action. In *Fun in Games*, Goffman discusses the more general characteristics of play in "focused gatherings", exploring the question of "how far one can go by treating fun seriously" [105, p. 17]. Focused gatherings, as the name suggests, involve an encounter amongst actors where there is a single "visual or cognitive focus of attention". These "ecological huddles" always involve some kind of bracketing, if only to produce the shared object of attention. The central device for this bracketing is, therefore, the separation of things that are relevant to the gathering from things that are not: the creation of an enclosing "membrane" of salience around the activity [105, p. 71]. In the case of games, these "rules of irrelevance" are clearer than in other kinds of encounters. Goffman gives the example of checkers: it does not make any difference whether the game is played "with bottle tops

1. See page 129, note 5.1 for a discussion of what may happen if the coin always comes up heads.

on a piece of squared linoleum, with gold figurines on inlaid marble, or with uniformed men standing on coloured flagstones”. For Huizinga, play is similarly framed by “special rules”, but there is no indication of just how these rules appear. Goffman, therefore, adds an important element to the conception of play. He is, however, only talking about a specific kind of play, a limit that he sets himself at the very beginning of the text: “the kind of games that are played around a table” [p. 7], and his analysis is of little use for other kinds of play which are less clearly organized around specific contexts, the National Lottery, for example.

This problem of contexts is dealt with to some degree in *Frame Analysis* through the set of ideas: frames, strips and keys.

The question “what is going on here?” is a question Goffman finds “suspect”, since any ‘here’ may be described more or less broadly or narrowly, and also, “in terms of a focus that is close-up or distant” [106, p. 8].<sup>1</sup> The word ‘suspect’ here is not to be taken as a criticism of the asking of the question, but as a suspicion that the question may be not satisfactorily be answered in any straightforward or positivistic way. This suspicion also, incidentally, undoes Novak’s conception of play as ‘here and nowness’, since there is no clear-cut time and place for play to refer to. The problem that “in most ‘situations’ many things are happening simultaneously – things that are likely to have begun at different moments and may terminate dissynchronously” [p. 9] means that asking ‘what is it that’s going on here?’ creates a bias in favour of “unitary explanation and simplicity”. This suspicion leads, therefore, directly into the central theme of *Frame Analysis*, which is how actors go about putting together ‘heres’: how they make meaningful contexts out of everyday life.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of framing is augmented by two more concepts: strips and keying. Goffman breaks everyday life down into what he calls “strips”, which are “arbitrary slice[s] or cut[s] from the stream of ongoing activity” and slices made

1. Burns calls this the “*Rashomon* problem” after the Kurosawa film [29, p. 242]. The intriguing metaphor of spatial distance reappears in the discussion of Simmel in section 4.6.

2. On William James, Goffman notes: “Instead of asking what reality *is*, he gave matters a subversive phenomenological twist, italicizing the following question: *Under what circumstances do we think things are real?*” [106, p. 2].

from the perspective of the actor or actors involved. These slices are arbitrary because they are merely “raw batches of occurrences... that one wants to draw attention to as a starting point for analysis.” [p. 10]. This “concrete, actual activity... meaningful in its own right” [p. 560] is given new meanings through what Goffman calls *keying*: “a transformation of materials already meaningful in accordance with a schema of interpretation” [p. 45]. Keying is related to the linguistic concepts *code* and *register*, the one a “special [way] of displacing utterances from their lodgment in everyday discourse”, the other “the linguistic requirements of a particular kind of social occasion”.<sup>1</sup> And the characteristics of keying closely resemble those of play: all participants know that “systematic alteration” is involved; there are cues for the beginning and the end of the transformation; and anything can be keyed, “even carpentry”.

This is a promising start in relation to the problems of context in playing. Goffman, however, says of the biases introduced by too readily replying to the question ‘what is going on here?’, that “this bias, too, I must be temporarily allowed”. Presumably, this temporary permission extends around the frame of the book. He plays with this device in later passages of the introduction [p. 16–20], where, *inter alia*, comments on prefaces [p. 17], apostrophic devices (“dear reader”) [p. 17–18], (potentially) infinite metalinguistic regresses [p. 18], and general play about the relationship between “getting dodgy with prefaces” and “writing about tricks done with prefaces” [p. 19], serve as illustrations of impossibility of arriving at a final framing.<sup>2</sup> Whether this passage reinforces or undermines Goffman’s argument is not clear, but it makes evident that the ensuing discussion depends upon a limiting factor. Indeed, Goffman’s sociology as a whole may be seen to be systematically limiting in this respect. Giddens [98, p. 271], for example, points out that up to and including his inaugural lecture, where he affirms the analytic viability, not to say vitality, of what he calls, “for want of a happy name”, the *interaction order* [107, p. 2], Goffman was interested in a very sharply delimited area of human social activity. And Geertz describes Goffman’s area of interest as “something not vertebrate enough to be called

1. See Burns’s *Erving Goffman* [29, p. 255].

2. Perhaps especially impossible for a text *on* framing.

a group and not structureless enough to be called a crowd” [94, p. 661]. This domain of interest has often been taken as the micro-sociological, but, as Giddens suggests, it is better understood as the domain of co-presence. For all of Goffman’s elaboration of detail on such situations, this is a very small area of focus, not even upon groups, as Giddens points out: “groups exist when their members are not together. Encounters, on the other hand, by definition only exist when the parties to them are physically in each other’s presence” [98, p. 256]. Goffman’s emphasis on “situated activity systems” [98, p. 256] renders him susceptible to the canonical criticism that he fails to take social structure into account:

It is as if the forces that somehow create the structural characteristics of social systems are quite distant from individuals in their day-to-day lives. Actors seemingly move in a pre-structured world, of which they take no account in their actions, but which they play no part in bringing into being or perpetuating. [98, p. 252]

But this kind of criticism fails to do justice, as Giddens acknowledges, to the modesty of Goffman’s explorations. He makes no claim to be talking about social structure, as he says in *Frame Analysis*: “those matters have been and can continue to be quite nicely studied without reference to frame at all” [p. 13]. Rather, he is interested in raising the dignity of the interaction order, that it might tell us something particular about social life, something not readily representable by any other means.

#### 4.5 THIS IS PLAY

When we get to the limits, however, of the frame in Goffman, to its “rim”, we find the whole business of framing susceptible to overflows, paradoxes and infinite regresses. Indeed, some have argued that Goffman’s understanding of the frame is a precursor of deconstruction. Burns finds in *Frame Analysis* a resemblance to Derrida’s use of quotation marks in *Eperons*, his discussion of style in Nietzsche:

However many degrees of complexity – of layerings – Goffman’s transformed frames may have, there is always a ‘rim’, by which the framed experience is ‘anchored’ in the ‘real world’ of ongoing events. But the anchor often turns out to be lightweight, or easily displaced, and the reality of the world it is supposed to be anchored in is a matter of belief rather than unassailable fact. [29, p. 246]

There is perhaps an even clearer family resemblance to the Derrida of *Truth in Painting*, where he tackles the meaning of frames themselves. But whether or not Goffman prefigures Derrida, it is true that there is something paradoxically disembodied about Goffman’s frames. For all of his elaborate detailing of the processes of creating ‘heres’, it is clear that there is no real ‘here’ there at all. What we have, it seems, is the focus of co-presence staving off the paradoxes of framing.

What would a conception of play look like if it encompassed the kinds of paradoxes Goffman hints at in his preface?

There is a suggestion of this in Winnicott’s work on playing in *Playing and Reality* [232], where he describes the key characteristic of a child’s play (through transitional objects) as “*paradox, and the acceptance of paradox*: the baby creates the object, but the object was there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object”<sup>1</sup> [p. 89]. Winnicott calls this the difficult part of his theory of the transitional object, for “a paradox is involved which needs to be accepted, tolerated, and not resolved” [p. 62]. It needs to be accepted because, in fact, it cannot be resolved since the baby must at the same time create the object and treat it as if it were already created: “the baby – and later the child at play and the adult at art (and religion) – recognizes some things and situations as ‘not me... not not me’” [193, p. 29]. A more direct connexion between this kind of thinking and Goffman’s is, however, to be found in Bateson’s *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* [7], since Goffman’s concept of the frame has a direct provenance in Bateson’s work. Goffman recognizes this debt when he states that it was Bateson who

1. (emphasis in the original)



directly raised the question of unseriousness and seriousness, allowing us to see what a startling thing experience is, such that a bit of serious activity can be used as a model for putting together unserious versions of the same activity, and that, on occasion, we may not know whether it is play or the real thing that is occurring. [106, p. 7]

Bateson's theory of play is based on the distinction between denotative communication ("the cat is on the mat"), and metalinguistic communication ("the verbal sound 'cat' stands for any member of such and such class of objects") [7, p. 178]. In an observation reminiscent of Huizinga's assertion that language itself is a kind of play with a "wondrous nominative faculty", Bateson speculates that an important stage in the development of communication happened when, in his words, signs became signals, when individuals "recognize[d] that the other individual's and its own signals are only signals, which can be trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected, and so forth." Playing requires something of this shift; it needs to convey the sense that "this is play" and not reality; play fighting, for example, must involve the message that it is not a real fight [p. 179]. Conveying this message, however, necessarily involves paradox [p. 180]: the statement "this is play", when expanded becomes, "these actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote", which, when itself expanded, becomes, "These actions, in which we now engage, do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote". There is, perhaps, a technical objection that two different levels of metalanguage are hidden behind the two uses of the word 'denote', but Bateson suggests that this can be brushed aside: "it would be bad natural history to expect the mental processes and communicative habits of mammals to conform to the logician's ideal". Notwithstanding this potentially intractable objection, what Bateson is finding here in play is the spirit of a class of paradoxes from Epimenides' "all Cretans are liars" to Borges's "all animals that do not fit into any category". The logical problem does not go away, but leads Bateson to define frames as "psychological" rather than logical. This diagram of a frame

illustrates the paradox:<sup>1</sup>

All statements within this frame are untrue.  I love you.  I hate you.
---

Except that if the first statement is false, then it is possible that one or more of the other assertions is untrue, because the falsifying of ‘all’ may lead either to ‘none’ or to ‘some’. Bateson resorts to a psychological argument here, claiming, quite plausibly, that cognitively (in terms of “primary” or unconscious processes), “the thinker is unable to distinguish between ‘some’ and ‘all’, and unable to discriminate between ‘not all’ and ‘none’ ” [p. 184]. This argument gains some plausibility when it is compared with some the work of the prospect theorists, and indeed when compared with the extraordinarily compelling fallacies that fall easily to hand when probabilities are assessed. Both of these I discuss in chapter 5.

The claim that there is something essentially paradoxical in play, even if the paradox lies at the cognitive rather than the rigorously logical level, has captured some imaginations. Schechner, for example, was inspired by Winnicott and Bateson to propose a conception of play as a positive enactment of those paradoxes. Writing off the western concept of play as a “rotten category” [p. 27], rotten because it is “tainted by unreality, inauthenticity, duplicity, make believe, looseness, fooling around, and inconsequentiality”, he turns instead to *maya-lila*. This composite Sanskrit word denotes a “performative-creative act of continuous playing where ultimate positivist distinctions between ‘true’ and ‘false’, ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ cannot be made” [p. 29]. Maya is a strangely porous, and ambiguously fluid concept, whose meaning oscillates between “making something that was not there before” and “making something that was there into something that was not really there” [p. 28–29]. Lila means something close to ‘play’, indeed there is an etymological connexion between the two words. I will not go into

1. Reproduced from *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* [p. 184].

any detail on Schechner's argument that *maya-lila* may revitalize the "rotten" category of play, since I consider this to be tainted with a fanciful exoticism, but he does have a point when he suggests that this concept may be a better try than the Batesonian metaphor of the frame, which, for him, is "too stiff, too impermeable, too 'on/off', 'inside/outside'" [p. 41]. He suggests instead the metaphor of the net: "a porous, flexible gatherer; a three-dimensional, dynamic, flow-through container".

## 4.6 SIMMEL: PLAY AND SOCIABILITY

If Goffman's attempt to understand play in the context of the "focused gathering" is limited because it is too constrained, then there is some promise in Simmel's idea of a play as a *form*, that it might supply a more adequate and more general conception of play, free from the contextual bindings of Goffman's frames and "ecological huddles". It may, indeed, provide the kind of "flow-through" container that Schechner called for.

The theoretically interesting aspect of the frame concept is that at the same time that it provides a good analytical tool for understanding a clearly demarcated activity, it also raises difficulties of the indeterminacy of boundaries: the stimulation of parmenidean paradoxes, and the tendency of frames to "overflow". Simmel's sociology has an affinity with this duplex, particularly his understanding of the relationship between form and content, and most particularly in relation to the concept of *sociability*. In this section, I discuss the Simmelian notions of *Wechselwirkung*, usually translated as "interaction" or "reciprocal effect", the form-content distinction, and finally sociability.

### 4.6.1 FORM AND CONTENT

The play form has a special place in Simmel's sociology. The clues to this are that he uses sociability – "the play form of association" – as his example of "pure" sociology in the *Fundamental Problems of Sociology* [202, p. 45], and that it is in this chapter that he gives his most direct explanation of the form-content relation. There are good reasons why sociability is so important for

Simmel, reasons which I go into later in this section; to anticipate, it is clear that the play form is of a piece with his general conception of form itself. It is epistemologically congruent with his conception of pure form giving shape to the contents of social life, in ways in which the other forms, the ones Levine calls “institutional”, are not [139, p. xvii], and both play and form are marked by what Vaihinger calls the “As-If” [219].

To describe the play-form is to give an account of Simmel’s key distinction between form and content. Typically, for such central concepts in the classical social theorists, a definition is nowhere offered head-on, and its meaning must be inferred from his usage. The distinction between form and content is the central idiom in Simmel’s sociology.<sup>1</sup> An indication of what Simmel means by these ideas may be found in *Sociability*, where Simmel notes:

Strictly speaking, neither hunger nor love, neither work nor religiosity, neither technology nor the functions and results of intelligence, are social. They are factors in sociation only when they transform the mere aggregation of isolated individuals into specific forms of being with and for one another – forms that are subsumed under the general concept of interaction. [202, p. 41]

Simmel is very close to a Kantian position here. Form is something given to the materials of life, which are not accessible directly, it “acts as a ‘circumference’ within which a particular set of contents ‘merges into a unity’” [228, p. 33]. He considers the possibilities and limitations of the Kantian question “how is nature possible?” in his essay *How is Society Possible?* [204]. The difference that he draws attention to is that it is not possible to find in society<sup>2</sup> anything equivalent to Kant’s transcendental cognitive self. The reason for this is that society is independent of any of its individual observers, is itself a set of cognitive selves.

1. These kinds of central concepts in classical, and no doubt contemporary, sociology, tend to be used everywhere and defined nowhere, or at best their definition is left tantalizingly ambiguous. Consider, for example, how difficult it is to find the exact meaning of society for Durkheim, or to find in Weber any definition of the elective affinity. (Levine makes this point in *Sociology’s Quest for the Classics* [141, p. 65]) These concepts are better described, perhaps, as *idioms*; that is, as characteristic and particular uses of words *as if* they had a meaning different from the usual.

2. Society, that is, conceived as something more than a mere aggregate of individuals.

In Kant's view, Simmel points out, "the unity of nature emerges in the observing subject exclusively; it is produced exclusively by him in the sense materials, and on the basis of sense materials, which in themselves are heterogeneous" [p. 338]. Society, by contrast, "needs no observer", because it is composed of "conscious and synthesizing units": it is a precondition of the social that it is already cognitively configured by its members. There is, then, a fundamental difference between "my representation" of nature and my representation of society [p. 339].

While the question of what is involved in coming to know nature as a unity, may be answered through the idea of a synthesizing act of the subject that applies forms of cognition, sociology, for Simmel, is concerned with the "storey above"<sup>1</sup> Kant, where the preconditions for understanding at the level of the individual are already in place.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.6.2 INTERACTION, FORM, CONTENT

Form and content are but relative concepts. They are categories of knowledge used to master the phenomena, and to organize them intellectually, so that the same thing which in any one relation appears as a form, as though it were looked at from above, must in another relation, where it is viewed 'from below', be labelled content. [142, p. 1103]

The assertion that what is form in one context may be content in another is troubling at first sight. Indeed, it is something of a puzzle as to how this is possible. Styles of analysis that emphasise form tend to take as unbreachable the divide between form and content. One can see this for example, in the separation of the signifier and the signified and of *langue* and *parole* in structural linguistics, and in Durkheim's ontological separation of the social as an entity *sui generis*. With Simmel, something more interesting and more dynamic is going on: form and content are in a continual interplay, forms emerge from content and merge back into it.

1. My coinage, following Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*.

2. See Weingartner's *Experience and Culture: The Philosophy of Georg Simmel* [228, p. 28].

How this happens needs some clarification. An important key to the question of the apparent mutability of form and content can be found in Kaern's attempt to read Simmel as a philosopher and sociologist of the As-If. The critical aspect of Simmel in this regard is his notion of *Wechselwirkung*, the subsumption of form under the concept of interaction<sup>1</sup>, and the relational position that this involves. Some writers on Simmel have called this key point in his sociology "relativism".<sup>2</sup> The choice of term may be misleading, since it connotes an anti-foundational epistemology that, even if it is true of Simmel, is not really to the point. Perhaps a better term is relationalism, since for Simmel, nothing may be thought of in isolation, but must be considered as it stands in relation to other objects or actors, whether that standing is 'up close' or 'at a distance'. Whatever the term used, what counts is that form is the means by which relations come about, it "provides the structure which makes it possible for contents to be related" [228, p. 33]. To place things in some kind of relation involves an invention; one might even venture to say that it involves a kind of play. Things must be taken to be something they are not, otherwise they would be incommensurable isolated objects. Thus, "relations between objects are not part of reality, they are not qualities of the object. However, we treat things as if they were related" [127, p. 171]. Money as exchange is a good example of this, for money allows us to treat two objects as if they were the same.<sup>3</sup> The distinction between form and content is another example. In fact, this relation is arguably the central expression of As-If in Simmel. Form, Simmel notes, is rich because "it can absorb an infinite number of contents", and, reciprocally, content is rich because "it can enter into an infinite number of forms".<sup>4</sup> This richness and infinitude, and the corresponding finitude that emerges when form and content meet, is, in the parlance of Vaihinger, necessarily a 'fiction', and not an 'hypothesis'. For Vaihinger, hypothesis is to fiction as science is to philosophy; hypotheses are "portrayals of reality" [219, p. 15], positivistic and probabilistic assertions

1. See the Simmel quotation on page 116.

2. See Kaern's *Understanding Georg Simmel*, for example [127].

3. It also presupposes they are different, which is another story.

4. "Der Reichtum der Form ist, daß sie eine Unendlichkeit von Inhalten aufnehmen kann; der Reichtum des Inhalts, daß er in eine Unendlichkeit von Formen eingehen kann. Wo beide Unendlichkeiten sich treffen, entsteht das endliche Gebilde." [200, p. 3-4]

about what the world may turn out to be; they are verifiable (or falsifiable), and are designed to ‘tap into’ and exactly cover the causal phenomena to which they refer. Fictions, on the other hand, are untruths about the nature of the world, “instruments for finding our way about more easily in the world” [p. 15]. Examples of such fictions are Weberian ideal-types, economic concepts of rational behaviour<sup>1</sup>, Rawls’s “original position”<sup>2</sup>, infinitely divisible space in the calculus, bayesian probability theory, and so on. Simmel’s forms are not fictions in any archetypical sense; they are not, as Duncan correctly observes, to be taken in the same spirit as the Goethean primal plants and animals [71, p. 103].<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the distinction between form and content is a kind of fiction: as Kaern points out, they are not “independently subsisting entities”, and the separation of form and content is not a “distinction”:

Things become forms and contents because our mind treats them *as if* they were in a form-content relation. An isolated thing cannot be talked about in terms of the form-content relation because it takes another entity to make the relation possible. [127, p. 174]

Kaern suggests that the form-content relation may be the same as the theory-model relation in mathematical logic. A model is “an interpretation of a theory that satisfies the axioms of the theory” [127, p. 173]. He suggests that part of the usefulness of a theory is that it is capable of generating a large number of models. One might also call this the ‘richness’ of a theory, and by analogy suggest that the richness of a form is related to the richness of contents which it is capable of shaping. A corollary of the theory-model interpretation what could be called the over-determination of contents: “the same content area may admit of more than one theory”. Thus, contents are simultaneously represented in an indefinitely large number of forms. From these points, it is possible to grasp what Simmel means when he says that form may become content. Kaern uses the example of probability theory. The game of roulette is a model for theory of

1. See Rubinstein’s *Modeling Bounded Rationality* [190, p. 10].

2. See Binmore’s *Playing Fair* [22, p. 13–14].

3. Goethe’s primal plant and animal may be read in a light that brings them closer to Simmel, however (see, for example, Vaihinger’s interpretation).

probability, it is the ‘content’ of the theory. But probability theory can not be considered exactly as a thing which is form, because it in itself is a content of mathematics. Weingartner makes a similar point using a mathematical analogy:

There must be a content ‘wobbly obtuse triangle drawn with purple chalk’, ‘drawn obtuse triangle’, ‘obtuse triangle’, ‘triangle’, ‘geometric figure’, and ‘shape’. [228, p. 29]

#### 4.6.3 AUTONOMIZATION

These two examples run the risk of misleading, in fact they may be well chosen *because* they mislead. The use of mathematics, and the suggestion that the form-content relation is a relation of class and instance would seem to suggest that an object’s essential nature may be traced back through its succeeding more general super-classes until one arrives at a transcendental proposition: the wobbly obtuse triangle drawn with purple chalk resolves into the very general category of space. This would represent the method Kant uses in the *Critique Of Pure Reason*, and there are good grounds for concluding with Kaern that Simmel, despite his clear debt to Kant, differs from him on this issue. Kaern’s claim that Simmel is at odds with Kant [128, p. 76, 83] hangs essentially on the open-endedness of mind and knowledge for Simmel, and therefore upon the impossibility of arriving at a transcendental deduction of the social. If social contents are structured by forms, and forms create the grounds for new formings, then there is no way of arriving at any complete understanding, for the aprioris are always mutable, always involved in a dialectic of forming and unforming. Neither can forming be considered a strictly unidirectional hierarchy of abstractions of content. But this is not to be taken as a suggestion that forming is of necessity a capricious enterprise, an activity of the sort found in stories by Borges, and perhaps in the framings of Goffman. There is a ‘logic’ to the construction of forms: autonomization.

In *The Philosophy of As If*, Vaihinger makes much of the tendency for means to become an end in themselves; indeed, he elevates this to the dignity of a law of the “Preponderance of Means Over Ends”:



It is a universal phenomenon of nature that means which serve a purpose often undergo a more complete development than is necessary for the attainment of their purpose. In this case, the means, according to the completeness of its self development can emancipate itself wholly or partly and become established as an end itself. [p. xlvi]

There is in this statement a clear resonance with some of the aspects of play discussed earlier in this chapter, and this resonance is still stronger when Vaihinger refers to Nietzsche, who is, if anyone is, *the* philosopher of play:

[Nietzsche] holds that over against the world of 'shifting', 'evanescent', becoming, there is set up, in the interests of understanding and of the aesthetic satisfaction of the 'fantasy' a world of 'being' in which everything appears 'rounded off' and complete. [p. 342]

The philosophy of As If derives from this fantastic rounding-off, and it is no less important for play, where the crucial characteristic is its 'separateness' from everyday life, from work, and, indeed, from any productive process. Becker notes the family resemblances between the ideas of the consequences, the heterogeneity of ends, and unintended consequences of purposive social action [13, p. 221], and in the autonomization of forms we find in Simmel a similar organizing principle. The 'crystallization' of form is of a piece with this notion of unintended consequences: forms have a tendency to take on a life of their own, to become, so to speak, formal fictions of their contents. This is demonstrated most clearly in Simmel's discussion of sociability, Simmel's privileged example of the workings of form.

#### 4.6.4 SOCIABILITY

Typically, Simmel starts his text *Sociability*<sup>1</sup> with a dualism of ultimate values.<sup>2</sup> The “old conflict” [206, p. 127] of the nature of society is a conflict over which is prior: ontology or epistemology. On the one hand, society may be seen as an objective entity that grants meaning to its actors. On the other hand, society may be seen as a placeholding concept for the resources upon which the actor may draw to make sense of the world. Typically again, this dualism is only obliquely related to the pivotal duality around which the piece revolves: that regardless of where one stands in the conflict, one must recognize that there is an enduring duality to society: individuals as bearers of structure, and individuals as bundles of specific “interests” which “motivate [the] union” of actors with each other [p. 127]. The forms of social life, Simmel says, arise out of the need to realize these contrasting pulls.

Sociability is a special form of this mediation, since, while it derives its meaning from the need to realize impulses in association, it also contains within it a margin that is not reducible to “special needs and interests”:

To be sure, it is for the sake of special needs and interests that men unite in economic associations or blood fraternities, in cult societies or robber bands. But above and beyond their special content, all these associations are accompanied by a feeling for, by a satisfaction in, the very fact that one is associated with others and that the solitariness of the individual is resolved into togetherness, a union with others. [206, p. 128]

Simmel derives this margin from an analogy with the impulse to play and to create art. While play and art may serve some purpose, exogenous or otherwise,

1. Simmel published two texts on sociability, the text in Levine’s collection *On Individuality and Social Forms* [140] is earlier (1910) than the one in the Wolff collection *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* [233] (1917). While the main bodies of the texts are substantially similar in what they have to say, despite some moving around of the content, the Wolff piece is more general, as I have mentioned, since it uses sociability as an example of a formal sociology. I have used both texts here, because sometimes the translation of a particular point seems better in the one or the other.

2. A characteristic remarked upon by Frisby [89, p. 73].

there is a residue to these activities that is an end in itself, a residue which is general to all instances, “a common element, a likeness of psychological reaction and need” [p. 128]. There may be methodological problems with this kind of analogical argumentation; indeed, whether it is warranted or not depends upon where one stands in relation to the original conflict described by Simmel at the beginning of the piece. Nevertheless, there is something persuasively suggestive about this observation; it allows us an understanding of a facet of social life that would otherwise would disappear under what Simmel calls “rationalism” [p. 129]: either treated as trivial – “what does that prove?” – or subsumed under some other purpose – “what function does that perform?”. A functional account, for example, would ask how does sociability serve society, a game-theoretical one would find in it rational self interest masked as a game.

Sociability is the sole means by which association is fully realizable, Simmel claims, because it is only through a form that has no end outside of itself that the necessary conditions of reciprocity may be met:

Sociability creates, if one will, an ideal sociological world, for in it – so say the enunciated principles – the pleasure of the individual is always contingent upon the joy of others; here, by definition, no one can have his satisfaction at the cost of contrary experiences on the part of others. In other forms of association such lack of reciprocity is excluded only by the ethical imperative which governs them but not by their own immanent nature. [206, p. 132]

This quality of reciprocity has a democratizing function; sociability is “an abstraction of association... it demands the purest, the most transparent, most engaging kind of interaction – that amongst equals” [p. 133].

It is interesting to compare this with another pure social form: bureaucracy. In *Fun in Games*, Goffman rather ungenerously criticizes “Simmel’s embarrassing effort to treat sociability as a type of ‘mere’ play, sharply cut off from the entanglements of serious life” [105, p. 21]. His counterexample is bureaucratic organization, which is dominated by “rules of irrelevance” in much the same way that play in focused gatherings is. The centrality of rules in bureaucracy

seems to provide it with an equivalent equalizing power, but Goffman fails to take into account the crucial reciprocal nature of Simmelian sociability, which makes it a different form from bureaucracy. While it is true, as Goffman asserts, that “a crucial part of the conduct of business, government, and the law has to do with the way in which an official handles clients or customers in direct face-to-face dealings” [p. 21], what really counts in a bureaucracy is the impersonality of its rules and the hierarchical structure of rules over employers and clients. There is, in short, no immanent reciprocity in bureaucracy.<sup>1</sup>

This point may be developed further. While it makes no mention of Simmel, Sennett’s discussion of the intrinsic democracy of play in *The Fall of Public Man* carries similar ideas about play. For Sennett, there several vital aspects to play which hang upon its disinterestedness. The first aspect recalls Mead’s work on play: is in a vehicle for self-distancing and for coming to know generalized others: the rules of games present themselves as objective entities in much the same way as bureaucratic rules do. But, crucially, these rules are not governed by a means-end rationality. Citing research on children playing marbles, where children demonstrate a preference for complexity, and a resistance to simplification of the rules, Sennett suggests that the rules of the game are not in any simple sense aimed at acquisition (winning as many marbles as possible), but are about extending the play for as long as possible [197, p. 318]. Likewise, Simmel, when discussing the purposive content of games, says that

Even when play turns about a money prize, it is not the prize, which indeed could be won in many other ways, which is the specific point of the play; but the attraction for the true sportsman lies in the dynamics and in the chances of that sociologically significant form of activity itself. [206, p. 134]

The second aspect is the malleability of the rules, their manipulation to control inequalities, and the way that this “take[s] the children away from direct

1. In *Strategic Interaction*, it has to be said, Goffman does recognize the significance of the intrinsic reciprocity of play forms. Commenting on the affinity shared between symbolic interaction and the study of games, he notes; “nowhere more than in game analysis does one see the actor as putting himself in the place of the other and seeing things, temporarily at least, from his point of view.” [103, p. 136]. See also page 91, note 2 of this chapter.

assertion of themselves, from immediate mastery” [p. 319]. In the game of marbles, particularly ‘long distance marbles’, if there are children of different ages, the older children will devise handicaps to even out what would otherwise give them a decisive advantage. If they did not do so, the game could not take place. Play of this sort, Sennett suggest, provides people with the social equivalent of the musical “third ear”:

This is an ability to hear oneself so that in practising one does not woodenly repeat the same patterns again and again; almost to be hearing a performance by someone else... Childhood play is a preparation for adult aesthetic work by developing the belief in and the first experience of, the “third ear”. Play rules are the first chance to objectify action, to put it at a distance and change it qualitatively. [197, p. 321]

#### 4.7 PLAY AND THE LOTTERY

The Lottery is an ideal vehicle for realizing the As-If in everyday life, for it compels one to think in the subjunctive mode. One reason that it does so is the length of the odds for the jackpot. While they might not know the probability precisely<sup>1</sup>, most players have some sense of its magnitude. The fascination that its players have for the jackpot is well-known by market researchers: before it was launched, it was determined that the size of the main prize was far more interesting for future consumers than the number and size of small prizes or the amount that went to charity.<sup>2</sup> This interviewee, for example

Carol W

interviewer: *These people who are...the two you mentioned, they almost don't need to win...*

1. For the main game it is 1 in 13,983,816. The Euro Millions game has even longer odds: 1 in 76,275,360 for the top prize.

2. See *Luck Had Nothing to Do with It: Launching the UK's Largest Consumer Brand* [133] and *The Dream Machine Launch of the UK National Lottery* [121].

Yeah. I don't think... it's not about need or deserve... I mean I think the... Oh what did I read somewhere about the odds of winning the lottery? They compared it to something, and it was something about the odds... I can't remember what it was now... It was something quite, you know, your chances of being so-and-so are more likely. And something really obscure like you know your chances of giving birth to live triplets or quadruplets is more likely than winning... that sort of thing. So I think it is absolutely a lottery it is down... I mean, to pure luck, you know.

has enough of a grasp of the odds that she really ought not to be playing it. That she does so is testimony either to the strength of her conviction in pure luck, or to the fact that she gets something else out of playing. It turns out that, for her, it is the latter:

Carol W

interviewer: *So why do you play then, if the odds are so bad?*

I don't know... it... sort of makes me happy

interviewer: *Do you think you might be lucky?*

[laughs] Well they do say It Could Be You, don't they... or is it something else now?

interviewer: *Maybe, Just Maybe*

Yes. That's right.

interviewer: *How does it make you happy then?*

Well, you know, it just gets your happy hormones going. I'll be shopping, and buy a ticket and I think "Oh, that's nice". Or at work, when we give the money for the syndicate, we always talk about it. You know, let's win the jackpot and chuck in our jobs.

interviewer: *Do you enjoy your job? would you chuck it in?*

Oh no. Of course not, we just like to talk about it, that's all.

We... none of us hates our job really.

interviewer: *So why do you talk about giving it up.*

Hmm. We just always talk about it. Don't mean anything by it. It's just how we talk. You know, we talk about the Lottery, what was on the telly last night, and how we hate our jobs. But we don't really.

For her, and for many of the others I interviewed, the pleasure of playing the Lottery is not directly related to the prospect of winning. It is something rather closer to the "strips" of which Goffman speaks: the Lottery is "keyed" into material from the immediate context. Its facility to conjure up the prospect of extraordinary change while reminding one of its practical impossibility supplies it with a special affinity with sociable, inconsequential, but meaningful chatter, since it refers at the same time to the current moment and to some remarkable counterfactual moment. The fact that its concrete referents are so very concrete: the shopping, the pound that one uses to buy a ticket (in contrast to the millions that one might win), the workplace, and the home only adds to this facility. The Lottery, therefore, supplies a model for a different kind of playfulness; rather like a sort of prosaic form of *maya-lila*, it is determined less by its boundedness as an activity, and more by a suppleness that, rather than separating it out from everyday life, allows it to co-exist with the time and space of everyday life.

## CHAPTER 5

# TIME, NARRATIVE, AND THE LOTTERY

Well, what is gambling, I should like to know, but the art of producing in a second the changes that Destiny ordinarily effects only in the course of many hours or even many years, the art of collecting into a single instant the emotions dispersed throughout the slow-moving existence of ordinary men, the secret of living a whole lifetime in a few minutes – in a word, the genie’s ball of thread? Gambling is a hand-to-hand encounter with Fate.

—Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project* [15, p. 498]

Gambling, it would seem, has a special relation to time. Unlike ‘life’, in gambling it is possible to short-circuit the usual unfoldings of narrative. Indeed, gambling may be said to break with the logic of narrative itself, to substitute a series of discrete and episodic fateful moments for the logic of accumulation and deferral of rewards in the present that is so central to the spirit of rational ascetic capitalism. In this chapter I explore the relation of gambling and time, and the relation of gambling and ‘life’. Gambling has usually been conceived as an *elsewhere* to everyday life. In one way or another, the moment of gambling is seen as an unusual enclave of experience, one which is either a kind of escape or a shadow to the everyday structure of experience. For its theorists, this is true of *all* play, as I have shown in chapter 4, but there is some sense in which gambling is especially powerful in generating “temporary worlds within the ordinary



world”.<sup>1</sup> Although there is an indication in all of the theorists discussed that gambling may be part of a giving of form to everyday life, this is often imagined in a negative sense; gambling gives a chance to act out scenes which would not be available in everyday life, gambling is *supplementary* and *compensatory*. Some theorists have a more finessed understanding of the relation of gambling (and play more generally) to everyday life, notably Simmel and Goffman, but, as I point out, they are limited by their focus on the contexts of play. The National Lottery makes this focus problematic, because of its special qualities, and particularly its loose attachment to any context. Much of the issue of context is to do with time and space, to do with the *mise en jeu* where and when the action takes place.

## 5.1 GAMBLING, LUCK AND FATE

If gambling does erase the usual workings of narrative, if, that is, it does undo the logical or at least coherent unfolding of events according to plot, and if it is possible to imagine in gambling a distinctive style of being in the world, then it would still be wrong to see gambling as the substitution of a chaotic organizing principle for an ordered one. Gambling may be distinguished from work because “it strenuously denies all acquired conditions, all antecedents pointing to previous actions” [15, p. 512], but events under the sway of pure chance are not consistently unpatterned, but inconsistently patterned. The ‘logic’ which governs this disordered orderliness is regression to the mean; as  $N$  increases, observed probabilities converge with expected ones. Tossing ten coins might yield nine heads, but tossing ten million is extremely unlikely to produce nine million. So unlikely that it is safe to say that this is impossible.

In Tom Stoppard’s play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* [212], the coin *always* comes up heads, and this device carries the sense of the boring fatefulness of two minor characters waiting to speak their already-written lines. This monotonous pre-destiny is dramatically interesting because it rubs up against the more contingent and uncertain tragic destiny of Hamlet, in whose

1. See section 4.1.1.3.

play, so to speak, the actors are waiting to act. A similar theme may be found in Borges' *The Lottery of Babylon* [23]: in an administered world where all chance has been excluded, the contingencies necessary for action (in the Weberian sense of acts which must have an 'otherwise') are artificially produced by a lottery in which both good and bad 'prizes' are won. In this "dizzy land where the lottery is the basis of reality" [p. 55], justice becomes arbitrary, a winner might just as likely win a prison sentence as win a sum of money. As Barbara Goodwin shows in *Justice and the Lottery* [108], justice may be produced through randomness, for example by the use of lotteries for choosing organ transplantation recipients, and by the use of some kind of sortition, perhaps even a hand of poker, for resolving a tied Presidential election.

It is, therefore, possible to imagine a kind of narrativizing that makes use of chance rather than emplotment. Such a narrative would have the shape of a bell-curve, destiny would be the tendency towards the normal.<sup>1</sup> But this cognitive potential is offset by the peculiar psychological distortions that always appear when people consider chance in their lives, and these are especially strong when they are thinking about risk. This psychological aura may even be found amongst experts in probability, statisticians. This is nicely illustrated by the Moscow professor of statistics in the second world war, who would always ignore the air-raids on the basis that the chances of his getting injured or killed were tiny. He turned up at the shelter one night during a bombing, and on being asked why, he replied that there were five million people in Moscow and one elephant in the zoo, and last night they got the elephant.<sup>2</sup> The two levels of experience, the generalizing, overarching level of regression to the mean, and the particularizing, stochastic moments of everyday life present themselves as two orders *sui generis* and which have a problematical relation, both are part of

1. There is something of this sentiment in the idea of *l'homme moyen*, institutionalized by Quetelet, and the mainstay of Durkheimian sociology (see Ian Hacking's *The Taming of Chance* [111], chapter 19).

2. An interesting counterexample to this story is the Lottery ticket buying habits of one interviewee, who reported that she only bought tickets personally (outside of a syndicate) when someone famous, or at least someone associated with a celebrity won a large amount of money: "Usually when I had read something about, you know when William Hague's auntie won, I thought Pah if she can win it, anyone can, you know, it's that sort of trigger. And if I happen to be in Sainsbury's at about five o'clock on Saturday..." [interview: Helen S].

the same piece, yet both have their own logics.

The gambler's fallacy – the belief that prior and entirely independent events have some bearing on the next event – does not render invalid the idea of the 'winning streak'. It is not, in a simple sense necessarily a denial of regression to the mean. It could be taken for a recognition that patterns will emerge, and that I, the gambler, am in a particularly profitable pattern right now. This is not the whole story of course. Discussions of luck and fate with my interviewees suggests that for many there is at most only the nicest of distinctions between contingency and determinism:

Jayne M ...like I say, I'm not a religious person, *but...* I suppose it's a type of faith isn't it, that you sort of would like to think, well my luck will come through one day.

I'm a great believer that if things are meant to happen they will; if it's meant to be, it will happen.

I believe people are... Well I suppose again it's going back to people have got destiny haven't they and goals in life and, you know, OK, you've got to work hard to achieve those goals, but at the same time in the world today, you've got to take each day as it comes and if you're lucky enough to have things in life, then you're meant to have it aren't you, if not, then it's not going to happen. You know, some people are not as lucky as I am.

In this fragment, the difference between destiny and luck is not so clear. There is destiny and there are 'goals in life', but these are placed against what happens 'in the world today'. Taking each day as it comes is reminiscent of the slogans of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous (and indeed Gamblers Anonymous), and thus calls up the idea of the breaking of a pattern or habit by the reduction of time to discrete units, the day.<sup>1</sup> In chapter 4 play was found

1. With Gamblers Anonymous, this property suggests an ironic homology between the source of addiction and its cure: gambling, as I have noted, breaks up time in precisely the same way. In the case of the Lottery it is the scratchcards, the Instants, which have attracted the most criticism because of their perceived addictive qualities (see chapters 1 and 2).

to be defined by its special qualities of ‘separateness’ in one way or another. I suggest that there may be found in this disjunctive moment between destiny and ‘the world today’ another kind of ‘separateness’, and in 5.2 I show how gambling is in a unique position to produce this separation.

But there is more going on in the quotation above. The ancient Greeks had a constellation of concepts with which to address questions of destiny, merit and luck: *tychē* (luck), *moira* (destiny), and *kairos* (the opportune moment) [169]. Here, the interviewee brings these dimensions into a complex relation. Luck “comes through”, and “things” happen as they will, both unfold as they are “meant to”. But the desire for luck is subjunctive, “I would like to think my luck will come through”, while destiny is fateful in the indicative mood, “if it’s meant to be, it will happen”. At first sight, this relation resembles the Calvinist spirit described by Max Weber. Here, however, luck does not seem to be so expressive of good destiny; luck is not a ‘sign’ of the gift of grace. Although you *are* meant to be lucky if you are lucky, this is separate from having goals in life and achieving them. The separateness of luck and destiny is something to do with the local-ness of luck against overarching destiny. This is emphasised by the objectivity of destiny – “*it* will happen”, “things” – which is contrasted with the possessive phrase “my luck”. Luck is, in a sense ‘local destiny’. While luck has its own circularity, its own confirmatory loops, it is also true that here is a fateful envelope that enfolds it. The more general story of one’s life bears some relation to how much and what kind of luck comes through. This interviewee has a more complicated idea of the interrelation of the *tychē*, *moira* and *kairos* than others do. For one, the director of a successful software company, it is *kairos* that is dominant:

Norman S [55]

interviewer: *What about more generally, not just to do with gambling, are some people luckier than others in their life? I mean, you have quite a successful business... do you think that’s anything to do with luck?*

I think there’s always an element of... [pause]... Luck is not the word

I'd want to use, I can't think what the word is I would want to use, but there's an element of being in the right place at the right time; I was working for another company. My now managing director, my partner in the business joined the company I was working for and between us we developed the first version of the software that this company now sells. So, I was in the right place at the right time to do that, otherwise I'd still be working for the previous company, well I wouldn't, I'd be redundant by now because they shut the company. But umm...is that luck? it's not a word I would use.

[56]

interviewer: *I'm trying to get to what word you would use.*

Yeah, I'm trying to think what that word is. Umm [pause] [pause]

[57]

interviewer: *Do you think that people make those sorts of circumstances, make their own luck?*

No, I don't think in the majority of cases they do, no. I think it is...yeah, I nearly said it...there's an element of luck. It is...oh alright...it is an element of luck, whatever you do, I think, very few people I'm sure set out to say "I am going to be a successful entrepreneur" or whatever it may be. I think most people start out working for a company, or working for whatever it may be, and they happen to be at the right place at the right time, and idea comes along that their employer fails to develop, or you know, they learn their skills in that and they take those skills and apply their own entrepreneurial skills on top of that to take that forward, and I'm sure...I think it's a matter of being in the right place at the right time, so I suppose there is an element of luck in that.

The idea of "happening to be at the right place at the right time" is interesting because it seems to be entirely passive, but is, of course, also an active idea also. The strongest expression of this 'active' conception of luck that I found was this

with one interviewee, who every day would visualize an empty car-parking space just before she arrived at work:

Jill M I'll be nearly there, and I just...picture that it is there as clearly as I can. Then, when I get there, there's always a space free.

interviewer: *Always?*

Perhaps not always. But when there isn't a space, it's because I don't want it enough... There might be something else on my mind, that makes me think too negatively about it.

interviewer: *What sort of things?*

Well, not winning the lottery, of course [laughs].

There are strong moral aspects to these accounts: responsibility for producing one's own luck, for exploiting 'external' luck, and indeed responsibility for one's own fate. In my research these aspects are most strongly articulated in discussions of charitable giving. For the purposes of this chapter, the key factors are temporal and spatial: what is the relation of the long and the short *durées*, of the time of "being in the world today" and the time of "things happening as they will"? In a general sense, this is a question of the relation of large and small, and of whether these have different logics. As Prospect theory shows, assessment of risks and prospects involves layers of focality, with the force of local circumstances overriding the *longue durée* of the Law of Large Numbers.<sup>1</sup> In the Lottery, this relation is hard-wired: it is at the same time both 'small' and 'large', everyday and extraordinary, small change and jackpot. It is, therefore, in a good position for its players to build practices around it that resonate with more general issue of focus indicated by Prospect theory. It also bears, perhaps, an affinity with historical changes in the way that chance is understood in contemporary society.

1. See Kahneman and Varey, *Propensities and Counterfactuals: The Loser That Almost Won* [131], and Teigen, *How Good is Good Luck?: The Role of Counterfactual Thinking in the Perception of Lucky and Unlucky Events* [215].

## 5.2 GAMBLING, TIME AND MODERNITY

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many theorists found a connexion between the spirit of gambling and the spirit of the times. Gambling may not only offer an opposing experience of time, it may also be possible to find in it a kind experience distinctive of modernity. That is not to say that people gamble more enthusiastically now than they did in the past, but rather that there seems to be a special affinity of the spirit of gambling and the spirit of modernity.

In the *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin devotes an entire chapter to the subjects of prostitution and gambling.<sup>1</sup> The usual reason for bringing these two together is as part of a list of moral problems: the usual suspects, prostitution, gambling, drink and drugs. For Benjamin, this constellation has a different intent. Gambling and prostitution are some of the purest expressions of commodity fetishism, because they make a travesty of the fundamentals of production and reproduction. They also hold within them, however, signs of emancipatory potential.<sup>2</sup> Gambling has a tremendous *collapsing* property, while it is irrational and while it sits well within capitalism, it is also a gesture of rejection of continuous time. This is just what Benjamin is looking for:

Each age, Benjamin says, has a longing to “awaken”...Awakening, for Benjamin, is a matter of breaking free from an administered continuity, and of recognizing that the momentary now is, in relation to what comes before or after, the only true reality. [186]

The *Arcades Project* is an exploration of modern urban experience. For Simmel, the psychological basis of Metropolitan life is an “intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli” [201, p. 410]. The blasé attitude, the parrying of shock by selection, by the glossing over of stimuli that would risk over-stimulation, is the natural attitude of urban life [201, p. 414].

1. Actually, a “convolute”. Benjamin’s unusual approach to writing, collaging his own work with others, makes it difficult accurately to cite him. All citations here will be attributed to Benjamin, even if they come from somewhere else in the last instance.

2. Perhaps this is not *despite*, but *because* of the purity of their ideological veiling.

For Franco Moretti, in *Homo Palpitans: Balzac's Novels and Urban Personality*, the metropolis “calls for a change in the perception not so much of space as of the *flow of time*” [164, p. 109]. Furthermore, he claims that there is a special affinity between this and a “new rhetoric of temporality” which is found not in poetry as one might expect, but in the suspense plots of novels. All places where people live are susceptible to and have an affinity with description and classification, in as much as value and meaning is encoded or “crystallized” in their objects, their buildings and streets. The city has its own distinctive quality, however:

...its spatial structure (basically its *concentration*) is functional to the intensification of *mobility*: spatial mobility, naturally enough, but mainly *social* mobility... [The] city as a physical place – and therefore as a support to descriptions and classifications – becomes the mere backdrop to the city as a network of developing social relationships – and hence as a prop to narrative temporality. [164, p. 112–113]

Space moves from place, from a *mise-en-scène*, to a temporal vector. Moretti claims that the literary response to this change marks a significant rhetorical shift:

Whereas the great aspiration of mythic narration exacts the metamorphosis of time into space, the urban novel turns the axiom on its head and seeks to resolve the spatial in terms of the sequential. [164, p. 112]

This observation is of a piece with discussions that emerged from Roman Jakobson's classic essay *Two Aspects of language and Two Types of Aphasia* [124], in which language is found to operate in two planes, substitution (paradigmatic, metaphoric) and combination (syntagmatic, metonymic). Poetry projects substitution onto combination, since it unfolds the paradigmatic syntagmatically. Interestingly, this discussion led many to diagnose modernist writing as distinctively metaphoric, while Moretti seems here to be saying the opposite.



Narration relies upon the “unheard-of” [p. 114], the introduction of novelties. The unheard-of of the plot was for a long time brought about by transgression – the *moral* unheard-of – and depended, therefore, upon the extraordinary, the unusual and the freakish. The freak is a product of classification, and the fluidity of the city means, for Moretti, that it is now possible to construct narratives without freaks:<sup>1</sup>

What engages the reader is no longer the ‘state of exception’ of the symbolic system... and, thereby, of represented life, but the unpredictability harboured *in ordinary administration and ‘everyday life’*. [164, p. 115]<sup>2</sup>

Shock is more at home with mechanical than organic solidarity; it is a suspension “between unswerving habit and sudden catastrophe” [p. 117]. In the Lottery, it is the bringing together of the mundane and routinized buying of the tickets every week, with the somewhat ambivalent prospect of winning the jackpot. This ambivalence comes across time and again in the interview data: big wins are imagined as exciting, but also as a threat. For some, it is a threat to identity: winning the jackpot would throw into confusion all careers and projects that one might hold [interview: Jill M]. For others, it is one’s sense of community that is endangered. One couple, for example, said that it would be impossible to carry on living on their housing estate where they had lived for forty years:

Betty and Douglas K Douglas: You couldn’t stay here... I mean... everyone would know. Even if you tried to stay the same. When I went down the pub everyone would know. You’d have to move to Canford Cliffs [a well-to-do area of Bournemouth] or somewhere, and when you were there, who’d want to know you?

These responses represent one plane of lottery play, the other bears more affinity with Moretti’s modern form of narrativizing. The idea of the “shocks and collisions” of urban life as described by Benjamin and Simmel is perhaps too

1. One might add that it is possible to construct social sciences without freaks too: anthropologies of home rather than elsewhere, sociologies of the everyday.

2. Emphasis in original.

rigid, too tightly bound around the poles of the usual and the freakish. Moretti calls for a more elastic conception:

City life mitigates extremes and extends the range of intermediate possibilities: it arms itself against catastrophe by adopting ever more pliant and provisional attitudes. [164, p. 117]

The malleability of urban life is indicated, ironically perhaps, by the dominance of the principle of the money economy. Simmel notes that the complexities of bringing together an aggregation of so many heterogeneous people with so many differentiated interests calls for the strongest application of “the pecuniary principle”:

Here the multiplicity and concentration of economic exchange gives an importance to the means of exchange which the scantiness of rural commerce would not have allowed. Money economy and the dominance of the intellect are intrinsically connected. They share a matter of fact attitude in dealing with men and things. [201, p. 411]

Money is blasé. It reduces the shocks of the use-value, the sensuous particularity of things, to their exchange value. It is only interested in “what is common to all”. The tension between this universalizing and abstracting force and the irreducible specificities of urban, and indeed modern life, makes for a new combinatory potential:

The isolated and unrepeatable event – Baudelaire’s apparitions that break the flow of time – lose their pre-eminence which is, instead, taken over by those events which, while in themselves repeatable and predictable, by *combining* together always end up breeding something unusual. [164, 117]

With the increased number of variables, there is an increase in the possibility of surprises. This correlation is not linear, and is perhaps not even merely exponential: as complexity theory shows, beyond a certain tipping-point the

combinatory potential of variables brings about a different order of entities.<sup>1</sup> Citing Balzac, Moretti claims that the modern mode of narration has moved away from the uni-directional and fateful template of tragedy. While tragic irony hangs upon suspense, upon waiting for the moments of reversal and revelation of destiny (*peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*), with Balzac and his contemporaries, the suspenses and surprises are serial and provisional:

In Balzac... the novel brings about a conclusion through a continuous and highly unpredictable series of ups and downs. In this way, suspense and surprise encourage city dwellers to believe that only rarely is 'everything lost'. Even in the middle of catastrophe they are induced to perceive, and hence rejoice in, all surviving potentiality. There is no need to illustrate how pleasant this sensation is. [164, 118]

Of a piece with this rhetorical shift is the novel's handling of time. In tragedy, time is diacritical, only has meaning relationally within the temporal scheme of the drama. It is closer to the time of a game of chess, where time is measured fundamentally not in minutes and seconds, but in the number of moves. It does not matter, Moretti notes, when Burnam wood comes, only that it does at the right point in the drama. In Balzac, it matters: "it makes an enormous difference that a certain promissory note expires today and not next week". Thus, the main aim of suspense is to foreground time passing: "time always appears as either too fast or too slow: in both cases, however, time *moves*, and forces us to come to terms with this fact". Put differently, where before history and plot, time and its representation, are separate with the one signifying the other, now the two are *entangled*.

The city is an abrasive space, where different types rub up against each other. Before, in feudal times, the close proximity of "luxury and penury" was expressive of the "immutability of social relationships". In modernity, the abrasion is brought about by mobility: "spatial contiguity is accepted because it is automatically 'translated' into and legitimated by, a chronological contiguity, the idea

1. See Ian Stewart's *Does God Play Dice? The New Mathematics of Chaos* [211].

of an unexpected and sudden reversal of fate” [164, p. 120]. Moretti contends that these kinds of reversals are different from previously. Where they differ is in the emphasis on *resurgence*, on the possibility of reversing the reverse, of re-doubling, one might say in the parlance of betting. This, he claims, has nothing to do with shock, or if it does, it is with the kind of shock that is merely an “Augenblick” – a moment that happens in the blink of an eye – since a kind of recovery is always possible.

It is here that the spirits of gambling and of urban life converge, along with the temporal characteristics of both. In the narratives of Balzac, Moretti notes, gambling is often a response in compensation for some other disaster [p. 121]. It is roulette that exemplifies this best of all. Roulette is a game of almost pure *alea*; if there is a competitive aspect to it, it is far closer to *paidia* than *ludus*. Like kite-flying, there is a kind of engagement with natural laws, but this struggle is impersonal, “red wins because it has ‘beaten’ black”. If the players do engage with each other, this is always mediated by the croupier, and more importantly by the complex combinatoire of possibilities of alliances and enmities:

For instance, whoever plays red is implicitly the enemy of all those who have played black and, conversely, the ally of all those who have played single red numbers... Thus an extremely complicated parallelogram of forces emerges, a combination of ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ and ‘accomplices’ graded into a thousand nuances. There is even a sort of universal brotherhood... against zero. [164, p. 122]

In Moretti’s account, destiny is associated with a uni-directional linear plot, whose ‘moments’ are, in the pure forms of such narratives (tragedies), produced through shock. The other kind of narrative, the modern one which produces a more pliable kind of a story with ups and downs, prospects and reverses, has affinities with the modern urban experience and with certain kinds of gambling. It is also possible to find in this form some similarity with the idea of luck in the interview fragment discussed in section 5.1 (page 131). There too, luck is a more fluid and more everyday experience than destiny. Luck is a matter of days, “taking each day as it comes”, while destiny operates on the scale of a lifetime.

There is some association between the qualities of the Lottery and this kind of separation: some of its aspects, thinking about winning the jackpot for example, are more ‘storied’ in the classical sense that they involve the invocation of a freakishly improbable, and perhaps therefore impossible, event. The counter-story to this would be that there is some aspect of the lottery that corresponds more closely to the kind of narrative experience described by Moretti. There is some indication of this in the casual “shock-free” ways in which people play the Lottery. Almost all aspects of the the lottery are displaced into other more mundane activities. Players buy their tickets with the weekly shop, or when they pick up a newspaper. With recent innovations such as direct-debit arrangements and text-message notification of any winnings, it is even possible to play without it touching one’s life at all. Many of the interviewees also declared a sort of indifference about checking the numbers:

Karen B And before now I’ve actually, I always, well usually ring my dad on a regular on a regular basis, and on a Sunday sometimes if I’ve rung him and I haven’t even bothered even to tape it I just say, Oh what were the lottery numbers?

interviewer: *So sometimes you don’t bother to...*

No.

interviewer: *...and you might check them not on Saturday...*

Not until maybe...and sometimes I’ve actually got them run them through the machine on a Monday, because they can check your tickets on a Monday see if you’ve got a winner amongst them.

interviewer: *That seems very peculiar to me, because that means, say, especially if you check them on Monday, then you’ve left two days time...*

...Before I go and check it.

interviewer: *And you could have won.*

Yeah, I could...I mean I’ve very often sat in the garden and said,

doing this garden, and said, Oh you know, I could getting a gardener in now, I might have won a million. [laughs]

This sort of casualness, and the almost deliberate ‘time-shifting’ of checking the numbers appears very frequently in the interview data. The chief characteristic, perhaps, of gambling is its generation of a series of tiny moments:

Over and above the *specific* nature of time in each game played can be discerned a *general* experience of time; a set of characteristics that come to light through the frequent playing of many games. This perception of time, common to all gamblers in all games, is of a *constant repetition of a fleeting present*. [181, p. 140]<sup>1</sup>

The Lottery, on the other hand, seems to allow a different experience of time that is more related to the everyday routines of life, and a kind of story-time that, while it has a freedom from “shocks” that Moretti characterizes as distinctly modern, is only connected to the classical form of narrativizing through the players’ imaginations. This capability endows it with the capacity to act as a bridge between the two forms of story-telling.

It also gives playing the Lottery some resonance with those problems of narrative that Richard Sennett diagnoses as distinctive of post-Fordism in his book *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* [198]. The decline of careers and the rise of flexible labour bring about, he argues, a disruption of the principal narrative by which one defines one’s life. In place of a realist-novel like trajectory of appointment, promotion and retirement, all within a single career, workers are faced with the demands of flexibility, and the prospect that they may need to change their work, that their *work* has become a series of discrete *jobs*. This leads, he argues, to the sort of narrativizing – or, more precisely, chronicling – whose organizing principle I characterized earlier as regression to the mean. This causes problems for workers in the post-Fordist era. Rose, one of the informants in his research, says: “you’re always starting over, you have to prove yourself every day”. This, Sennett goes on to say, can

1. Emphasis in original.

...eat away at your sense of character. There is no narrative which can overcome regression to the mean, you are always “starting over”. [198, p. 84]

For Rose, the symptoms of this “corrosion” of narrative and character are not some kind of depression, but a lower-level anxiety, a “dull, continual worry”. And it is not only one’s character that is affected. Another of his informants, Rico, suffers from the absence of a “long term” in its effects on his family and community:

[Rico’s] deepest worry is that he cannot offer the substance of his work life as an example to his children of how they should conduct themselves ethically. The qualities of good work are not the qualities of good character. [198, p. 21]

This highly personalized form of the risk society thesis is, in my view, more satisfying and, indeed, interesting than Ulrich Beck’s in *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* [11]. For it is not derived, as Beck’s seems to be, from a misplaced critique of scientific reason in the tradition of the Frankfurt School’s critique of positivism.<sup>1</sup> But it does suffer from a similar drawback, which does not seem to have been observed elsewhere. Namely, that a part of what Gigerenzer, in *The Empire of Chance: How Probability Changed Science and Everyday Life* calls the “probabilistic revolution” is the appearance of a probabilistic ‘style of reasoning’<sup>2</sup> that is not burdened with a sense of loss of certainty because of the unavailability or intractably great volume of information.<sup>3</sup> For reasons indicated above, the lottery mentality has strong affinities with this style of reasoning, and not merely as a source of escape from the pressures of a chance-dominated life. In the next chapter of this thesis I develop my account of these affinities in relation charitable giving.

1. Dingwall advances this criticism of Beck convincingly in *‘Risk Society’: The Cult of Theory and the Millennium?* [64].

2. A notion from Iain Hacking [112].

3. This idea is the basis of some work that I have done on intelligence-gathering for terrorism: *Betting on Terrorism: Decision Markets and Total Information Awareness* [171].

## CHAPTER 6

# THE LOTTERY AND CHARITY

I am using the story of betting at a racetrack because it is traditional to make the necessary distinction [between objective and subjective probability] by contrasting a roulette wheel with a horse race. But one could equally well discuss the director of a major charity trying to guess which of several potential famines is likely to prove most devastating.

—Kenneth Binmore, *Playing Fair* [22, p. 265, n. 9]

It is remarkable how often the phrase ‘winners and losers’ appears in discussions of gambling. Within the cost-benefit scheme implied by this expression, ‘winning’ tends to refer primarily to the economic gains from gambling revenue, taxation, and economic development, while ‘losing’ refers broadly to something usually construed as the social costs of gambling for its players. This lends a particular disposition to the analysis of gambling: to look to *general* large-scale economic considerations along the axis of gain, and to *particular* effects upon the individual – economic, psychological, and moral – along the axis of loss.

The Rothschild Commission’s analysis bears something of this structure even while it concludes that a national lottery would be desirable. It recommends a national lottery because lotteries are, in its view, by nature and when compared with other forms of gambling largely “harmless” in terms of their possible social evils. Furthermore, it believes that it is possible to establish an institutional buffer that protects the lottery’s charitable intentions from both the residual problems that inhere in all gambling – the dangers of gambling to the individual, the possibility of fraud and of the involvement of organized crime – and the



tendency for governments to act for political expediency rather than economic prudence or philanthropic good will. The lottery, it noted, could take on the rôle of the philanthroper, a character whose heyday was long gone.

This philanthropic tradition carries an obvious tension between the profit-seeking purpose of a business and the sense of obligation of an individual to contribute something to society. Prochaska has suggested that the degree to which actors take on this strain is an indication of the strength of civil society [179], and also that it is a source of civic virtue [180].

Prochaska notes that there has been a subtle change in the style of philanthropy over the course of this century:

Today's philanthropists... reveal attitudes long customary. They have shed the narrow religious doctrine and the language of social hierarchy often associated with the nineteenth century, but they are direct descendants of their Victorian forebears in their individualism, with its emphasis on self-help, their moral sensibility, and social activism, their belief in progress, and the localism which makes them chary of centralised authority. *They are the successors of Mill in their political economy, of Wilberforce in their crusading zeal.* [179, p. 86] (my emphasis)

This change shadows the secularizing of moral opposition to lotteries that I discussed in chapter 2. As well as the similarity of the narrative, the sense of privatization and particularism is very close to the local concerns of lottery funding: rather than the money being absorbed into the national exchequer, the principle of additionality and the practice of hypothecation opens up spaces set apart from the everyday life, so to speak, of the treasury, as play does in the routinized world for Goffman. In a parallel sense, this has been the role of philanthropy also. One of my interviewees made this connexion explicit in a discussion of where he would like to see the money raised from the Lottery spent:

Norman S Yeah generally. Yeah, generally. Now [laughs] now there... see I'm applying splurge money on a national scale. See,

I'm delighted to see money going into what many people have said is wasteful money. I am not a fan of the opera, I've never seen an opera in my life, I've never been to a ballet in my life, I've no desire to go to either, but I'm delighted to see money going into those sort of things which I regard as a national institutions shall we say. I am very resentful of lottery money being filtered off under whatever guise you want to put it under, being filtered off into the national health service or filtered off into education, or filtered off into any of those places. For me, the lottery is splurge money on a national scale. And if it goes to build a memorial hall, that's great.

“Splurge money” was initially his expression for the £6,000 that he won as part of a syndicate.<sup>1</sup>

In their very strongly polemical text *Making a Lottery of Good Causes: the National Lottery and the Politicisation of Charity* [53], Cummins and Whelan develop this point into an argument that charity has been a force in the opening up of the public sphere. Philanthropy is an “expression of the moral sense of a free people and a vital part of civil society” [p.12]. The Welfare state is a threat to this healthy open space since it introduces politically motivated agendas into the distribution of funding. More damagingly, they claim, the bureaucratization of the erstwhile philanthropic domain, whether it is by way of the Welfare State or the growth of large charitable institutions, has reduced the immediacy of philanthropy, has replaced face-to-face care with the impersonal. No longer can care be given and received, to use the expression that Goffman applied to the focused gathering, in ‘the same breath of experience’. There is, then, a kind of homology between the kind of space-making that gambling enables and that of philanthropy.

The contemporary form of philanthropy is, perhaps, corporate social responsibility; in this incarnation, the donors become generalized to organizations and institutions, and the beneficiaries to specified ‘stakeholders’. Corporate social responsibility has enhanced the ambivalence of the economic actor’s acting for

1. Discussed earlier in chapter 3, on page 3.2.

the public good.<sup>1</sup> The tension between the economic ethic of a business – maximization of return for shareholders – and the ethic of benefiting society as a whole has, in sharpening the contrasting pulls of these two ethics, generated an ambiguous third term into the ethical nexus: stakeholderism. For individuals as economic actors, rather than business organizations as economic actors, it would seem that the problem of charitable giving – understood as corresponding to philanthropy for the business – is less sharp, for the value of economic efficiency is not explicitly upheld by law, but merely by values.

Devereux explained gambling in terms of its ability to release the strain between the two imperatives of prudence and risk-taking. We might also seek to find in charitable giving a similar “safety-valve” that frees the actor from the tension between charitable giving and economic gain. The association between gambling and charitable giving brought about by the National Lottery suggests that it might be possible to find in it some kind of an affinity<sup>2</sup> between the two, and one that allows the release afforded to be all the more effective because it yokes together, in a deeper sense than merely receiving “permission”<sup>3</sup>, a happy sense of satisfaction through charitable giving with relief from the value strains of capitalism.

At first glance, it would seem, however, that there is nothing more dissimilar to gambling than charitable giving, the one founded upon acquisitiveness or compulsiveness, the other upon altruism or duty. If one follows a path of generality to their most fundamental forms – *luck* for gambling and *ethics* for charitable giving – so does the conceptual distance between the two appear to increase. It is *prima facie* an absurdity that one’s moral status is subject to luck [210, p. 1], for morality must, if it is to be meaningfully moral, involve the contingency of agency and not the contingency of chance. To paraphrase Goffman’s formulation, one might say that wherever charity is to be found,

1. See, for example, *The Ethics of Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropic Ventures* [237] and *The Development of Corporate Charitable Contributions in the UK: A Stakeholder Analysis* [24].

2. In his book on the history of the introduction of the UK National Lottery, Andrew Douglas uses the word “synergy” for this relation [67, p. 97–98].

3. See the National Audit Offices report on its evaluation of tenders for the Lottery [154], and also marketing literature [49] for uses of this expression.

there is sure to be action.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one of my interviewees spoke felicitously of charitable acts – in this case donations to a milk bank for premature children – as supplying “a pleasing and surprising sense of agency” [interview: Siobhán O]. One might even propose the charitable act as a kind of ‘adventure’: while gambling seems more readily susceptible to this interpretation, charitable can, itself, be a fleeting moment that provides a “warm glow” [167, p. 12] from the sense of having the utility of others in one’s own utility function” [167, p. 1]. Where one interviewee described playing the Lottery as “getting your happy hormones going” [interview: Carol W], another spoke of a similar pleasure he derived from giving money to people on the streets:

Roy J You see people... all the time, asking for money on the streets. Usually I’ll just walk past. There’s only so much you can... I mean you see so many each day.

interviewer: *Are you talking about people begging, or people asking for money for charity?*

[laughs] Well, both really.

interviewer: *Do you ever give some money?*

Well, sometimes. If I’m feeling... I don’t know... Sometimes it just makes me feel good. I’ll give someone a few coins...

interviewer: *When do you do this?*

I suppose it’s either when I am feeling down myself, or when I am feeling happy and I think, well I’ll make that person happy too. It’s just a passing thing. [laughs] It’s like a scratchcard I suppose, you know.

interviewer: *And who do you give most to, charity collectors or people begging?*

The beggars really. I mean... they’re the ones that you’re going to help most, aren’t they. So you sort of get more out of it as well. As

1. Mentioned on page 107 of this thesis.

I say, though, it's only a passing thing. I'll not... it won't make me feel good for more than... Oh... a few minutes.

The Lottery is, then, a curious amalgam of different aspects whose ingredients never quite merge into a single substance: charitable aspects, business aspects, a taxation aspect, and an entertainment aspect. According to the Rothschild Commission, the charitable aspect was the sole rationale for the lottery's existence. It was, indeed, intended to re-introduce the spirit of philanthropy remoulded for a society where "there will be no new Nuffield Foundations".<sup>1</sup>

But those concerns played no part in determining who would run the Lottery or how it would be run. The choice of a profit-making organization – Camelot – over Richard Branson's not-for-profit bid, a choice made not once but twice, has been one of the most controversial aspects of the National Lottery, and one which was the principal concern of my interviewees when asked about charity and the Lottery. The National Audit's decision was made exclusively on the grounds of how much money would be raised for charity; questions of how much the business itself would make were not considered relevant [154]. Richard Branson's bid was judged to be likely to have lower returns than Camelot's because it proposed a not-for-profit business model. As it turned out, Camelot made so much money, and ran into so much adverse publicity about its 'fat cat' directors, that it eventually set up its own charitable body: the Camelot Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

## 6.1 THE SPIRITS OF GAMBLING AND CHARITY

There are some interesting confluences of the gambling ethos and the charitable ethos both in history and in the interviews for this thesis. The eighteenth century may have been an age of speculative projects, but it was also the period when the dispensation of charity through collective organizations became institutionalized, to some degree alongside individual charitable acts, and to some

1. See page 57 of this thesis.

2. It is also involved in other fund-raising bodies, amongst which are The Childline Foundation and GamCare (problem gambling support) [33].

degree in place of them. Owen, in his *English Philanthropy 1660–1960*, finds in this time a change in the outlook of middle and upper class society. The combined advances of the economy and territory of the UK, and of philosophical and scientific enquiry fostered a spirit of pragmatic compromise and tolerance from which was derived a new charitable sensibility:

Whatever uneasiness eighteenth-century Englishmen may have felt as they contemplated their society, thoughtful critics among them could discover at least one conspicuous merit. Their age, they liked to point out, was exhibiting a new sensitiveness to human need and was developing fresh instruments for dealing with it. ‘Charity’, observed Henry Fielding ‘is the very characteristic virtue at this time.’ [172, p. 11]

The growth of individual charitable was deeply-rooted in the emergence of the Protestant ethic, with its emphasis on an ethos of individual this-worldly conduct and diligent prudence, and its resistance to Catholic forms of charity:

One of [Protestantism’s] most formidable aspects was the earnest denunciation and repudiation of the whole Catholic apparatus of alms, of social inaction dominated by clerical policy, and of a generally conservative attitude towards broad areas of social responsibility. [126, p. 151]

By the eighteenth century, however, charity had become modulated into a more generalized notion of the progressive improvement of society as a whole. This route would eventually lead to a return to puritanism in the nineteenth century, but this time with an emphasis on the moral state of the recipient rather than of the donor [179, p. 42]. In the eighteenth century, however, the charitable impulse was characterized by a sense of benevolence and humanitarianism that, Owen suggests, was itself a kind of escapism:

... an escape from some of the unpleasant realities of the eighteenth-century world – its poverty, insecurity, and suffering. The practice of benevolence assured one of the surpassingly agreeable sensations, ‘the most lasting, valuable and exquisite Pleasure.’ [172, p. 13]

At the same time that the instabilities of the economy and the possibility of suffering devastating financial reverses were evoking a benevolence, perhaps compensatory and empathetic, towards the suffering of others, they were also providing a model for its remedy. For, as Owen shows, an important factor in realizing this new charitable ethos was, remarkably enough, the lessons learnt from the growth of financial speculation from the late-seventeenth-century joint-stock boom to the period of the South Sea Bubble:

If commercial activity could be financed by drawing small amounts from numbers of individuals, perhaps a similar plan could be usefully employed in good works. [172, p. 12]

There appears to be no evidence to establish a similar connexion with the lotteries of the time, but their entanglement with other kinds of financial speculation at the time, and their popularity with the State for raising large amounts of money in good time, is suggestive of a such a link.

In her work on life insurance Viviana Zelizer argues that the expansion of financial exchange led to the substitution of markets for morals.

[This change removed] a powerful normative pattern: the division between the marketable and the nonmarketable, or the sacred and the profane. [239, p. 43]

I have already discussed in chapter 3 the connexions between this change and changes in moral attitudes towards lotteries.<sup>1</sup> I have also discussed the 1774 Life Assurance Act in chapter 2<sup>2</sup>, which established the distinction between legitimate insurance of lives. This second discussion suggests something of a criticism of the view expressed in the quotation from Zelizer above. The legal specification of what counted as a legitimate insurance contract was motivated by those freakish policies that are exemplified by the Chevalier D'Éon case. It was, that is, a move to ensure the dignity of the contract, a reminder of Durkheim's observation in *The Division of Labour in Society* that contracts are not reducible to the paper upon which they are written:

1. Page 67, note 1.
2. Section 2.3 on page 39.

Everything in the contract is not contractual. . . Wherever a contract exists, it is submitted to regulation which is the work of society and not that of individuals. [72, p. 211]

There is another face to this moral dimension in the 1774 Life Assurance Act: what made a policy legitimate rather than “a mischievous kind of gaming” was that the policy-holder had to have an interest in the event against which the policy-holder was taking insurance: the holder should stand to lose, financially or otherwise, if the event were to happen. In this respect, the Act was referring back to the principle of the aleatory contract, while cleansing life-insurance of the taint of gambling.

Today’s National Lottery has posed similar questions in the mind of at least one of my interviewees:

Peter J

interviewer: *Right, so what are your feelings about, do you think more should go to charity?*

Yes, I do. I would have preferred to have seen the Richard Branson no-profit style of lottery. . . Patently, even Branson was going to have to make something out of it because I don’t believe anybody does anything for nothing very much, but there’s a world of difference between that and, as I’ve said earlier this almost obscene level of profit being made out of a business that just couldn’t fail. There was no risk element in setting up a lottery, there is no risk in that.

This view concerns the institution of the Lottery rather than its players, but there is something of this attitude that comes across in other areas of Lottery play.

## 6.2 LUCK, MORAL AND OTHERWISE

May one’s moral standing be subject to luck? This question reprises the apparent contradiction inhering in the notion of charitable gambling. And it is no



accident that these two problematic couplets, charity and gambling on the one hand and morality and luck on the other, evoke similar phenomenological trajectories: at a first glance they seem at best contradictory,<sup>1</sup> at a second glance they reveal some interesting affinities, and on the third they open out into some very deep and interesting challenges to conceptions of morality.

The conjunction of morality and luck seems wrong because the separation of the two seems natural. In philosophy, there is a long-standing view of morality that sees virtue as something that either grants immunity from luck or something that is characterized by such an immunity. This view, exemplified by Kant, holds that “the disposition to correct moral judgement, and the objects of such judgement, are... free from external contingency, for both are, in their related ways, the product of the unconditioned will.” [231, p. 20]. This belief in the immunity of morality to luck is attractive because it “has an ultimate form of justice at its heart... it offers an inducement, a solace to a sense of the world’s unfairness” [231, p. 21]. Immunity to luck allows a moral environment of equality, in much the same way that, as I discussed in chapter 4, immunity to consequence allows play to offer the promise of equality: “If morality is immune to luck then the option of being moral is open to everybody everywhere and furthermore, it is open to everybody *equally*” [210, p. 2]. Immunity to luck also sits well with questions of just desert: a just justice would not judge people on the basis of a ‘natural lottery’ of factors that are beyond their control.

But immunity from luck proves to be a problematic ground upon which to build a moral philosophy: luck is a “curious and treacherous concept” [120, p. 79], not least because one’s individual capacity to make judgements free from contingency is a matter of luck itself. Luck-free morality is an attractive notion, but it is also bound, as Bernard Williams notes [231, p. 22], to be a disappointed aspiration. Hurley suggests that a “thick” conception of luck – one which may be applied to judgements about what one is responsible for – should be replaced with a “thin” conception:

Thin luck is simply the inverse correlate of responsibility, in the

1. Margaret Coyne Walker: “The very idea of ‘moral luck’ cannot fail to engage our interest, if only because some of us are astonished at the very idea” [48, p. 319].

full-blooded sense that licenses and is implied by praise, blame, moral assessment, moral accountability, and resentment and other reactive attitudes. What is a matter of thin luck for agent is just what he is not responsible for, and what he is responsible for is not a matter of thin luck for him. Thin luck is just the absence or negation of whatever it is that makes for responsibility. [120, p. 80]

I have already discussed the potential that the Lottery holds for thinking about questions of luck in chapter 5. The question of deserving luck appears frequently also when jackpot winners are discussed. An example, from the USA:

On Wednesday morning in Lincoln, Neb., after four days of speculation about who had won the biggest jackpot in Powerball history, eight employees of a ConAgra ham processing plant came forward and identified themselves as the winners of the \$365 million purse. As lottery stories go, this is about as heartwarming as it gets. Two of the winners are immigrants from Vietnam and one is a political refugee from the Republic of Congo – and all worked the second and third shifts, some clocking as many as 70 hours a week. There is probably no jobsite as gruesome as a meatpacking house. If anyone deserves an express ticket to a new life, it's these folks. [39]

Winners who seem to have no need of the money tend to be treated with a sort of amusement. A celebrated case at the end of 1998 was when an aunt of the then leader of the Conservative Party, William Hague, won a share of the jackpot worth £856,648. Under the headline *Hague's Aunt Fleeces National Lottery*, the BBC reported:

The aunt of Conservative leader William Hague is celebrating her £856,648 National Lottery win - and plans to buy a prize ram for her Yorkshire farm.

[inset: Mike McKay hears Tony Blair wish it was HIS auntie]

Marjorie Longdin, 73, only realised she had hit the jackpot when she was reading *The Yorkshire Post* on Thursday morning, after Wednesday night's draw.

After finding she had four numbers, she was looking forward to putting her winnings towards the cost of Christmas.

[image: William Hague: Delighted for his aunt]

When she matched all six, she could only utter: "Oh my god, I've got the lot."

"I just went all shaky," she told BBC Radio 5 Live.

Her nephew William congratulated her good fortune. "It's very good, very funny," he said.

Asked if he would benefit too, he laughed: "We are a good Yorkshire family so I don't expect to see any of this money from Auntie Marjorie." [9]

This subject appeared often in my interviews, with a similar humorous tone:

Karen B Well she won, what was it? a million or something? and I think good luck to her. There's others who could do with the money more, and what... she's pretty old, so she won't get so much enjoyment as someone else. Like me for instance. [laughs]

On the other hand, some characters who have won the jackpot have become folk models of someone who does not deserve the good luck they have received. These are typically winners with a criminal past, who continue to behave badly, but on a grander scale, after their win. One in particular, Michael Carroll, self proclaimed "King of the Chavs" [54] appears frequently in news items since winning £9.7 million in 1002.

Another group who attract attention for their Lottery play are the unemployed. There is much evidence that unemployed people are one of the groups that is most at risk of suffering from gambling-related problems [92, \$17.35].

And I came across many stories of this kind, both in interviews, and in casual conversations about the Lottery:

Beth W It's a big council estate on the outskirts of Poole, and a lot of people there are unemployed and single parents, living on benefits and that sort of thing... Sort of every other house has a social worker visiting...

And they were saying they were in the post office on Turlin Moor on a Thursday or whatever it is when they all get their cheques from the social-security and they were saying the number of people that were cashing the benefit and just spending that money on lottery tickets.

And I thought, I thought that's terrible. Because I've worked with families there and know, you know, half the time the children don't get fed and everything... and, you know, I just thought that was terrible.

And as I say, if it was... hopefully for me... that I had a choice between buying a lottery ticket and food for my children, I would buy food for my children.

Rather like the "lotto louts", these accounts seem to be a kind of shared Lottery folk-form. The story usually has the same basic structure. There is always the reflection upon "if it were me", and this seems to be the basic point of the story: it is a sort of inverse form of the jackpot fantasy.

### 6.3 THE GIFT ECONOMY

The obverse of "I would buy food for my children" is what I would buy for them if I were lucky enough to win the jackpot. The extensive fantasies that people have about this constitute a sort of charity in itself, an imaginary act of care towards others for whom one has a particular bond.

The gift – the basis of charitability – has been understood in the canons of anthropology and sociology as one of the fundamental aspects of human

societies. It is one of the conceptual mainstays, in particular, of structural anthropology and anthropology. For Mauss, a study of the gift requires “a return to the old and elemental” [153, p. 67], and Lévi-Strauss elevated this elemental conception to the dignity of a universal structural principle of reciprocity. Gift giving as a means of social reproduction was, for him, characteristic not only of simple societies but also of contemporary advanced capitalist societies. Gift giving at Christmas in North America finds its analogue in that of Native Americans’ potlatch ritual. The function of the gift is social control: the apparent generosity of the potlatch giver is rewarded by the obligation engendered in the recipient.

The disposition to return to the elemental – elementarism in the coinage of Ekeh – goes hand in hand with the assumption that there are universal and invariant laws permeating all levels of generality and degrees of complexity of human life [76, p. 128]. To understand these laws requires the examination of “reduced models” of society in order to separate out what is essential from those cultural layers of the non-essential that build up during the development of a society. Because of the principle of universality, the data reduction method used by the structuralist involves examining in all of its detail the simplest forms of society, where laws may be found in their purest form. This move is methodological, but it also carries a normative load as well: Mauss says of the gift, that returning to the elemental

... we shall discover those motives of action still remembered by many societies and classes: they joy of giving in public, the delight in generous artistic expenditure, the pleasure of hospitality in the public or private feast. Social Insurance, solicitude in mutuality or co-operation, in the professional group and all those moral persons called Friendly Societies, are better than the mere personal security guaranteed by the nobleman to his tenant, better than the mean life afforded by the daily wage handed out by managements, and better even than the uncertainty of capitalist savings. [153, p. 67]

Aside from methodological critiques of structuralism, it is difficult to have it

save the appearances of some aspects of contemporary society. It is questionable whether the gift's ability to foster social ties is as appropriate in complex societies as it is in simple ones. As Cheal remarks "achieving control over others by overwhelming them with gifts is likely to be found on a large scale only where more effective forms of domination do not exist" [40, p. 3]. Furthermore, the more complex the society, the more difficult it is to sustain the universality – and indeed the elementality – of the gift, and the more compelling it becomes to maintain the specificity of particular forms and contents of gift-giving.

In *The Social Psychology of the Gift* [194], Schwartz suggests that gift-giving may be seen as a kind of play. The rules of irrelevance that are central to play, that "the content of the game, as that of sociability must be 'self-sufficient' or irrelevant to the relationship between players in non-game encounters." [p. 1]. The maintenance of this rule, he says, is particularly important for gift-giving, since "an excessive display of pleasure or displeasure would affront the giver, violate the Rule of Irrelevance, and take the entire encounter out of the sphere of 'pure' sociability. He also speaks of gift-giving as a means of "free-associating about the recipient in his presence, and sometimes in the presence of others" [p. 2].

Cheal suggests a way of reformulating the concept of the gift is to look at it from the perspective of the social reproduction of intimacy [40, p. 151]; and to consider it in the context of a "moral economy", rather than an a purely economic one. In his view, as with Schwartz, gifts are playful, and they are also small-scale and intimate:

Gift transactions do not have as their principal purpose the re-distribution of resources. They are, for the most part, redundant transactions that are used in the ritual construction of small social worlds. [40, p. 11]

The subjunctive quality of the Lottery – that it is more about imaginary situations than it is about concrete ones – allows it much scope for these kinds of transaction. It can be found in the fantasies that people have about what they would do with the jackpot money, most of which centre around their family, friends and colleagues. Much of the work done in these kinds of thoughts seems

to be a kind of classification of nearer and closer groups:

Elaine D

interviewer: *Why do you have syndicates?*

Well just because you'd win within that group, it's just a fun thing to do as a group.

interviewer: *So it's something to do with...*

With the groupness. Yeah, it'd be nice if you win, if all your colleagues win.

interviewer: *So what if you win with your individual...*

Oh if I win with my individual... Yeah, because that group is, sort of the family group benefits from that.

interviewer: *Oh I see, so there's always a group, but it could be a different group.*

It could be a different group. Yeah.

interviewer: *You've got three syndicates and your family group, if one wins then the others kind of lose in some sense...*

No, no, as I say, my individual ticket is... my family group will win.

Deep and meaningful, you've got me thinking now. But that's it, yeah. But then if they win in the office group then it would still be by my family that would benefit.

The choosing of numbers is well-known to be very important for many Lottery players. While many profess that it is not a superstition, but a mere mnemonic, birthdays of family members appear very frequently amongst the choices of numbers, and they carry some significance. This is illustrated by one of my interviewees [interview: Mandy W], who, having separated from her husband, was desperate to remove his birthday from her Lottery numbers. She was troubled by this for nearly two years. It was not until the death of her grand-

mother that she felt able to replace his birthday with hers, as a commemoration of her life.

#### 6.4 SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

The “synergistic” relationship that Douglas divines between casual charitable giving and long-odds, small-stake gambling, is in part due to demographic correlations between the two activities, and in part due to psychological correlates between them [67, p. 69, 82].

But beyond the fact that there is some similarity between the size and style of the spend in both cases, there is a cluster of aspects of playing the Lottery that encompass gambling, charity and work. They may be gathered together under the expression “something for nothing”, which captures something fundamental about the Lottery. In its pure form gambling involves gain without work – something for nothing – and charity involves giving (or receiving) with no work expected by the actors. These pure forms of the two are tempered by aspects that make something out of the ‘nothing’. Some forms of gambling involve work: the studying of form, card-counting, the face-work of poker, for example. Likewise, charity is most often not quite pure: the giver may gain something: absence of guilt, satisfaction of the demands of sense that it involves a reciprocal arrangement of somethings for duty, even tax relief. An analysis of altruism from the standpoint of utility shows that it could just as easily be called self-interest. Gary Becker, for example, in his *Treatise on the Family*, argues that altruism is generally considered important within the family, but that that altruism of parents towards their children is a calculative economic act. Parents, he claims, invest in their children to improve their own prospects on retirement. Since they cannot legally enforce future financial assistance from their children, they act altruistically towards them to secure an emotional debt [12, p. 277-]. Charity seems to differ from gambling in the nothing: *giving* something for nothing and *receiving* something for nothing. But even here, a similarity may be found if one considers the loser as well as the winner, for the gambling loser, whether an individual, a group of individuals (those who do not win lottery



prizes, for example) or an organization (such as a casino), does indeed give away something for nothing as well.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

What speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event, the untoward, the extra-ordinary: the front-page splash, the banner headlines... What's really going on, what we're experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of... what happens every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?

—George Perec, *Approaches to What?* [173, p. 204–205]

The contribution of this thesis is to the sociology of gambling. It uncovers new facts in the form of empirical data and historical evidence, to which it applies and extends existing theories of gambling and play. It advances a synoptic understanding of the subject matter that encompasses not only social aspects gambling, but also economic rationality and charitable giving. It addresses these issues with a distinctively sociological style of reasoning.

It is impossible to avoid playing the Lottery; one might refuse to play, but there is always the chance that others may buy one tickets as gifts. On two occasions since I began this research, I have been given two lottery tickets and one a scratchcard as gifts. I have been lucky: I have won £15.00. And I have, in my view, been lucky that I have not won the jackpot. Even had I not been bought these tickets, I would still not find it possible to avoid being touched by the Lottery. Rather like the system of fashion, there is no escape from the Lottery, for there is always the possibility that someone close to me who does play will win a large amount. And I must confess that I have occasionally enjoyed such a fantasy. One might say that the lottery is a *memento* of one's

inescapable membership of society. It is, of course, not unique in this respect. But the real interest in the Lottery is that, for all the apparent brashness of its marketing, the tawdriness of the kinds of fantasies that it seems to evoke, and its apparent exploitation of base desires for material gain at little cost, there is something extraordinarily and compellingly resonant about it. It is also a surprisingly subtle phenomenon. As I have noted many times in this thesis, most of the play of the Lottery happens somewhere other than in the game itself. The Lottery seems to disappear into the general content of everyday life. It makes its appearances, but those appearances are only fragmentary and fleeting. Furthermore, it only seems to make its presence known in the context of something else. On the face of it, this assertion may seem strange. But, as I have shown in different parts of this thesis the actual play of the Lottery is, for its ordinary players, only incidental.

Naturally, this raises the question of whether one ought to study such an evanescent object. Evanescence itself may be interesting, as Freud's theory of neurosis and Marxian theories of ideology show. But to apply the one or the other of these theories to the Lottery, as some have indeed done, would be to suggest that the truth of the Lottery is behind those few handles it gives us to grasp it: the Lottery would be a signifier for something else, something latent and repressed.

But it is possible to look at the Lottery from another perspective. One could find in the Lottery something that the novelist Georges Perec calls the "infra-ordinary": it passes through the mundane and back out into the extraordinary, through the smallest scale of individual life to the largest scale of historical social processes. It is what Simmel called a "microscopic-molecular process", for the practices of the Lottery are able "more readily to give us access to how we experience society in our everyday existence than will the study of 'major organizational systems'" [90, p. 11].

It was not always like this. One of the most striking difference between the lotteries of the eighteenth century and those of today is the stage upon which they are set. There are public aspects to the lotteries of both periods, but they are very different kinds of public-ness. The extraordinary ferment

of the draws of the 1700s has been replaced by managed television spectacle. When one attends the lottery draw show in the BBC television studio, as with all such programmes, the entire experience is choreographed, the audience is warmed up, and instructed when to cheer.<sup>1</sup> The potential that the draws of the eighteenth century had to become an arena for dissent, or indeed mere affray, has all but disappeared. Recently, the fathers' activist group Fathers 4 Justice staged a protest on the Saturday *National Lottery: Jet Set* programme [10]; a spokesman for the organization said, "The lottery is a metaphor for what can happen to any parent, mother or father, and their children, at the hands of the secret family courts". But it was a small-scale, rather desultory affair.

In terms of playing, the Lottery has, rather, become privatized: while it has its public aspect in the capital projects that it funds, the essence of the Lottery for its players is to do with their own lives. In all of the different aspects covered in this thesis, we might say, following Abt and McGurrian that gambling is a social structure which sits between the individual and chance, and which, while it has no ability to manage the randomness of life, "it does change the individual's interpretation of that outcome" [1, p. 414]. Perhaps more so than ever, if we concur with Ulrich Beck [11], individuals are confronted with new, unbounded risks. Gambling, Abt and McGurrian suggest is able to supply a cultural means of adding a bound to those risks:

The cultural values of a society influence our decisions to define the uncertain outcomes of life situations as either games or real, as dangerous or exciting, as rational or foolish. [1, p. 414]

In this respect, it is no surprise that the predominant attitudes to the Lottery are individualized and privatized, for, in the same way that, as the Rothschild Report noted, there will be no more philanthropers in quite the same way as those of the late-Victorian period, the time between the two great periods of state lotteries in the UK has also witnessed what Richard Sennett described as a "fall of public man" [197]: a decline in the living of one's life on the public stage.

1. For some accounts of attending the draw, see Atherton's *Gambling: A Story of Triumph and Disaster* [5, p. 1–6], and <http://www.myledbury.co.uk/lottery/default.asp> (last visited: 25th July, 2006).

The essence of play is that it draws upon the real world and creates a temporary ‘world within a world’ for a moment. Gambling adds something to this, the bricolage of play – its reworking of the world into another one untrammelled by consequences outside of the game itself – is intensified by the prospects of winning and loss. It is possible to make almost anything – anything that has an element of chance, that is – has a betting potential. In 1754, the *Connoisseur* newspaper said that “there is nothing, however trivial or ridiculous, that is not capable of producing a bet” [5, p. 75]. Atherton lists some of the more extraordinary bets from the eighteenth century:

In 1735, Count de Buckeburgh laid a large wager on riding to Edinburgh whilst sitting backwards on the horse... Lord March bet a thousand guineas that a four-wheeled carriage could be drawn at a minimum of nineteen miles an hour. The event took place over a mile in Newmarket and Lord March won his bet with seven minutes to spare. In 1770 two earls struck a bet that one could ride from London to Edinburgh and back in less time that it took the other to draw a million dots... [A] northern baron... laid a considerable wager that he would go to Lapland and bring back two native females and two reindeer within an allotted time. He did so, and the Laplanders lived with the Baron for about a year until they asked to go home. [5, p. 75]

Gambling has a tremendous capacity for finding objects for itself, and this is no less true of today’s spread-betting and betting exchanges than it was in the eighteenth century.

One extraordinary kind of gambling market that warrants further investigation is the use of gambling as a device for information-gathering. In July 2003, as part of its programme to develop new intelligence procedures after 11 September 2001, the US defence research agency DARPA introduced an initiative, called a PAM, where gamblers could bet upon terrorism. This programme, named FUTUREMAP, was never fully realized, but extensive policy documents were produced, and a mock-up web-page was posted on the DARPA

web-site. Amongst others, this mock-up offered gambling odds on the level of regional security threats across the world, on a North Korean missile attack, on the assassination of Yasser Arafat, and on terrorists attacking Israel with biological weapons. Unsurprisingly, the web-site attracted much notice: many commentators were strongly critical, few were enthusiastic, and some were scandalized by the proposal. As a result of this reception, the web-site was soon removed, the programme was abandoned, and the deputy Director – Admiral John Poindexter – was forced to resign his post [171]. This kind of “decision market” relies upon the efficient markets hypothesis: that markets will optimize the information available about fundamentals because it is in the interests of all players to do so, since they have a stake in the price of the commodity.

But one could argue, as I have in this thesis, that the ordinariness of the Lottery player who plays regularly but wins little is even more extraordinary. It seems, by its form and by its usage, to have a tremendous capacity not merely to create a separate world within a world, but to allow extra- and infra-ordinary worlds to co-exist at the same time.

# APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW DATA

### A.1 INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Basic details:

\* First of all, I'd just like to ask you a few basic details about playing the Lottery.

How often do you play the Lottery?

Do you play regularly?

Ever miss a week...(Saturday/Wednesday)

Scratchcards.

Syndicates.

(Syndicates and playing individually...)

Do you ever buy tickets on impulse?

How much money do you spend each week?

Have you won any money?

When did you start playing?

Do you do other things like the Lottery?

What about other forms of gambling?

Before the Lottery?

When do you check your tickets?

(watch the programme ?), with whom?

Do you use the same numbers each time? (why/why not?)

How do you choose your numbers?

\*\*\*\*\*

General Lottery Play.

\* Now I want you to tell me more about more general feelings and attitudes you hold about the Lottery.

Can you describe your feelings when checking numbers?

(When you won some money?)

What about when you choose numbers  
Do you feel that you are going to win?  
Do you talk about winning with others  
describe the kinds of conversations you might have.  
Do you imagine what you would do...describe fantasies  
Are there times when you feel especially likely to win?  
Do you feel lucky in general? (examples)  
Would you say you are superstitious?  
Are some people luckier than others?  
Do people earn luck (e.g. through doing good?)  
Do some people deserve to win more than others? Are there people who  
should not win (who have)?  
Do you deserve to win?  
Do you believe in fate?  
Probability of winning: Do you know what the odds of winning are?  
(Lottery, Thunderball, scratchcards)  
Do you really believe that you are going to win sometime, given the  
odds?

\*\*\*\*\*

Charity:

\* An important aspect of the Lottery is that it is used to fund Good Causes. Now I would like to ask you a few questions about this.

Ask how much money goes to charitable causes  
Reactions to actual figure: more/less  
Where the money goes...do you know where the money goes?  
What do you think about this...  
Can you think of examples...good and bad.  
How would you change the way that the Lottery funds Good Causes?  
Do you give money to charities?  
How often, spontaneous/planned

Do you know anything about the company that runs the Lottery?  
What do you think about C's profit-making status?

Would you play if it was not charitable?  
Would you prefer it if it was run on a not-for-profit basis?  
Why (or why does it not matter)?

\*\*\*\*\*

Gambling:

Is the Lottery gambling? (compare with horse-race betting, bingo, casinos, premium bonds).



Some people believe that gambling is immoral...what do you think?

\*\*\*\*\*

Risk:

\* Playing the Lottery is all about chance; I'd like to ask you about other ways in which chance touches our lives in the form of risk.

Can you tell me some of the risks you face in your everyday life?  
What about things like BSE...?  
How do you deal with risk?

## A.2 SAMPLE INTERVIEW

number: 7  
name: Helen S  
location: Pippins  
age: 40  
gender: f  
marital: s  
children: 1  
occupation: NVQ co-ordinator. managerial.  
income: 23,000  
education: diploma health and community studies  
emic-class: middle by profession. working culturally. background  
"definitely" working  
religion: practising Christian (CE). Sunday school teacher.  
initial impressions: Loads of good stuff about budgeting, charity.  
Being a Christian. Risk in relation to horse riding.

*Can you tell me just the basic details about how you play the lottery?*

Right. I play regularly in two syndicates both through work, both through here. So the Saturday one and the Wednesday one and the Saturday one started, you know obviously early on and we all paid I think fifty pence a week each and I usually pay mine monthly in advance. And then once the Wednesday one started we all said No No No, we're not going to do the Wednesday one because it becomes ridiculous and then we said what if any of our Saturday numbers came up on a Wednesday? we'd be sorry. So somebody else then organized a syndicate on a Wednesday.

*Who is it, because I talked to Jayne who organizes the Wednesday -*

- Jayne organizes the Wednesday one and Beryl organizes the Saturday one. So, I pay fifty pence into each of them a week, so that's... a pound a week and originally we had an alternative to the lottery, we bought premium bonds between us for those people who, you know, because in, in principle originally I'm quite, I'm opposed to the lottery principle because I think, you know, government should use money in a different way and health and education shouldn't be reliant on you know lottery applications and grants etc. but I also recognize the reality is that it does extract vast sums of money from people some of which is used to good, and if its an

alternative taxation... and I got to the point where more of my colleagues were in the lottery syndicate than were out and you know a few things would come up in the paper you know groups of nurses have won... and I thought I would be so sick if my colleagues won and you know they share and they had ten thousand each and I didn't. So I thought blow the principles I'll join the syndicate so I did really.

*So... if they won you'd be... sick, you wouldn't be pleased for them.*

No I don't think I would be, I'd be sick that I wasn't involved.

*You don't think that they'd share the money with you?*

No I'm sure they wouldn't. So I thought, right I must join in and be part of this. So I did I recognized, I thought if yeah if they had a big win and they were all in Monday morning, you know and I was one of the ones who said on principle... you know... so I thought no.

*Do you think, do they share these sorts of principles? I mean, are they similarly compromised?*

No. not at all. they just thought it was a useful way to spend 50 pence I think. And there was one other colleague who was similarly principled and still \*doesn't\* play the lottery I have to say. She doesn't work here now. And so I think i was in sort of isolation really I was probably one of the last ones who wasn't actually doing it. I think most of us are in...

*I'm interested in its social role, I mean, does it work as a way of, as part of a sort of group thing...*

... In terms of our own group? In terms of something that we share?

*yeah, sort of, a culture...*

Ummm... I think it does, I mean it is just one more thing that we come together for and regardless of principle there is certainly a sense of isolation if you're not involved. I mean, you know, absolutely... you know, so I think it is one of those things about being in and and...

*But it's quite low key isn't it, there aren't posters about it.*

No, no, it's very subtle and if new members of staff start you know they get to hear about 'cause somebody is saying "Have you paid your lottery money?" and a new member of staff will go "Oh, do you run a lottery syndicate?"

*How long have you been here?*

Four years.

*So that's almost all of the time that the syndicate has been running.*

Yeah

*So people who come here, someone doesn't say "Oh we've got this syndicate, would you like to join?"*

No

*Why do you think that is?*

I don't think they see it as of any great relevance you know so people tend to pick up on it rather than...

*Are there other things like that?*

Umm... no probably not, because our organization has this sort of structure where you know i guess we have an ethos of caring and sharing so we tend to make sure people know you know the sort of non-said things like bring your coffee mug and you pay your coffee money and you know this is where we often go for lunch and we do some social things and...

*These things are spoken about?*

Yeah.

*So when someone arrives...*

Yeah, they would be told. And they are picked up in meetings you see. Whereas the lottery is all a bit more "did you know we won 10 pound?"

*It's interesting that it is so understated.*

Yeah, yeah, and yet it's not really, because it's you know everyone is paying weekly there is no requirement that any of us pay, you know, so long as you paid, you could just pay a week ahead, so long as you'd paid your 50 pence on Wednesday and 50 pence on Saturday. I mean most of us pay 4 or five or 6 weeks: "Oh look, here's, knock 2 pound off my lottery and they tick the little boxes and say where does that take me to? Oh up until..." So you know there's quite often... and because both of the people who organize the Wednesday and Saturday lotteries are in the main office there's quite often people...

*Are they both...*

... They're both admin staff. And they both keep you know little envelopes with all our names on and little boxes. And we also, when it first started, we were all issued with the numbers, and we used the same numbers. So however many lines that we buy we all know –

– *you actually get to choose two of the numbers each week?*

Yeah

*So how do you choose them?*

Oh I chose mine are birthdays.

*Do you think most of them are birthdays? Lots of people say that.*

I think most are birthdays or house numbers. I think people use significant dates for them: their anniversaries and birthdays and that.

*Right... what about this premium bond thing? I thought you said that wasn't running any more?*

Yes that is running, but it's not open to any new members, we closed it off... and then we had to have a vote about whether we carried on, whether people wanted to re- because you can't legally run a premium bond syndicate. So what we do is on trust we each buy a hundred pounds worth, at the end of the period, and we agree that if it wins in that time we share it but if it's, but at the end of that time it's our own. It's already in our own name. So I've got 300 pounds worth of premium bonds that I wouldn't have... I wouldn't have taken 100 pounds out of my salary one month and gone off and bought a premium bond.

*Without that...*

Not at all without that...

*So it's very trusting isn't it?*

It is. [I don't know what was going on here!]

*So, can you imagine if your premium bond did win would you –*

– be quite happy

– *to share the money?*

Yeah

*You wouldn't be tempted to...*

The other things is that we record the numbers of the premium bonds that have been bought and at the end of the period when the numbers become ours, those numbers are destroyed. But

you might like to check if, you know, I'm quite sure if I won everyone would know anyway.

*I'm trying to remember, I asked you about whether you play apart from in the syndicate.*

Yeah I do occasionally, but it is only occasionally.

*When would you buy them?*

Usually when I had read something about, you know when William Hague's auntie won, I thought Pah if she can win it, anyone can, you know, it's that sort of trigger. And if I happen to be in Sainsbury's at about five o'clock on Saturday. And it is a sense about feeling lucky, I mean I've never won, even won 10 pound.

*You haven't won at all?*

Not outside of the syndicate.

*How much have you won in the syndicate then?*

I don't know, but I would sense that we fairly regularly get 10 pound. You know I quite often hear "Oh we had 10 pound on Saturday", or "Oh we haven't had a win for a few months".

*So this William Hague's Aunt, was that a particular instance when you went out and bought a ticket?*

Yes. And there was another one another famous somebody's sister. Somebody from Coronation Street.

*Is it something to do with them being famous?*

No I think it was something to do with the profile of... and it was just about walking into Sainsbury's and thinking, Good lord William Hague's auntie is eighty-thousand richer today just cause she risked a pound.

*Does that seem a bit odd to you, the logic behind that?*

No I think it makes... because most of the time, you don't go through your daily life, \*I\* don't go through my daily life, planning or wishing or dreaming of large sums of money you know I pay my syndicate money so that if they win I'm not behind. It's not a major feature. I never check the numbers, the syndicate numbers, ever. I'd no more put the Saturday night television on to look at the lottery than... I mean I just don't and I wouldn't. So I think it's about it being bought very much... I mean when William Hague's auntie won, I mean it was like front page news. And when I think it was someone's daughter from Coronation Street, someone like Pat Phoenix's daughter... again, so it was very front page...

*These people who are... the two you mentioned, they almost don't need to win...*

Yeah. I don't think... it's not about need or deserve... I mean I think the... Oh what did I read somewhere about the odds of winning the lottery? They compared it to something, and it was something about the odds... I can't remember what it was now.

*People usually say something like being struck by lightning.*

Yes. It was something quite, you know, your chances of being so-and-so are more likely. And something really obscure like you know your chances of giving birth to live triplets or quadruplets is more likely than winning... that sort of thing. So I think it is absolutely a lottery it is down... I mean, to pure luck, you know.

*So, you haven't won any money personally and you've won a bit of money with the syndicate. Can you tell me if you do other things like the lottery?*

Umm. I occasionally. No. I mean I do the premium bond thing which is, you know. And I, I never buy scratchcards. Never have done, never would do, and one of the reasons for that is that I think I probably have a mildly addictive personality and I'd probably become of those

people that become totally... you know, I have some friends who when they do their groceries they treat themselves to two scratchcards, two one pound scratchcards, but I know that if I once scratched off 5 pound or 10 pound I'd think "Whoah", you know, the temptation of easy money, it'd be a bit like cigarette addiction and all those other things.

*Hmm, It's interesting though, that you know... I'm interested in this idea of an addictive personality because several people have said that to me... but you sort of know that you are being sucked into something but it isn't something like addiction to nicotine, something which is physical, is it?*

I think it could be, I think the thrill of that is you know... it would be quite a... [While talking, she mimes scratching scratchcards] ... one more... I think it would, you know, I occasionally, not so much now, but I occasionally go horse-racing and the thrill of winning, you know and I gamble so I mean I keep money to gamble at the races because that's about a fun day out, you know. But I realize that it would have to be very controlled because I could very easily become a, oh you know...

*What's the evidence for this, why do you think that...*

... I think it would be about the easy winning, you know it's all part of that work ethic, you know, you only get what you deserve if you work for it and anything that came a bit too easily, the temptation to just keep trying to repeat that type of...

*But are there other things outside of gambling which you think you might become addicted to in a similar sort of way?*

No, I mean I smoked for a long time and then gave it up so no, I think gambling would probably... there is a real thrill, I mean things like horse racing.

*So how often do you go to the horses?*

Less now because I've got a little one, but certainly when I was, when I didn't have... when I had more money, more time to you know take whole days out. I usually go to Salisbury, go couple of times a season to Salisbury, go to Wincanton, go to local races. I like the point-to-points.

*Sounds like you go quite often.*

No, it's not. I mean it sounds... I go point-to-pointing so we probably go three or four times during the season to the point-to-points only because... I mean if I had to travel... they happen to be here at Badbury. And it's a lovely day out, there's people and dogs and the gambling and the horse-racing are all part of it.

*Do you have an interest in horse-racing itself?*

I do have an interest in horses and I have friends who have horses.

*You said that you don't go so much now because you have the little one.*

Yeah, because they're a bit of a liability at those sorts of things. When he was tiny it was fine because you could put them in a push-chair and they're strapped in.

*How old is he?*

He's four. So they're just at that age where, you know, if you are going racing and you stand on the stand then you want to watch the race and you might have your binoculars and you might be screaming and shouting "Go on!"

*You do all the screaming and shouting.*

Oh absolutely. But if you've got, if you look down and your four-year-old will be disappeared you know and you can't... it's not a good environment at that age. When he's seven or eight and you can say "well it's fine, you go over there and have your face painted and I'll still be here by the rail and -

– so he's just at a difficult age.

For some of those things, yes. And things like we used to go racing on Boxing Day, go to Wincanton on Boxing Day, but you know when you've got a four-year old they want to spend their Boxing Day with their aunts and uncles playing with their yesterday's presents.

*When you go to horse-racing, you bet on horses could you give me a rough idea of how much.*

Um, yeah, what I do is I have a change bottle you know where you just throw your loose change into the change bottle and so what I will do is I'll just empty that and see what I've got in there. And because if you gamble very little there's always the perception that you come out on top because you very often break even on the day and particularly at local races, at a local race, something like Salisbury or Wincanton it's much easier to predict a horse that will win.

*So you actually go into the business of looking for horses.*

Oh yes, I don't go "Oh look, Lucky Harry" no I look and think...

*I spoke to someone else who goes to horse-racing and she said she bets on horses she feels sorry for... it's a sort of sympathy thing. If there was a three-legged horse she would bet on it.*

You see I wouldn't bet if the odds were really, you know if the only horse I liked in the collecting ring was say... something like at Salisbury you might have only four or five horses in a race because three or four have been scratched, if I looked and I thought "Oh that's the only thing that's going to romp home today" and I went and the odds were you know odds on or even, I wouldn't even bother to bet. You know I wouldn't think "Oh well, I'll just get my return back for that", but then I might say "Well that's about the second best horse and that's twenty to one. Yeah that's sounds better, I'll have a fiver on that".

*So, you have all this change in a bottle.*

Yeah, in a bottle and I count it up... It's like spending money.

*Is it your gambling or your horse-racing money or would you spend it on something else?*

No, it's my nothing money really. It's sort of you know if I take the children to the carnival I'll raid the bottle. But it doesn't seem like real money because I've not missed it. For that sort of thing.

*How long does it take you to fill up the bottle up with money?*

I don't know it's never been filled right to the very neck, but usually any time I go... I suppose I dig into it about every three or four months or something. And there's usually between thirty-five and seventy pounds depending on how many twenty-pence pieces there are in there.

*So you save quite big amounts.*

I save up to twenty-pence pieces and that reflects on... I don't put pound coins in because you see if I'm quite hard up then the twenty-pence pieces never get there and the coppers all stay in my purse and I'm counting out one-pound twenty-seven, you know. But if my purse gets a bit heavy I think "Oh I'll get rid of some of these coppers" and throw them in the bottle. And I'm not sure that I would be able to happily justify, you know, taking ten pound, you know \*proper\* ten pound from my purse and just thinking... on a horse.

*It's funny though, because –*

– It's not the same

*What makes it different?*

I don't know. I think it's about the way you psychologically manage your money. I mean my money is fairly tight and therefore it's all accounted for and I would class a bet on a horse or a scratchcard or something as a waste.

*What about the syndicates then?*

No I don't because I have quite a different view about that; A. because it is a much smaller amount because it's \*only\* fifty-pence, it's \*only\* a pound a week, and I think, well I could lose that in a Safeway's trolley. You know, you put the money and it doesn't come back out again. Do you know what I mean?

*It's almost like a sort of gambling then isn't it, putting money in the trolley?*

So, I see it as an insignificant amount.

*And so, outside of gambling, do you carefully budget your money?*

No, I notionally budget in my head.

*Notionally budget in your head?*

I think, you know, well I need, out of my salary I need this for this and I need that for that and after the mortgage has gone out and after... you know.

*But is it all accounted for, there isn't a... you don't have a chunk of money...*

When I have a chunk of money left there's always something I need to do with it. You know, Oh look I'm a bit better off this month, that's good I can... get...

*Do you have a sort of luxury budget*

No, No, No. I don't put pleasure first.

*Like I think I \*must\* go to the cinema once a week...*

I do go to the cinema regularly, but I see that as almost essential. So, yeah I keep sort of I think... you know I would be horrified if I thought that in a month I couldn't go out at least once eat with friends and once to the cinema which usually involves having something to eat first.

*But the money in this bottle is... just...*

It's change, it's loose change. It's money that has fallen into the bottom of my...

*But it's for a different kind of thing.*

Yeah, yeah. Quite different. Because it doesn't occur to me to go to it, you see. If I'm a bit hard up and I think Oh, if I had a... I'd could go to the pictures twice this week, it wouldn't occur to me to go and count out four-pound eighty from the bottle and say well that's alright I can use that. I mean it just stands there.

*I was just wondering, when... I'm sorry to keep focusing on this bottle of money, but it's very interesting... but, when you -*

I've done it since when I was a student, that's 22 years that I have had this bottle.

*The same bottle?*

It's not the same one, no. The first one broke; it wore out.

*You wore it out ?*

Well I think I must have done. It got glass fragile, it was a big Bells Whisky thing.

*When you take the money, when you raid the bottle as you put it, do you put in little plastic bags and take it to the bank?*

Yeah, that's \*exactly\* what I do. That's \*exactly\* what I do. Why?

*So when you go to the bank*

So then I say would you change, you know, I've got a lot of change could you put this into notes for me.

*And when it becomes notes –*

No, it's still bottle money.

*That's what I want to know –*

It's still bottle money, it's not real money.

*So when you have say –*

– Is this a bit peculiar?

*No, no, no, I think it's quite normal actually. When you have a... you maybe have a wallet or something, do you keep it separately?*

Umm, yes, but I usually only do it as I'm going to spend it.

*I'm just wondering whether you actually spend those particular bank-notes.*

Yes, I do spend those particular bank-notes. Yes, I do.

*And that's important?*

I've never thought about it in this much depth really. I'll be quite neurotic now. I'm going to go out and think I'm going to get rid of that bottle, I'm not doing that... But that's exactly what I do. I raid the bottle for some special money that I think I can afford to waste and I have absolutely no guilt, compulsion or anything else about it if I lose it. I tend not to, so if I tend not to lose it, I tend to spend it anyway, so we stopped at the Chinese in Salisbury on the way back. You know and I'm a bit flush for the rest of the week and I think oh that's special money. I don't change it back into money.

*Do you actually think "This is bottle money", do you use that phrase?*

I do, I do, I think this is bottle money.

*I think maybe we should go back to the lottery.*

Yes, let's go back to the lottery.

*So you don't... what about checking numbers, you don't really do that at all.*

I don't no, only on those occasional Saturdays when I buy an odd ticket.

*You do check then.*

Then I check in the Sunday morning paper.

*You check the day after then.*

Yeah.

*So it's always on a Saturday then. You don't play on a Wednesday then.*

No.

*You don't watch the programme then.*

No.

*Why... you don't get excited and think I might just have won like William Hague's auntie.*

No. But once I've done it it doesn't remotely interest me. It's just...

*Which bit does interest you?*

I think it's just buying the ticket and just thinking Oh, you know... that might be a lucky ticket.



But it wouldn't interest me to think; and therefore tonight at six o'clock, whatever time it's on, seven o'clock, I don't know what time it's on, eight o'clock. Whenever it's on Saturday evening. But then on a Sunday morning I would think Oh yeah I bought one yesterday, I'll see if any of my... Oh look none of them match there's something... you know.

*You look in the papers do you?*

Yes. In the Sunday paper on the second page in there just...

*You don't get very excited about it?*

No absolutely not.

*And you don't think you are going to win?*

No. I think I'm too realistic for that.

*So what's the attraction of doing it?*

I just thinks its a momentary thing when you buy it really.

*The scratchcards are a bit like that aren't they? and you know straight away that you can throw it away...*

No, scratchcards wouldn't suit me at all. I think I would be so disappointed you see whereas with the lottery ticket...

*Right, so it's something to do with the time is it?*

Yeah, I suppose. I mean, I'm not conscious that I think... on the occasions when I buy a lottery ticket I'm not conscious that I spend Saturday night thinking... what can I buy?

*But do you think about it at all?*

No, I don't think I do until the next day really.

*This is really interesting, but I don't quite understand what's going on inside your head. There's something to do with disappointment that there is with the scratchcard, you'd be disappointed straight away, but the lottery...*

I do see them quite differently, because I suppose... I mean the odds are much better with the scratchcards because its a much less amount that you would win and I think that's why it doesn't attract me really, I just sort of think oh well, there's not enough excitement in it to win fifty or a hundred pounds. I only like to buy a lottery ticket when I hear about someone winning a \*huge\* sum of money and I think, oh wouldn't it be nice.

*But you don't seem especially excited though, after you've bought the ticket.*

No, because I think the excitement is before. It's sort of more casual than that really. I think, lottery, oh yeah, I think I'll get a lottery ticket tonight. Write my numbers out when I get a ticket, but then something can easily distract me an hour later and I'll forget about it.

*Do you actually ever imagine winning lots of money? or talk about it to friends?*

Yes, I think, because again, because I think the big winners are so high profile and most of us can name one or two if we thought about it hard enough.

*What by name?*

Oh I don't know... there was somebody who moved to Bournemouth... had a very sad life since [this is a joke] I think but... yes I think because it's at us all the time, you know everywhere you look there's the little thumb sign

*The little thumb sign?*

You know the little "It could be you" sign, particularly if you are a regular Safeway customer

because all the numbers are up there. So if you go to Safeway to buy a sandwich at lunchtime or go into Safeway after work, the National Lottery is just there all the time.

*Actually I just went in there to look while I was waiting for you to arrive because people keep describing this to me, just to see what it looks like. So do you actually imagine... do you think, I'd do this, buy this?*

Yes, but usually if I'm talking to somebody else. You know somebody will say, oh I thought, you know "I thought I was", you know. My colleague Barbara, her husband had four numbers at one time and she said, "Oh," she said "you think, four numbers" and I, I mean he didn't get very much, ninety-something or whatever it was, it wasn't a great deal of money, and she said "just think" and I do think then I think, oh that'd be lovely.

*But you don't have elaborate ideas.*

Oh yes. Not being at work on Monday and you know...

*So, you wouldn't come back to work?*

And we've already said things like, "Well you know, you know, if I'm not at work on Monday that I've bought a lucky lottery ticket on Saturday". And things like... it's those sorts of imaginings that you have with friends. You think, wouldn't it be nice. I have a friend currently who is trying to buy a horse box and she is trying to raise some cash. So if we talk about it you say, you know, "Oh, I'll buy you a horse box if I win the lottery." It's that... but I never think deeply of all the good deeds I might do I think two things: I wouldn't come to work again, and I wouldn't want any publicity.

*I was just wondering, if this syndicate at work won the jackpot, it would be quite empty here wouldn't it.*

But if you think about it, there are a lot of us in the syndicate, let's say there's twenty of us, it would have to be a phenomenally large... if you think of 8.5 million between twenty people, that's still only what, fifty-five... I don't know how much it is... but I mean I worked it out... it's not huge. It would probably be enough for some of the older people to retire on and invest. You could insure against it. Because I read about how companies can insure against their staff having a major lottery win.

*I didn't know about this, I must find out about it.*

I don't know which insurance company, but they were offering small premium cover... you know you take a small industrial unit on a industrial estate with seventeen workers... big win, they could have no work force on... Sorry, I digress

*No, that's fine. What about luck then in a more general sense than winning the lottery, do you... feel lucky?*

Ummm [pause] It's quite difficult really. I don't particularly feel lucky, because I don't believe things happen by chance, I think there are things where the odds are so low, like the lottery absolutely that, a lottery. I think that's just, you know, about chance, rather than luck. But I think most things in life are not about luck. I think they are about design and about behaviours and attitudes and...

*Is that human design?*

Umm...

*Because you are a Christian...*

I think the way, yes I think it is. Because I think how we choose to live is how we you know make if you like, make your own luck in a sense.

*What about fate?*

No, I have to say, I don't believe in fate. I think its, you know, for me, its god-given. You know, there is an all-powerful god that has far greater designs than we will ever know about. I think we have human choice within this great design and I think there things that man...

*Do you believe that there is a sort of blueprint or a map that is mapped out by god.*

Not in a fatalistic way no. I believe the bigger design is about love and I think god is about that, and I think that's how it all fits together. So I don't think things like when your time's up you go, you know, I think people get killed in road traffic accidents...

*And do think there is any sort of moral dimension to this... I mean... this traffic accident, somebody might be hit by a car because they had just done something wicked.*

No. None whatsoever. I don't think god is responsible for man's actions or suffering at all. And I don't think that's luck, I don't think that's unlucky to get hit in a road traffic accident, I think it's the fault of one or more drivers. You know, and I think air crashes are the fault of one or more... and I think some of it might be quite finite [?] to actually measure but I think most of it is about human responsibility.

*I have to ask you about this Christianity because the Christian church is traditionally very opposed to gambling isn't it –*

– Yep.

*And very suspicious, so how does that fit?*

Well it fits like all the other things. I mean I'm a single parent, unmarried single parent and a Sunday school teacher.

*So how does that work?*

[?] church meets people where they're at, and I think a modern church works within that. I think human nature, I think it's far more realistic for me to be in with my colleagues and doing something and if we're talking about god as an omnipresent person looking down on me, I think he'd be much more delighted with me doing the thing that's right with my colleagues and for my own day-to-day well-being and being part of a bigger picture than he would be if I went round, you know, being opposed to gambling.

*You go to... is it a Church of England church...*

And it's quite high church surprisingly enough, it's fairly anglo-catholic really, it's not...

*So, other people, the congregation, do they play the lottery?*

I don't know. It's not something I discuss with them really. I suspect that a huge number of them do because, we, you know, I think in terms of Christian faith, we've moved on. I mean we raise funds by having a... we have a lottery in church, you know, a number lottery. We call it the 100 club where so many numbers are sold and then at the end of the month there's three financial winners. Half the money is used for paying out the financial winners and half of the money goes to church funds. We actively encourage people to buy numbers for that and that's a lottery and that's gambling. So I think its just moved a long way and I think that a lot of the gambling now is about social gambling and leisure, it has... I think there's been a big cultural shift in the last 50 years, the days of the puritan... posters of no drinking, no gambling...

*Do you think there are things that have the same position as gambling might have done before.*

I think probably... I think recreational drugs have taken, you know... the place somewhere now. They're higher profile, they're more easily available, they're...

*What do you think about other... I don't know what to call them... other branches of Christianity who do take a strong moral stance on gambling say the methodists or the baptists?*

Well I tend to believe they're entitled to their principles and if they live by them, that that's

good for them.

*You don't think that they are being too strict?*

No, not at all, because there are other areas where I could be quite principled and I think if you look around there are churches that are not averse to applying to the millennium fund for money to build extensions and book libraries and run coffee shops and things. So I think you've got to look at the bigger...

*Do you think they have to, to get money?*

No, I think it's one of the options and it's possible to bend your principles when the options suit.

*I'm asking everyone what the probabilities of winning the lottery are, do you have any idea what the odds are?*

No. No. I know they are pretty remote, but I couldn't actually say.

*You don't have a rough idea?*

No I don't.

*Does it not matter to you?*

No. Because I think that the only probability for me is that I stand as much chance as the next person.

*What about with the syndicate, that makes you more likely to win?*

No, because I don't think it does. I still think only one of those lines is as likely as any others. Does that make sense?

Yes.

I don't think we increase our chance by twenty times, we have twenty lines with a similar... chance... I don't think we have twenty times the chances... and it doesn't work... I don't think the statistics show that the more, in the lottery, that if you, if you buy more premium bonds you can actually, the bigger your holding the higher your chance of winning. And they've shown that people who've had maximum holdings regularly get fifty pounds back, and you know.

*You say "they have shown this" and "statistics show" where... have you looked?*

I did with premium bonds because we had the information that said with these holdings, the average winnings... I haven't seen anything for the lottery.

*Oh, because I thought you said that the statistics showed that -*

- No. Only on the premium bonds.

*Ok, I'd like to go on to the topic of charity now. I'm asking people a similar numerical question about the money that goes to good causes in the lottery, so do you know how much out of every pound ticket goes to good causes?*

Nope.

*You don't feel you'd like to know?*

No, I don't make the connexion really between me playing and what people get, because I think I play, or I do the syndicate, for me to win. It doesn't occur to me when I play that, oh look there's my contribution towards a new village hall in Bransgore if they get some money from the lottery.

*So if it was just purely a commercial enterprise, do you think you would still play?*

Yes. I don't see it as charity giving \*at all\*. I don't make that connexion.

*I talked to the person who organizes the premium bonds earlier and he said that whole thing arose because of a debate about charity and the purpose of charity... and...*

... and partly because with the person who has now left who [?] the principle...

*So were you involved in that debate?*

Yes, because I wasn't a lottery... I only joined the lottery syndicate probably about eighteen months ago.

Yes. I don't really remember, I know it was debated greatly and the people on principle wanted an alternative. But I don't think that I ever thought deeply about it really. I see charity, you know, I'd done some work for charity and I see that totally separate

*It's a bit like your money isn't it?*

Yes. I'm just that sort of person who has the ability to do that. I see what I give to charity as quite separate. To me, giving fifty pence a week into the lottery syndicate...

*Can I ask about giving money to charity, what you give and how you do it?*

I give regularly to Samaritans and I give regularly to Cafaid and the Children's Society.

*What's Cafaid?*

It's a Christian aid foundation for... it tends to be for war-torn areas wherever they might be, it was very third-world focused and has more recently become much more European.

*And do you have some sort of bank arrangement?*

Yes. And I also give to my church regularly by bank.

*Do you see that as a kind of charity?*

Oh very much so, yeah, because the church, I give to our church which goes to our PC [Parish Council] but it has a much broader remit than buying kneelers [?] for our church. Our church gives as a church to... and there are appeals from the diocese where individual churches are asked to donate.

*And this money comes from the money that you give them.*

Yeah, because that's the church's main income from gifts.

*The church, you give to because you are a member of the congregation, what about the other ones, is there any reason why you chose these ones?*

I think there was originally, I think part of it... The only one that has changed really is the Cafaid one. I used to quite a lot of work for Amnesty, the bits that I could do, so I used to do door-collecting, so I got too depressed...

*Why?*

Oh, it's terribly depressing to do door-to-door collecting for charity. It's fine going out giving the envelopes out but going back and saying I left an envelope five days and they say "Never seen them love", you know...

*Did you do that on a voluntary basis?*

Yes, if you're a member of Amnesty, and I'm still a member, then they buy in a group [?] that rings around all the members and says are you prepared to do three roads in your street, you did it last year, and they give you a bookmark.

*They give you a bookmark*

Yes, to say thank you for collecting.

*So these other ones*

The Children's Society is a Christian, it's through the church, so we do the all the candle activities... I mean there are quite a few charities that I... those are the regular ones...

*There are other ones that you...*

Yeah... the... I don't know how I got on to this one, but there's a college for visually impaired children and I regularly get their newsletter and regularly... if they're doing anything I'll...

*So this is regular, but it's not...*

...It's not...

*...automated, by bank...*

No, no, it's by, you know, whatever their appeal...

*What about people on the street collecting?*

No. I tend not to, I tend not to... I think I tend not to because I think well I've chosen the charities that I give to. You see that would depend because if I had my little one with me and they've got a sticker... you know...

*But you don't feel inclined to.*

I don't, because I think we're so exposed to it all the time, it's not rare now, everybody, every charity has their patch outside Sainsbury's for however many days over whatever period.

*You said that you have chosen the ones that you want to give to, do you feel that you –*

– I think it's the ones that I feel involved in, because with the Children's Society and Cafaid I get direct feedback on the work of those organisations through the church, so... in the Samaritans, I still have friends who are Samaritans, I was involved with them for a lot of years... So I think it's about the charities that you actually, that you know fundamentally that... whereas I think that so-and-so society, I don't know what they do or I don't... you know.

*What about things like the Big Issue do you buy it?*

I have done, but I don't regularly think oh I haven't had my Big Issue this week, you know.

*And what about people just begging... or busking?*

Well, yeah... I'm just casual about it really. You know, if I've just been into Marks and Spencer's and bought a two pound forty sandwich and the ten pence is still in my pocket I'll... I tend not to give to beggars, just...

*Why is that?*

I don't know, I haven't really thought about it deeply enough... Well there's a sense in which buskers are at least trying to do something for it you know, they're giving something back and there's an expectation, you know, it's a give and take thing whereas... but I don't know.

*Well that's enough about charity, and the last topic is risk. We've talked about gambling and luck and I've asked you about fate and another aspect of chance is risk and I'm trying to find out how people go about dealing with risk in their lives, how aware they are of risks and such like. I've given people a few examples just to get things going which is things like BSE, this current thing with Belgian food... and things like genetically modified food.*

Umm I actively avoid buying anything that I'm aware has genetically modified materials in it and that is purely because doing a diploma in community studies I studied genetics for eighteen months and lots of what we were looking at was, this was five years ago, and we were looking at genetically modified... and I think the risk to the population as a whole is too great in terms of... you know, I mean they don't know what the effects are of GM in crops, they don't

know what cross-pollination, they don't know any of those things... Umm, I only... don't eat beef at all, don't give beef to my son. So if we go to McDonald's we have fish fingers. Since the BSE scare I buy organic meat, I buy less of it and I buy it from a very good organic butchers near us in Ringwood, and so I buy less meat.

*So these are all risk-based decisions?*

Yeah. Because like... and like and part of it is I just don't what to eat an animal that's been eating sawdust and another animal's brains. I don't think it's a natural... I don't think that's the best... I think it's fine to eat animals and risk eating an animal in the natural order of things if they've been slaughtered humanely and raised humanely.

*So with this BSE thing, the risk is quite small, isn't it?*

Well I actually believe in years to come we'll find that the risk, you know, there will be increasing evidence that the risk is greater than we've been led to believe. And so I think I'm avoiding that and avoiding it for my child at this time.

*What about other things... people talk about driving.*

I mean I'm aware of the risks from driving, you know, because I do high mileage. And in the past I've done a lot of high mileage driving. I'm aware that I must have an increase risk of a road traffic accident by...

*..But do you actually \*take\* risks?*

No. No. No I don't. No, I'm a careful driver... I don't take many risks, I live a pretty safe life really.

*Can you think of any aspects of your life which are risky?*

No. No. I don't... And there again, I think being a parent changes that. You know, and particularly physically because I'm fortunate enough I've got my own horse and since I've had Patrick she's sort of retired now. Someone else had her for a couple of years.

*Patrick is your son.*

Yes. Before that, I would take risks with my horse. I'd take a risk jumping over a fence knowing that it's a risky sport. And I've had one or two falls, had one or two broken bones. And I know people who've had fairly serious injuries from riding, but I, you know, I don't think Oh this is very risky, but I know, logically I know that it is, I know people who've had crushed kidneys and all sorts of... but it doesn't prevent me... and it doesn't prevent me from taking on some horse and thinking, yeah we can do that.

*So, being a mother means that you are less liable to take...*

... I think it does, I think it does.

*When you were talking, you reminded me of that mountaineer woman, do remember her, several years ago?*

Who died on a mountain?

*And there was lots of debate afterwards about whether a woman should climb mountains if she's got children.*

I think, for me it was more almost intrinsic than that. Because what I found is that after I had a child I actually lost my nerve with the horse and that wasn't a deliberate thing, I didn't have a fall, but it suddenly seemed an awfully long way up and the horse seemed much... it seemed much more difficult... you know... it felt...

*So when you say "more intrinsic" you mean more... instinctive?*

It was more instinctive, I had much more awareness of my own personal safety once I had a

child.

*But you weren't actually thinking...*

...I wasn't \*logically\* thinking, Oh I mustn't fall off my horse because Patrick's... and I'm a single parent and if he didn't have me, what would he do if I was in Odstock [local hospital].

*Before that when you road horses did you actually take risks?*

Yeah I think so because the whole sport is risky. Riding a horse that's fairly... my horse is very fit, so she was quite, a bit sort of jumpy and I would ride along the road and be very conscious of... you know... there's quite an element of risk; a bird flies up, your horse jumps up and you're splattered. And I would ride horses that I didn't which is very risky really. You don't know the horse, you don't know how they're going to respond, so you put yourself in a certain amount of risk.

*But can you minimize these risks?*

You can minimize them by being fit and being a fairly good rider, but there's still, because it's the unknown...

*Do you think it's part of the pleasure of doing it?*

Oh yes, absolutely. Because it's the exhilaration of jumping something high... it depends what you ride for, because I've ridden most of my life to ride fast, to get the horse fit, to have a challenge, and I don't ride as much as I did, but those were the things that I rode for. I didn't ride because I was a bit higher up to see the countryside.

*Do you think people do that?*

I think people do. People hack out, go to the New Forest ride twice a year, they hold onto the saddle and they just do it because it's a way to see the New Forest.

*So you actually rode fast... for speed.*

Yes, yes, for speed and challenge and excitement. And on a very fit horse that's a handful it's an exciting thing to be doing.

*But do did confine that to riding a horse, you didn't...*

Yes. I didn't drive my car particularly fast, no I've never driven my car fast.

*Well I think that's the end of the interview.*



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