

Some elements for the history of pathological gambling





**"I also see fools even more mad than others
who haven't any other pleasure than dice and cards
and who have the illusion
they would not be able to live any more
if they had to go without
and stop gambling fanatically
from dawn till dusk..."**

**Sebastian Brant
The Ship of Fools (1494)**



The history of gambling



Gambling as a transgression and a profanation

In the past, alcohol or drugs were bound to religion and to holy.

Gambling was at first glance considered as a transgression and a profanation.

There is no good way to gamble.



The clergy was hostile to gambling for moral and theological reasons

Governments and the clergy tried to fight against gambling.

Greeks and Romans

Emperor Charlemagne

Second Latran Council, in the 12th century

Fourth Latran Council (1215)

But why were the Church and the clergy so hostile to gambling?

The use of fate in gaming is an offence to God's providence.

The hazard notion

Saint Thomas d'Aquin.


He distinguishes:

- fate for divination
- fate for consultation
- fate for distribution

The notion of hazard is progressively admitted by the clergy.

This will allow the creation of the lottery.





The influence of mathematics and probabilities

The philosopher Pascal and the Knight of Méré story.

When an hazard game is disrupted before its end, how can we designate the winner?

Should this game be cancelled?

Should the winner be the one who was winning at the game break?

Or does it exist a mathematical calculation allowing to know the winner?

These questions gave birth to the probability theory.

Hazard became a mathematical object.



From sin to vice

The moralistic discourses of the clergy did continue in the second half of the 18th century.

At the Age of Enlightenment, philosophers did incriminate the bad consequences of gambling: the royal lottery is accused to enable the ruin of families.

At the end of 18th century, gaming is seen as the root of the French Revolution.

Some games are legalised, others are prohibited. At that time, games kept their sacrilegious aspect.

The development of the gambling industries

Lottery became popular in Italy since the 15th century.
Later, lotteries spread across Europe.

In 1830, they were forbidden again.

Consequences of the 1929 economic crisis

The current Lotto is invented in Italy in 1938.

A voluntary tax

Las Vegas

Gambling is controlled, supervised, and the State is the first
organiser and the first beneficiary.





Historical construction of pathological gambling



De alea.

**Sive de curanda ludendi in pecuniam cupiditate
Paschasius Justus (1561)**

Title of the very first medical monograph on compulsive gambling.

Paschasius offers a medical explanation of the socially disruptive phenomenon and, consequently, proposes a medical treatment for those people who find themselves afflicted by the disease.

Compulsive gambling is seen as a passion or a mental disturbance resulting from both a hot or sanguine temperament and melancholy.

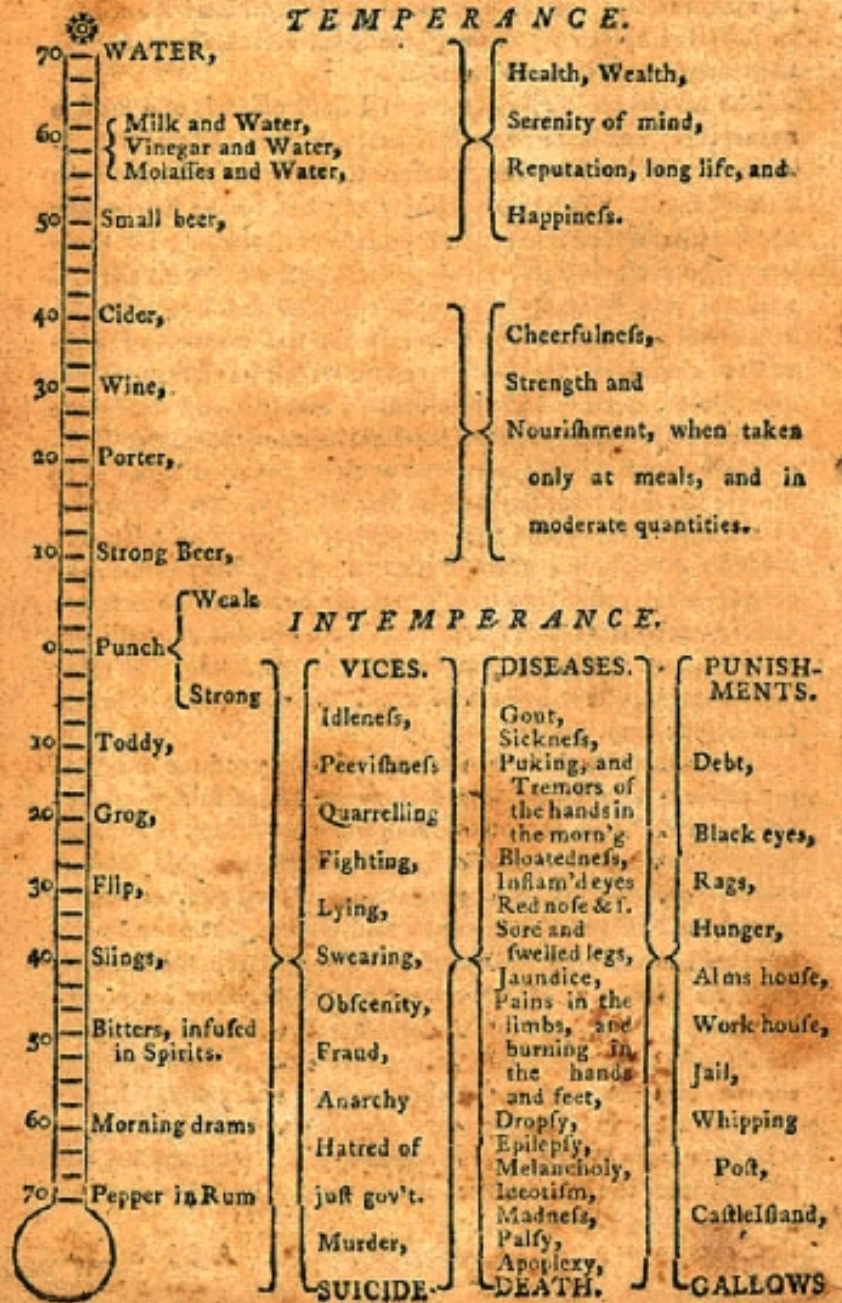
He devises a detailed psychotherapy which depended on the application of cognitive strategies.

According to Paschasius, persuasive words are needed to dispel the wrong opinions that created and maintained a gambler's mental disorder.

Benjamin Rush (1785)



Y2 A MORAL and PHYSICAL THERMOMETER : Or, a Scale of the Progress of TEMPERANCE and INTemperance. LIQUORS, with their EFFECTS, in their usual Order.



The border between science and morality remains vague. (1857)

Clinical medicine is independent from religion.
Nevertheless, some moralistic considerations remain within the medical discourses.

For example, during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, psychiatry was strongly influenced by the degeneration theory of Benedict A. Morel, in 1857.

This theory states that some people are weaker than others.

This weakness is transmitted by heredity. It gets worse because of external events. Social diseases such as syphilis, alcoholism, tuberculosis, and then drug addiction concern degraded people.

Their children are suspected to present even more serious troubles.





Dupouy and Chatagnon (1929)

One of the first psychiatrist text:
The gambler, a psychological outline.

The two authors assimilate gambling as a drug addiction.

First phase: initiation (several weeks)

Second phase: habit

Third phase: need

Fourth phase: suffering

Fifth phase: social fall and physical troubles

This description is very close to the nowadays work on
pathological gambling.



Dupouy and Chatagnon (1929)

In the Dupouy and Chatagnon writings, moralistic considerations are clearly expounded.

Like the drug addict, the gambler is an amoral person.

Considerations on heredity belong in fact to the “dismal science” that had a big influence of the degeneration theory.

Childish or primitive people games - which means games played by children, deficient, Arab or black people - are characterised by impulsivity with a display of pique and anger.

Games played by a higher class of people (in gaming clubs, stock-exchange, horse race) are at the contrary characterised by a cold attitude, and unconcerned, disdainful, indifferent, haughty postures.

The experience of Clemens J. France (1920)

In 1920, the American psychologist Clemens J. France tried to demonstrate that the gambler is a risk taker.

His experience with pupils:

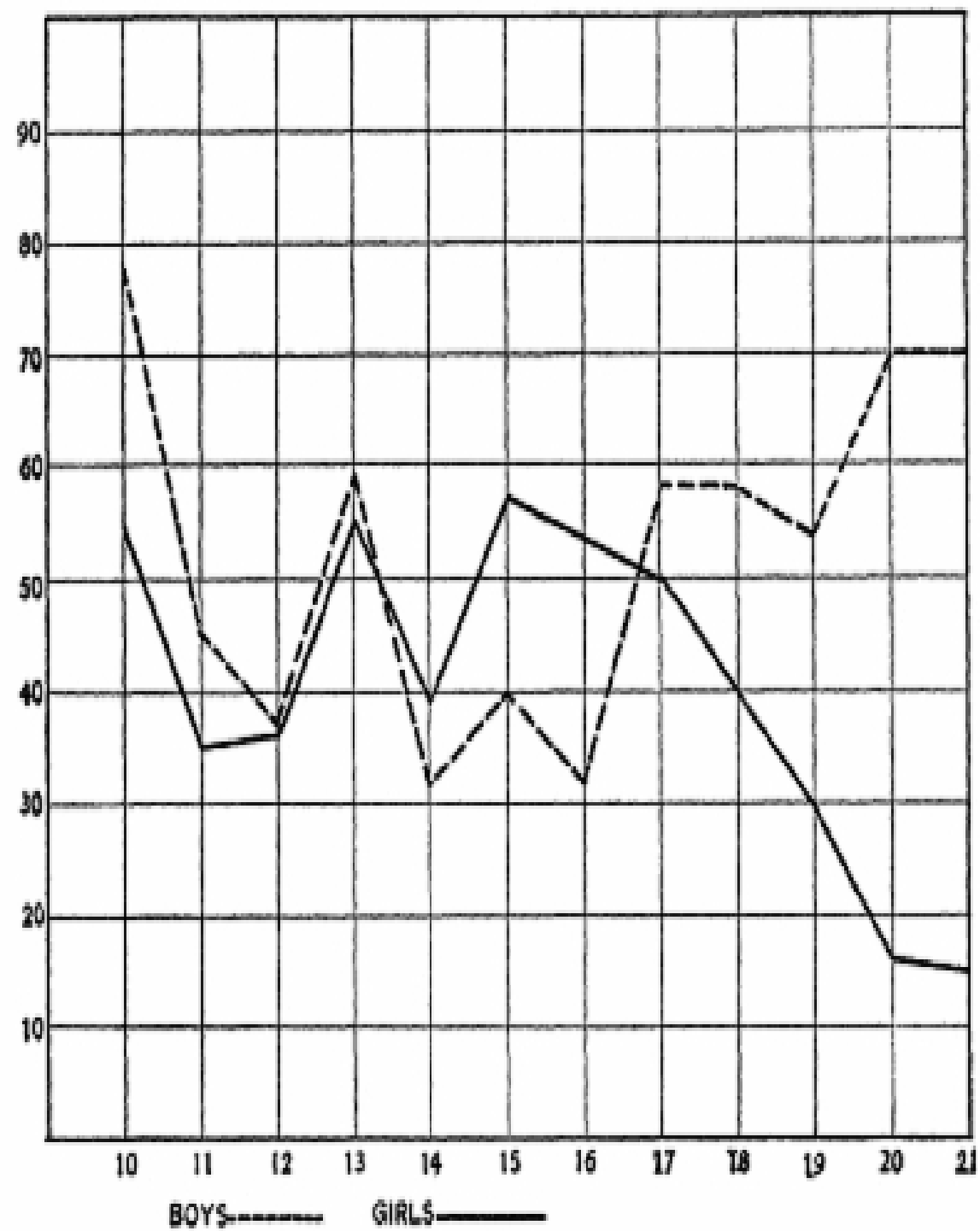
- I am offering you two-days holiday.

But if you accept to take a risk — participation to draw lots:



if you win, you will have three-days holiday, but if you lose:
you will just have one-day holiday.





Dostoievski and the parricide Freud (1928)

The question of meaning.

Talking about risk taking within the game, the idea of winning and the reality of loses, in relation to the peculiar story and the subject's structure.



Fenichel (1945)

In 1945, Fenichel created the notion of addiction without drugs. His theory is probably at the basis of the inclusion of gambling into the DSM.



Pathological gambling into the DSM III (1980)

That's official: pathological gambling is now classified in the medical field as a disease and it moved away from the moral field.

Changes of the social values: from the good and calm behaviour of the past to the nowadays necessity to buy, to enjoy life, or even to take risks...

Gambling has become a symbol of the leisure society.

Mankind devotes 5 or 6% of its national product to the games industry: that's twice the sum devoted to the technological and scientific researches. (Alain Cotta, 1980)

The game as opium of the people.



Conclusion

Pathological gambling is a product of a progressive abandonment of the moralistic and religious vision, which dominated all other explanations during the Middle-Ages.

Though, the religious vision of sacrilegious gambling persists today in our social representations.

Today games should still be moderated. Excessive gambling is still stigmatised.

The switch of the gaming control from religion to State, and then from police to medicine, is also an evolution of the control modalities.





**Thank you
for your attention !**

