

SOME SHORT ODDS ON GAMBLING: A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH*

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Introduction

We often consider gambling to be dangerous in the same way as drugs and alcohol: It is something to which we can become addicted. The destruction and deterioration caused by addictions reveals a similar pattern and is expressed on a physical, psychological and social level. The unifying nature of their manifestation for the gaze of the Other is reflected in the uniformity of the description of their symptomatology. This has led to the development of treatment models which make hardly any distinction between addictions or addicts, such as the 12-step programmes of self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous.

Several questions arise when we look at the addictions from a psychoanalytic perspective (which is the perspective of the subject and not that of the description of observable clinical phenomena). Are different psychological mechanisms at work in compulsive gambling and the toxicomanias (alcoholism and drug addiction)? Are we dealing with different kinds of enjoyment?¹ The scope of this paper will not allow us to formulate an

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¹ We have used the word enjoyment as a very crude translation of Lacan's concept of *jouissance*. This concept refers to an enjoyment which goes beyond pleasure into the realm of that which is painful. In the way we have employed it here, the significations of the word 'enjoyment' range from mild to unbearable pleasure or pain.

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answer to these questions, but we will take the first steps toward an understanding of gambling as an addiction and the way in which it differs from the toxicomanias in terms of the enjoyment which compels the compulsive gambler.

Toxicomania and Compulsive Gambling

In psychoanalysis, one side of the symptom is considered as a formation of the unconscious and, as such, is structured like a language. The relationship between the subject and his or her symptom is central in psychoanalysis. The subject speaks through symptoms in the sense that they are an attempt to address the Other. The difficulty is that the symptom conveys a meaning which the subject refuses but it is a symbolic construction nevertheless and that opens the possibility for analysis and interpretation. When we consider the toxicomanias to be symptoms, then they are not symptoms in the aforementioned sense. They are not symbolic constructions and they always lead to secondary problems which will eventually come to determine the stereotypical clinical picture of the addict.

Our description situates the toxicomanias largely at the other side of the symptom as recognised in psychoanalysis. This is the drive to enjoyment which glues the subject to his or her symptom and very often makes them resistant to therapeutic change. The subject often prefers not to give up his/her symptom. The toxicomanias are not so much an attempt to address the Other via signifiers or symbolic constructions as they are an obstacle which stands in the way of a verbal analysis because the very movement of these addictions excludes the Other. Toxicomanias can be considered to be immediate and radical ways of attempting to undo a lack, the cause of our desire, a lack which is fundamental to our existence and which is structural in nature and which is always problematic for every human subject.

Toxicomania usually evokes the idea of orality as the dominant factor in this form of enjoyment: An enjoyment which is total, which can be administered at will and in an immediate way. This means that it is able to

avoid the risk of the encounter with the (desire of the) Other. This is not the case with gambling. Gambling is not without risk. It is all about taking risks or chances. This seems to indicate a different kind of enjoyment. Strictly speaking, compulsive gambling is not a toxicomania because it is not based on the incorporation of a drug which causes immediate enjoyment independent of the Other. The gambler plays a game of chance in which the possible outcomes are winning or losing. As we shall see, this excludes another kind of game, namely, the game which depends on pure skill or reasoning. An example is chess. The only limit here is one's inability to oversee all possible strategic moves. A gambler is rarely addicted to a game of pure skill. The gambler is mostly interested in games of chance, like roulette and throwing the dice, or games in which skill and chance are combined, such as card games, betting and stock-market speculation.

A Description of Compulsive Gambling

On a descriptive level we could say that compulsive gamblers take chances with their stake out of habit. They learn nothing from their loss, never stop when they win, always risk too much and get a peculiar kind of enjoyment out of this; a thrill. This thrill or enjoyment is very reminiscent of the enjoyment Balint mentions when he describes the phenomenon of the funfair.² He distinguishes between three forms of entertainment. Two of these contain a component of oral aggression, namely, to stuff oneself with sugar-based food and aggressive games of destruction or violence. The third form of entertainment is different. The games here are connected to the sensations of vertigo and feeling overwhelmed. These sensations are based on a certain kind of anxiety: A mixture of anxiety, pleasure, hope and faith in the face of an external danger. Moods and anxieties of that nature seem to express themselves in the discourse of compulsive gamblers when they talk about

² E. Laurent. *Une seule règle vous manque...* in *L'Ane*. No. 27. Paris, Seuil, 1986. p. 44.

their experiences and the chase for their enjoyment. The cyclical moods and the chase for this enjoyment are very specific characteristics of the gambler.

Another characteristic of compulsive gamblers is that they quite often try to develop a strategy to play their game. Despite this they lose eventually and their debts accumulate. Compulsive gamblers never appear to be able to escape an extraordinary sense of guilt, often co-existing with a feeling of depression.³ This raises questions about the connection between the accumulation of debts and this burden of guilt. In his essay on Dostoevsky, Freud writes that the neurotic's sense of guilt can take tangible shape in the form of a burden of debt.⁴ Freud quotes one of Dostoevsky's letters: 'The main thing is the play itself. I swear that greed for money has nothing to do with it, although Heaven knows I am sorely in need of money'.⁵ Dostoevsky was addicted to gambling, he lost everything and ruined his life. The 'masochistic' project of compulsive gamblers comes across as a form of self punishment. When all money is lost they promise everyone that this was really the last time. This promise is always broken and more humiliation follows and the inevitable downward spiral continues. The conscious rationalisations of compulsive gamblers for repeating their game are based on the illusion that fate will eventually provide a big win which will wipe out all debts. Meanwhile however they feel worthless because they lose their stake and fate is not paying out anything. The burden of debt and the daily conflicts of compulsive gamblers can become so bad that they attempt suicide.

At the end of this description, we are faced with a number of questions. What does the stake represent for the subject of the gambler? What enjoyment do they get from this game of chance? What keeps them imprisoned in these repeated acts, this passion for the game? These questions aim at what lies beyond the description of gambling as an addiction. They aim at the subject

³ Bergler writes about guilt-feelings in gamblers in his excellent book on gambling as a clinical phenomenon. E Bergler. *The Psychology of gambling*. New York, Harper and Row, 1957. pp. 96 and 151.

⁴ S. Freud. *Dostoevsky and Parricide*. (1928) S.E., XXI, p. 190.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 190.

of the gambler and the gambler's relationship to the game of chance as a symptom. Forrester writes 'What else could one expect from the detailed examination of the soul of a gambler but the anatomy of a neurosis'.⁶ But what kind of neurosis? Before we move on, we propose to have a look at the theory of games from a psychoanalytic perspective.

The Subject of the Unconscious and the Theory of Games

In the *Ecrits*, Lacan compares the course of a cure to the development of a game of bridge.

One cannot regard the phantasies that the analysand imposes on the person of the analyst in the same way as a perfect card player might guess his opponent's intentions. No doubt there is always an element of strategy, but one should not be deceived by the metaphor of the mirror, appropriate as it may be to the smooth surface that the analyst presents to the patient. An impassive face and sealed lips do not have the same purpose here as in a game of bridge. Here the analyst is rather bringing to his aid what in bridge is called the dummy (*le mort*), but is doing so in order to introduce the fourth player who is the partner of the analysand here, and whose hand the analyst, by his tactics, will try to expose: such is the link, let us say the abnegation, that is imposed on the analyst by the stake of the game in the analysis.⁷

⁶ J. Forrester. *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. p. 260.

⁷ J. Lacan. *The direction of the treatment and the principles of its power*. (1958) *Ecrits. A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London, Tavistock Publications Limited, 1977. p. 229.

game of strategy with an Other, intimate partner of the party who plays.⁹

Freud compared the analytical structure to a game of chess. Although the moves are dependent in part on the other player, the game is, at least in theory, determinable. The fact that Freud uses chess and that Lacan adopts bridge as his metaphor for psychoanalysis is not incidental, according to Charraud. Chess is determinable, the moves are on the chess board, whereas in bridge the players do not know the others' cards. The knowledge of the bridge player is incomplete. Bridge is therefore not determinable and contains an impossibility, that is, it shows a lack.¹⁰ Lacan's position remains, however, quite close to Freud's. He retains the idea that the course of the subject's destiny will unfold in a fairly strict way. But we need to establish what Lacan means to introduce by adopting the bridge metaphor here. He introduces into psychoanalytic theory the concept of a symbolic order which is incomplete. This Other is lacking (\emptyset). This lack is the reason why the course of a cure is something we can account for, in the sense that the truth which emerges in that process can be calculated and located.¹¹ This lack in the Other has been defined by Lacan in various ways. For instance, 'There is no Other of the Other' or 'There is no sexual relationship because there is only one signifier for sexual difference'. What these statements refer to is that the game between subject and Other is not completely determined because it contains an impossibility, or a lack, around which the game is structured. When the subject is introduced into this field of the Other, it cannot be completely taken up by it because of this lack. Something is left over from this division of the subject by the Other; a remainder which is unconscious and which Lacan calls object *a*, cause of desire. The discovery of this object *a*

⁹ N. Charraud. *La theorie des jeux et la question du sujet*. In *Aspects du malaise dans la civilisation*. Paris, Navarin editeur, 1987. p. 24. My translation.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 25.

¹¹ *ibid*

has turned analytical truth into some-thing that can be approached indefinitely; a limit in the mathematical sense of the word.

The Question of the Subject of the Gambler

We hardly ever see compulsive gamblers sitting at the chess board. They sometimes play bridge, but it is not their real passion. Gamblers are more interested in the game of pure chance. What is their passionate interest in this game? Lacan says that 'the gambler's passion is nothing but that question asked of the signifier, figured by the automaton of chance.'¹² The automaton of chance is a repetitive procession of pure signifiers, which have acquired the status of a sign for the gambler in the sense that they have come to represent something for him or her. The question of the gambler is asked of the signifiers which are devoid of meaning. These signifiers are pure signifiers, like the writing on dice which has no meaning in itself. In Seminar II Lacan says:

In the game of chance no doubt he will test his luck (chance), but also he is going to read his destiny in it. He has the idea that something is revealed there, which belongs to him, and, I would say, all the more so given that there is no one confronting him.¹³

For gamblers, the Other exists in the form of a game of chance. The operation of the structure of the game, that is, the rules of the game in their purely symbolic form, produces a subject; a subject of the game which comes as an effect of the points or moments of irreducible impossibility inherent in the playing of a symbolically structured game. This subject will pose to the Other

¹² J. Lacan. *Seminar on The Purloined Letter*. In *The Purloined Poe*. Eds. J.P. Muller and W.J. Richardson. Trans. J. Mehlman. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. p. 51.

¹³ J. Lacan. *The seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Ed. J.A. Miller. Book II. *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*. Trans. S. Tomaselli. Cambridge, C.U.P., 1988. p. 300.

as game the question of his existence: Tell me who I am? He wants certainty and is prepared to take enormous risks to achieve it.

So far we have referred to the Symbolic dimension (the structure and rules) and the Real dimension (the points of impossibility) of the game. There is also an Imaginary dimension to the playing of games. The subject who plays or gambles apparently cannot escape this dimension. Lacan illustrates this with the help of a game of even-and-odd in Seminar II.¹⁴ He wonders what sort of strategy is needed to play with a machine and why the machine always wins. He begins with the example of a game from Poe's *The Purloined Letter*. Dupin, a character in the story, relates the tale of a guessing game. In this game someone has to guess whether the adversary holds an even or odd number. To do this, the subject will take up a mirror position through imaginary identification with the other, which is supposed to give access to the truth by eliminating the element of chance as much as possible. This method always presupposes a dimension of intersubjectivity, in the sense that the subject has to know that he or she is dealing with another homogenous subject. The form this method usually takes from the second guess onwards can be worded as 'I think, that he will think, that I think...etc.'. The game unfolds between one ego and an alter ego on the level of a dual relationship, that is, on the level of the Imaginary axis. This will lead to an impasse when the aim is the truth in the form of guessing correctly.

Lacan proposes to play this game with a machine which can produce pluses and minuses. Now the subject might attempt to develop a strategy which allows him or her to figure out any regularities in the production of plus and minus by the machine. As a consequence, the game has become one of predicting patterns. We are not dealing with intersubjectivity here but with strategic behaviour of the subject at an Imaginary level. This strategic behaviour is supposed to guarantee winning. The highly intelligent strategy of the subject is countered by the idiotic production-patterns of the machine. This will also lead to an impasse for the subject in terms of guessing correctly

¹⁴ *ibid*, pp. 179-185.

because the machine is unpredictable and the strategy of the subject is to predict patterns. The only way out of these impasses is to play at random. That will prove impossible for the subject. Freud has shown us that every apparently random choice is always unconsciously motivated.¹⁵ Every choice obeys the laws of the unconscious and in the context of a game, the adversary (or machine when it is complex enough to be able to keep count of previous go's) will detect the unconsciously motivated patterns of choice. There is only one way out for the subject when the employment of strategy leads to an impasse, when the choice of the Other (machine) is unpredictable and when playing at random appears motivated: Namely, to have choice dictated by, for instance, the game of heads or tails. The only way to play a game of chance is to rely on the calculation of probability.¹⁶ For example, in a game of 50% chance you can base your moves on the flicking of a coin. That is, the gambler must match the probability of his or her moves to the probability of the outcomes of the game. Ultimately then, the game is totally determined. That is precisely not what interests gamblers. They want to take chances or risks.

We have seen that every game is symbolically structured and that every game contains a point around which the game is structured (for instance, a particular rule which prohibits) which is the inevitable or impossible Real. We have also mentioned the Imaginary/dual aspect of playing games which can take the form of intimidating, misleading your adversary or developing a strategy. The combination of this Imaginary dimension with the particular way games of chance are structured always leads to loss for the compulsive gambler. Gamblers frantically push or force the Real out of the Symbolic. According to Charraud, gamblers provoke the Real, the *tuché*, over and beyond the structure of the game, which will provide an answer to their question, an answer which is immediate and as such avoids a long detour.¹⁷ *Tuché*, a concept which Lacan borrows from Aristotle, stands for the encounter with the Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis. This encounter is

¹⁵ S. Freud. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. S.E., VI, p. 240.

¹⁶ N. Charraud. *op.cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁷ N. Charraud. *op.cit.*, p. 28.

the trauma in Freudian theory and is the result of an accidental external event; pure chance. In the chapter '*The Purloined Letter*' from Seminar II, Lacan shows that the Real can be determined in the Symbolic as a point of the inevitability of certain successions of unities, or to put it differently, as a calculation of impossibility. For Lacan, this point of the Real as trauma is determined, but in a negative way, as something impossible in a series of possibilities; an inevitability.¹⁸ This implies that the Real (or trauma) can be calculated and located. The trauma seems to fit the neurotic, often remarkably well. ('I'm not surprised this happened to him or her'). Access to this point of truth, however, often requires a lot of analytical work. Gamblers force an immediate answer, an answer to the question of desire. They avoid as such the long road of the psychoanalytic cure.¹⁹ Gamblers have no time or money for a long winding detour, for working through the phantasy to gain access to the truth (cause of desire) which structured it. Instead they take a short cut, so short that they create a short circuit. Indeed gamblers often appear to be living in a state of frantic activity and of timelessness.²⁰ They cannot unmask their phantasy and will not be able to establish an effect in the Real of their existence. Compulsive gamblers are imprisoned in their passion and they oscillate between anxiety and guilt or loss and debt, often accompanied by a cycle of moodswings, ranging from fear to depression, via excitement and agitation. Subjects who are addicted to the game of chance live under the illusion that the 'big win' is attainable through increasing the stakes. The game therefore contains for gamblers an object (*not cause*) of desire which can generate an enjoyment. The object cause of desire is the object of the stake of the human subject, which must be given up so that the subject can partake in human culture.

¹⁸ J. Lacan. *op.cit.*, p. 193.

¹⁹ N. Charraud. *op.cit.*, p. 28.

²⁰ See also Forrester when he writes the following: 'The world of the convict and the gambler are similar-lives withdrawn from life, a world of timeless crisis time, of the final moments of consciousness before execution or suicide'. J. Forrester. *op.cit.*, p. 281.

Fundamental to the structure of toxicomania and compulsive gambling is the illusion that worldly objects of desire can be substituted for the object cause of desire. There is a marked inability to accept that our object cause of desire is forever and irretrievably lost. In Seminar II Lacan writes:

You mark the six sides of a dice, you roll the dice - from this rolling emerges desire, I am not saying human desire, for after all the man who plays with the dice is captive to the desire thus put into play. He does not know the origin of his desire, as it rolls with the symbols written on its six sides. Why is it only man who plays with dice?²¹

What is the desire to which the gambler is captive in this game of pure signifiers? We know that (symbolic) castration is the condition for the humanization of desire. It prohibits and it makes the primordial enjoyment of the (M)Other impossible. Anxiety and guilt feelings always stem from incestuous desire for that primordial prohibited enjoyment. What is important to realise, however, is that these feelings are not just related to this lost enjoyment but also relate to the impossibility of being able to respond to the lack of the mother; to answer the question 'What does she want?'²² (*Che vuoi?*) Coming face to face with this question causes anxiety because one is stuck for an answer of one's own. This is the moment when the subject disappears under the signifiers of the Other (*Aphanisis*) and constitutes itself in the field of the Other, in a process which Lacan calls alienation.²³

At this point (of imaginary castration) the subject does not yet have any desire of its own, but is *captive* to the desire of the Other; it wants to be the object which fulfils that desire. This is not yet human desire in the

²¹ J. Lacan. op.cit., p. 234.

²² P. Verhaeghe. *Tussen Hysterie en Vrouw. Een weg door honderd jaar psychoanalyse*. Leuven, ACCO, 1987. pp. 155-156. English translation due 1996, Rebus Press, London.

²³ J. Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Ed. J.A. Miller. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York, Norton, 1981. p. 211.

aforementioned sense. In this process of alienation the subject will arise as meaning and disappear as (pure) being.²⁴ This process introduces what we can consider to be a specific lack. A lack which is due to the fact that the subject cannot be fully represented in the Other, because it is incomplete and leaves the subject with a bit of non-sense. Here the subject has lost the state of pure being, but he is caught in a desire to complete this lack in the Other; a 'wanting-to-be-for-the-Other'. The first stake the subject puts up to play the game of partaking in human culture is its being. The subject will have to formulate an answer to the loss of its being and to the consequences of its disappearance under the signifier (into the demand) of the Other. It will have to answer with its own lack through a process of what Lacan calls separation.²⁵ This is the acceptance by the subject of an other lack, which is a lack on the side of the subject, so that neither (subject and Other) are considered complete anymore. The necessary condition for this symbolic castration is the installation of the Name of the Father and now the subject does not need to respond to the question of the Other anymore, but can develop a desire of its own.²⁶ Precisely from this moment originates the dialectic of human desire as formulated in Lacan's famous statement 'The desire of man is the desire of the Other'. The lack in the Other is answered with the lack of the subject. The subject has to let go of his stake which implies the death of his being. He enters the field of meaning and gains an awareness of finality; death has become an integral part of his existence. The game of signifiers is indeed a game because it has a stake.²⁷ It is a game of loss and gain. What is lost is being, what is gained is desire and access to language.

When compulsive gamblers are only able to chase the provocation of the Real out of the Symbolic, namely the loss of the stake, then maybe we can understand what Charraud means when she writes that the enjoyment of the

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*, pp. 213-214.

²⁶ P. Verhaeghe. *op.cit.*, p. 148.

²⁷ N. Charraud. '*Roulettes et loteries*' in *L'Ane*. No. 27. Paris, Seuil, 1986. p. 45.

gambler flows out of the identification with his own loss and the stake is 'being' itself in the sense of *litter*.²⁸ Loss has to win and the end will eventually come. This is the radical answer gamblers are demanding. We could also put it this way: Compulsive gamblers find themselves frozen (like a rabbit caught in headlights) in a position of 'being-for-the-Other' and as such they become a passive object of enjoyment for the Other which completes it. This leads to what Lacan refers to (in Seminar X) as a 'lacking of lack' (*le manque vient a manquer*) which results in anxiety for gamblers (and neurotics), as a warning signal that they are disappearing as subject. Compulsive gamblers remain stuck in imaginary castration and are not able to make the step towards symbolic castration. The Oedipal situation does not resolve itself in a symbolic solution, but grinds to a halt in the Imaginary. Symbolic castration implies the ability to accept the lack in separation but for neurotics and gamblers this lack is unbearable, which leads to a completion of the Other and causes anxiety.

A possible way out of the impasse of this Imaginary prison is the use of a symptom as a barricade against the desire of the Other. The symptom emerges as a form of resistance and sometimes as a true rebellion. Rebellious and agitating are common features of the compulsive gambler. Perhaps we could say that the solution compulsive gamblers have acquired as a way out of this Imaginary impasse is as follows: They install an Imaginary fate which functions as an absolute Master ($\$ \rightarrow S_1$) and which will inflict on them a lack or a loss as a form of punishment without knowing why they do this ($\$/a$). The result is a symbolic (financial) privation in the 'lacking of lack', instituted by an imaginary agent (fate) through a real act (the repeated acts of gambling). As such they are trying to do away with anxiety by accumulating debts. They exchange anxiety for guilt (through the tangible form of debt) because they cannot be for the (M)Other what they think she wants them to be. They feel guilty or indebted and try to pay it off, being unable to do so ($a // S_2$), which often leads to a state of depression. This way the cyclical drama

²⁸ *ibid*

unfolds. Compulsive gamblers look to fate, as a projection of the father, to provide them with a loss in the form of a privation.²⁹ They hand themselves over to fate, abdicate responsibility and their destination comes to them as if by chance (*Zufall*). This goes hand in hand with the illusion of omnipotence so characteristic of compulsive gamblers, which expresses itself in the wish to be master of their destiny. These illusions are rooted in the identification with the omnipotence of the phallic mother, that is, the mother without a lack.³⁰ Sometimes illusions can touch reality. On occasions when compulsive gamblers win, they can become overexcited and even maniacal. Some remarks made by Charles Melman when he was talking about depression seem relevant to situate this phenomenon.

If things are too successful I may become maniacal, and I have the feeling that nothing can stand in my way any longer. I can do anything, and I am very rich, and I have this feeling of possessing an inexhaustible fortune, which is linked at that moment to the manic subject and to the emergence for him of this imaginary phallic agency, whose possession he thinks gives him all power.³¹

These are the moments compulsive gamblers live for, but they are not the truth which drives them. The passion of the gamblers is a passion for ignorance, because they do not want to know about this truth (\$/a). When you take away the game from the compulsive gambler, anxiety often emerges in reaction to the appearance of the Real with the possibility of

²⁹ In his work on Dostoevsky Freud writes the following: "For every punishment is ultimately castration and, as such, a fulfilment of the old passive attitude towards the father. Even Fate is, in the last resort, only a later projection of the father". S. Freud. *Dostoevsky and Parricide*. (1928) S.E., XXI, p. 185.

³⁰ P. Verhaeghe. *op.cit.*, p. 179.

³¹ Ch. Melman. *On depression*. Talk given for The School of Psychotherapy in St. Vincent's Hospital, Elm Park, Dublin, November 1990. (unpublished).

'acting out' or '*passage a l'acte*'.³² Do you leave gamblers to their game, to accumulate debts as the price for their 'being-unto-death'? Death is the radical answer to the question of their destination and that is what the game will eventually reveal to them.

When compulsive gamblers go into therapy, as with toxicomaniacs, there is always transference. Analysis is possible but the gambler's guilt feelings are an obstacle to recovery in the way Freud described in the '*Economic Problem of Masochism*'.³³ However, often they will not ask for help because their demand is addressed to fate and not to the analyst.

Epilogue

If, according to Plato, writing (or language) and passion can be poisonous to man, then the addiction to the game of chance is a toxicomania.³⁴ Or as Lacan said, 'We only talk to toxicomaniacs'.³⁵ Everyone is always playing games, whilst the unconscious is at work. To illustrate this Lacan refers to the odd game in Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*:

Think of that very strange game Freud mentions at the end of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* which consists of inviting the subject to say numbers at random. The associations which then

³² See Lacan's seminar on anxiety and more specifically the one held on 23rd January 1963, for an exploration of the relationship between "acting out" and "*passage a l'acte*" as reactions to a confrontation with the Real. J. Lacan. *Anxiety*. (1962-1963) Seminar X, Unpublished Translation by C. Gallagher.

³³ S. Freud. *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. (1924) S.E., XIX, p. 166.

³⁴ Plato. *The Collected Dialogues*. Eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairn. New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1961. Laws II 935 a. See also J. Derrida's essay, *Plato's Pharmacy*, for Plato's idea of writing as a poison. *A Derrida reader*. Ed. P. Kamuf. New York, Columbia University Press, 1991. p. 128.

³⁵ J.P. Dupont is paraphrasing Lacan in a roundtable discussion on toxicomania when he says "*de toute facon on ne parle jamais qu'a des toxicomanes*". '*Discours de la Toxicomanie*' in *Quarto*. Brussels, Bulletin de L'Ecole de la Cause Freudienne en Belgique, no. 17, 1984. p. 51.

come to him bring to light significations which reverberate so neatly with his remembrance, his destiny, that from the point of view of probabilities, what he chooses goes well beyond anything we might expect from pure chance.³⁶

It was no accident: as chance would have it, it fell my way - Zufall.

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³⁶ J. Lacan. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Ed. J.A. Miller. Book II. *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 1954-1955. Trans. S. Tomaselli. Cambridge, C.U.P., 1988. p. 56.