

# THE GAMBLER

## Romancing Lady Luck

*A Jungian exploration*



**Billye B. Currie**

## **The Gambler**

Marie-Louise von Franz, Honorary Patron

**Studies in Jungian Psychology  
by Jungian Analysts**

Daryl Sharp, General Editor

**THE GAMBLER**  
**Romancing Lady Luck**

**BILLYE B. CURRIE**

To my mentor and my friend, Mel Marshak,  
and to my late mother, Marcella White McCarver.

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# 1

## Introduction

*Under the influence of uncontrollable ecstasy, the players  
gambled their wives, their children  
and ultimately themselves into captivity.*  
—Tacitus, *Germania*.

My interest in the gambler is quite personal and filled with emotional intensity. There is the gut-wrenching sadness that strikes when my ten-year-old client tells the story of her mom's descent into the depths of gambling pathology—the end of the family, as she knows it, and the beginning of the monster dreams that strike fear in her. There is the excitement tinged with trepidation as I watch my daughter confidently place three black chips on the line. There is her sickening surge of defeat when she loses, and the exhilarating flight to ecstasy when she wins. There is the unmitigated arrogance of the loud, obnoxious winner at the craps table—and his equally obnoxious, obscenity-laden monologue when he turns tail and leaves the loser. There is the omnipresent hope of turning the winner into a bigger winner, and the loser into a winner. There is the courage for the coward to go for the big one. Seduction seethes through the sights and sounds of the casino. Lady Luck holds the dice. The winner walks with the gods, a dangerous walk indeed.

And yet, as I become weary of my daily tasks, as my puella seeks to soothe my loneliness and experience some excitement,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Puella refers to childlike or “eternal girl” characteristics. With this comes the ability to explore all kinds of possibilities, an enlivening place to be sure, but which may leave one poorly defined, with scattered activities and relationships. See Linda Leonard, *The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship*.



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I may find myself heading for the nearest casino, sixty miles away. As I drive, I wonder about my trip back home: Will I laugh about the day's experiences? Will I have money in my wallet? Could I return a millionaire? Will I enjoy the people? What will I play? There is the inner excitement of taking a chance and not knowing the outcome. As I imagine the win, my body shivers with anticipation. My own journey, it seems, must include a dance with this intensity, and thus a conscious effort to track the archetypal patterns<sup>2</sup> that form the basis of the gambler's energy. In this work I shall explore the archetypal foundations of both the gambler and the game, following the thread of intensity—from titillating play to terrifying pathology—as it makes its way through history and into our individual lives.

The following story may bring to life the kind of intensity I have experienced.

It was my twenty-first birthday. The year was 1957. My husband Dan, a charming man of landed gentry, had surprised me with a trip to Las Vegas. He had arranged for my mother to keep our baby and we were off. Now I knew my husband was a country-club gambler. He played poker and gin rummy, bet on ball-games and golf, and his nickname was “Big Stack.” The name referred to the big stack of poker chips he had as a player. None of this seemed unreasonable to me. I was a competitive person myself in golf, tennis and duplicate bridge; but I had never “really” gambled.

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<sup>2</sup> Archetypal patterns are recurring ideas and images found throughout history in all cultures. They are reflected in myths, fairy tales and religions and may come to us from the unconscious through visions and dreams. They form the core of our complexes and carry fascinating, numinous power. (See “A Review of the Complex Theory,” *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8) [CW refers throughout to C.G. Jung, *The Collected Works*]

The casino was exciting and I watched Dan shoot craps until he hit a losing streak, gave me a black (\$100) chip, and told me to get lost. I was bad luck. The casino was noisy with fast moving action everywhere; I felt intimidated. I didn't know how to play the games so I went to my room. Twenty hours later, Dan came to the room with a man I had never seen before. His name was Joe. Dan told me to get my things together and go with Joe. I was to be the collateral for a loan because he had lost \$10,000, his entire casino credit line at that time, and Joe was going to loan him money to keep playing so he could win his money back. Dan's usually kind and gentle voice was nasty and demanding. I think I was more confused and terrified than angry. I left without a fight. Joe was an older man and I imagine my mute terror and youthful appearance did not turn him on. In any event, he spoke kindly to me, told me not to be afraid and put me on a plane home.

I was much too ashamed and humiliated to tell others what had happened. In fact, this story was buried so deeply in my shame box that I never told anyone about it, even my analyst, until I began this work. The memory resurfaced when I was researching the history of gambling. In the *Mahabharata*, I found a story called "The Game of Dice." In this Indian epic, the righteous king, who had gone to the kingdom of the evil king to attempt mediation, was challenged to a game of dice. Even though the good king was opposed to gambling, it was his duty to accept the invitation of his rival. As the game progressed, it was clear that the good king was destined to be the loser in a corrupt game—a game played with "magical" dice, perhaps what today would be called "fixed" dice. Although the story has several versions, the gist is that the good king wagered all his goods, his armies, his kingdom, himself, and lastly his wife, the queen. It is said that heads in the court drooped in shame and the lustful evil

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king ordered the queen to be brought forth and disrobed. In her helplessness, the queen called on Krishna to save her from disgrace. Krishna responded by covering the queen's body with unending layers of cloth. The evil king wore himself out trying to unclothe the queen and finally collapsed.<sup>3</sup> For several days, I became obsessed with this story. My work came to a halt. Finally, the untold pieces of my twenty-first birthday story came into consciousness and I began to explore the gambler in both my inner and outer worlds.

Why write on gambling? First, from the astonishment at myself—at my own attraction to it; and second, because it seems that many others would benefit from a more conscious connection to their inner gambler. I have lived through the destruction of my home and family through the gambling of my husband, have watched one of my daughters come back from the brink of suicide caused by her gambling debts, and have seen families of my child clients destroyed by gambling. I have seen and felt their anguish and shame. Gambling can be a secret that devours.

And yet, some years ago when I had suffered through a few crises, I found myself seeking excitement at the casino. I enjoy gambling and feel enlivened when in the game. What is it that pulls me into this precipitous place? What is it about gambling that pushes or pulls people over the edge? Is it a wounded Eros reaching out to Lady Luck? Is it a disabled feminine reaching for her dark seduction? What is this infatuation with Fortuna that grips the gambler and releases a darkness of irresponsibility and intensified affect? Why is it that hope never dies for the gambler? I wonder if I too could fall over the edge. That possibility alone is enough to continue my work.

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<sup>3</sup> Summary of "The Game of Dice," *Mahabharata 12 and 13*, adapted from the internet site, *International Forum for Neo Vedantins*.

Here I plan to explore some of the beliefs and values that have supported the game and the gambler since ancient times. There is an energy in gambling that responds to the worldview of particular cultures. I will follow this affect in an effort to know what it is about. Furthermore, I am particularly interested in how the gambler may show up in our individual lives. Little has been written about the gambler from the perspective of Jungian psychology. I have, however, found that the very word, “gambler,” brings an immediate, energetic response when posed as an object of discussion with therapists from a variety of schools.

Mental health professionals are not exempt from the polarization of the numerous moral issues in today’s society. Gambling is one of those arenas that can quickly constellate a powerful autonomous complex.<sup>4</sup> It is my contention that the continuum of gambling is poorly conceptualized in our society, partly because of the secrecy often involved, and partly because those who come to treatment for gambling have already fallen over the edge. In order to explore this continuum, I will use anecdotal stories with the purpose of illuminating an archetypal context with individual experience.

The gambler’s infatuation with Lady Luck can take many forms. In terms of Jungian psychology it may involve the projection of the anima or animus<sup>5</sup>—the “other” or unknown parts of

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<sup>4</sup> A complex is an emotionally charged grouping of ideas or images that interferes with our conscious performance. Complexes are the activating center of our psychic life. Jung said a complex becomes pathological only when we think we have not got it. (See “Psychotherapy and a Philosophy of Life,” *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, CW 16, par. 179)

<sup>5</sup> In Jung’s terminology, anima and animus refer to contrasexual complexes. The anima is the unconscious feminine side of the man—seen as the soul and described by Jung as the archetype of life itself. While she can be the great comforter and inner lover, she can also be the wily seductress. The animus is the unconscious masculine side of a woman

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ourselves onto the image of Lady Luck. We may also find Lady Luck in the guise of a Demon Lover, as described by John Haule in *Pilgrimage of the Heart*—a combination of anima/animus and shadow projections.<sup>6</sup> In this case we may find Lady Luck personifying both our most desired and our most repudiated psychic components. By bringing gambling experiences into an analytic space, we can follow the affect back from the behavior to the complex, and thus to its archetypal source.

This work will not focus on the pathological gambler per se but rather on the archetypal foundations of the game itself and the nature of the continuum of gambling from play to pathology. What is the unity within these foundations that has Krishna saying in the *Bhagavad Gita*, “I am the game of the gambler.”?<sup>7</sup> Jung, in his interpretation of a client’s drawing, responds to the Krishna remark thusly:

In point of emotional intensity, which is a factor of decisive importance for the primitive consciousness, the most heterogeneous things—rain, storm, fire, the strength of the bull, and the passionate game of dice—can be identical. In emotional intensity, game and gambler coincide.<sup>8</sup>

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and means mind or spirit. The animus-possessed woman becomes stuck in fixed ideas and opinions. For the man, the task is to discover his true feelings. For the woman, the task is to question her ideas and opinions. The assimilation of these complexes is essential to the transforming work in one’s journey to wholeness. (See Daryl Sharp, *C.G. Jung Lexicon: A Primer of Terms and Concepts*, pp. 18ff.)

<sup>6</sup> Jung gave a concise definition of shadow as “the thing a person has no wish to be.” (“The Psychology of the Transference,” *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, CW16, par 470) In a broader sense, the shadow is an unconscious part of a person’s psyche that contains both positive and negative, as well as undeveloped, aspects. Overall, the shadow is a container of intense energy.

<sup>7</sup> “The Philosophical Tree,” *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13, par. 339.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 341.

It is the form and content of this emotional intensity in the gambler that interests me. Where the pathological gambler can become trapped in the repetitive flow of destructive psychic energy, completely detached from the ego, the recreational gambler can maintain a level of consciousness that allows for creative play that is animating—the game is played within the rules.

My exploration of the psychology of gamblers will focus primarily on the casino gambler. The proliferation of casinos and the variety of games they house give millions of people easy access to gambling. Poker tournaments can be seen daily on a number of television channels. Entry to multimillion-dollar tournaments can be gained by Internet play. This exposure has led to an increase in casino poker rooms and large numbers of new gamblers trying to hit the big one. However, my casino emphasis is not to negate the tremendous influence in our society of sports betting, horse racing, prize fighting (all of which may be available in casinos), Internet gambling, lotteries, game shows, stock market investing, and the many other allures inviting us to “take a chance.” The casino emphasis, in my opinion, touches the heart of the archetype of the “game and the gambler,” for it offers opportunities for excitement in a variety of forms.

In the casino there are the rapid-fire wagers on the slot machines coupled with very high odds. One can win millions on a single lucky pull. In addition, no interaction with others is necessary—it can be a solitary experience. Table games allow gamblers to use a strategy and that gives the player some sense of control—a feeling of power. Socialization with friends or with other gambler soulmates adds a reward for some. The casino shelters the gambler from the potential negative responses of society at large. Within the casino, much attention is given to players. Sometimes they are treated like royalty. And then, when Lady Luck smiles, there is also the energy of Eros in the air.

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When you enter a casino, the temple of Lady Luck, you enter it to gamble or to engage in the passion of the games. Today's casinos beckon people of all classes and provide a container that encourages "the bet." The soul of the gambler lies between the bet and the fall of the dice—not on the beauty of the horses, the power of the racecars, or the emotional ties to an athlete or a team. The container, the casino itself, is built to shut out the external world and thus increase the contagious intensity of the game. From primitive times to the twenty-first century, we have always been enlivened by the challenge of having chance on our side. In today's culture, the opportunity for maximum numbers of wagers in a variety of games can be found in casinos that are now legal, easily accessible and an acceptable part of mainstream society. In a culture that generally rewards rationality, the search for the irrational seeks notice. Within the confines of the temple of Lady Luck, people of all classes, ages and colors are invited to experience the irrational.

Gamblers have worshipped many gods, perhaps none more seductive than Lady Luck, couched in her temple, partnered with another god, Money. Seduced into the power of the goddess, isolated from the external world in the temple of the casino, it is easy to become a convert. Governments bless the business. Can our collective and individual consciousness resist the temptation? How well do we know our inner gambler—that risk taker who enables progress?

Who are we then? Are we innocents? Are we searching for the sacred? Is Lady Luck the sacred prostitute offering initiation into an illusion of abundance? Have we concretized our psychic searches—losing ourselves in her archetypal power? What are the societal characteristics that shape the gambler—money, leisure, opportunity, acceptance? And finally, how do the casino games mirror and/or compensate our daily life challenges? Win-

ning is big in our society. It has been big throughout human history—the gods smiled on a winner. This connection of the sacred to luck came from the primitive belief in sacrifice and divination. The gods spoke. In the casinos of today, we could say that nothing has changed. Lady Luck still calls the shots.

My intent is to present archetypal images of the gambler through history and through a variety of contemporary settings that may inform us as individuals of the kinds of intense affect that can enliven and/or enslave anyone who enters the temple of Lady Luck. And perhaps, with a reflective stance and a little bit of luck, we can become better acquainted with our own inner gambler, either as a wheeler and dealer in twenty-first century get-rich schemes, or as a companion in the consulting room.

Legalized gambling, with its cornucopia of jackpot offerings, is now a component of mainstream Western society. Currently Utah and Hawaii are the only two American states without some form of legalized gambling. Internet games provide access to gambling activities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in the privacy of our own home. Participation in gambling is reported by over 80% of the population of the United States and that number includes adolescents. In fiscal year 2003-2004, \$72 billion in gross revenue was generated by the casino industry alone.<sup>9</sup>

There is a fascination with gambling activities in our collective. The very word “fascination” invites a closer analysis—reflection on this energy so often experienced in our culture. Jung reminds us to take note of our fascinations as we struggle to become more and more conscious—to become familiar with our shadow and other unconscious parts:

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<sup>9</sup> T. Fong, “The Biopsychosocial Consequencers of Pathological Gambling,” in *Psychiatry*, vol. 2, no. 5 (2005), pp. 22ff.



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Unless we prefer to be made fools of by our illusions, we shall, by carefully analyzing every fascination, extract from it a portion of our own personality, like a quintessence, and slowly come to recognize that we meet ourselves time and again in a thousand disguises on the path of life.<sup>10</sup>

Jungians have written very little about gambling per se and when the topic is introduced, it is usually in relation to the problem gambler—associated with addictions. It is interesting to note that even in my own society of Jungian analysts, there was, perhaps, a stigma associated with casinos when a decision was made to meet in a hotel without gambling a few years ago in Tahoe. Perhaps this was more about the stigma of a criminal or moral element in gambling rather than concerns over addiction, since there were many bars available in the chosen hotel. In any event, strong emotions do surface around the game and the gambler. This in itself could tell us something about our inner gambler. Do we respect or do we denigrate gambling? Where do we stand on the continuum from play to addiction?

Legal casinos are widely viewed as a viable source of entertainment, attracting millions of people from all socioeconomic levels. Gambling behaviors range along a spectrum from recreational to pathological. Current research estimates that three percent of the American population is at risk for pathological gambling and another three percent are classified as pathological gamblers. Thus the majority of those who engage in gambling activities fall within the category of recreational gamblers. However, the number of people engaging in games of chance is known to be increasing with the ease of accessibility. The high or rush associated with the game and the gambler is well docu-

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<sup>10</sup> “The Psychology of the Transference,” *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, CW 16, par. 534.

mented across all cultures throughout history. Lady Luck with her spinning wheel of fortune beckons.

Within this work I will explore the archetypal foundations of the gambler through 1) amplification of images of Lady Luck and the manifestations of her archetypal energy; 2) exploration of the role of play as an archetypal activity underlying the gambler's approach to the game; and 3) expansion of images of the gambler on the continuum from play to pathology. I hope that in this way we may become better acquainted with the gambler in ourselves and in those around us.

## 2

### Psychological Connections

*Nothing is easier than to denounce the evildoer,  
nothing is more difficult than to understand him.*

—Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881).

#### Jung and Jungians

One of the few references to gambling in Jung's work is found in his afore-mentioned essay, "The Philosophical Tree."<sup>11</sup> In interpreting a client's drawing, Jung noted the importance of emotional intensity, or emotional value for primitive consciousness. His comments were made in response to these words written on the drawing: "Awake my soul, stretch every nerve. I am the Game of the Gambler."

Jung thought the client's words referred to sacred books of the East that related light, sun and fire, as well as the god, to the game of dice. Dice were also accorded "brilliancy" in such sacred books, which, Jung said, related to the concept of "mana" in primitive psychology.<sup>12</sup> He went on to say:

Heterogeneous things—rain, storm, fire, the strength of the bull, and the passionate game of dice—can be identical. In emotional intensity, game and gambler coincide."<sup>13</sup>

The gambler can become fused with the notion of brilliance, enthralled with the glowing, charismatic quality of the game of

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<sup>11</sup> *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13, par. 339.

<sup>12</sup> "Mana is a Melanesian word referring to a bewitching or numinous quality in gods and sacred objects. A mana-personality embodies this magical power." (Sharp, *Jung Lexicon*, p. 83)

<sup>13</sup> "The Philosophical Tree," *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13, par. 341.

dice, the spirit of the divine. When the gods throw the dice, fate is created—as in divination. This can then lead to inflation, a false sense of self-importance. The gambler has been possessed by his complex and acts from a space of lowered consciousness. In Jungian terms, we can say that the mana-personality has identified with the archetype—Lady Luck. When this happens, ego-consciousness has been displaced—the intense archetypal energy from the unconscious takes over. This emotional energy and the intensity inherent in the game and the gambler are of extreme importance in following gambling behaviors. When the conscious attitude of the gambler is not solid enough to relate to the unconscious—that is, when the unconscious energy causes you to forget the reality of your life—gambling can sink into pathology. The gambler is under the spell of an autonomous complex—a split-off piece of our psyche that has a life of its own—completely outside of conscious control.

Jung's complex theory is the basis upon which we can begin to familiarize ourselves with our inner gambler. As we study gamblers, we can begin to think about ourselves. Where is there a similarity? Can we see ourselves in any of these stories? What is it that enlivens us, fascinates us? Is it play, mystery, or maybe risk? Complexes, though formed around universal patterns, are unique to each of us because they develop from our personal experience. As we work to familiarize ourselves with our complexes, we are becoming more conscious—building a more solid ego. Complexes may be thought of as containers of psychic energy. Without them our conscious attitude would become stagnant. As we become more aware of the emotionality, positive or negative, surrounding the archetype of the gambler, we become better able to play with the intensity the image brings. We can respond to our emotions in a more conscious manner. Therefore, these ideas on Jung's complex theory become my starting point

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for exploring the archetype of the gambler.

Jung's pioneering concept of synchronicity is also relevant to the study of the gambler. Synchronicity may be said to occur when an image comes into consciousness meaningfully coincident with an event in the outside world. Jung's ideas about synchronicity were based on his personal and clinical experience but he found some substantiation for this work from the laboratory experiments that J.B. Rhine presented in *The Reach of the Mind*. Of particular interest is Jung's discussion of Rhine's experiments on extrasensory perception in which cards and dice were used. These experiments consistently showed certain subjects were able to identify cards being pulled from a deck more often than would be expected on the basis of chance. The dice experiments were designed to see whether or not wishing for a certain number would increase the probability of that number being thrown by the participant. The results of these experiments were also positive in that there were more hits than would have been expected by chance alone. In terms of gambling it is of interest that the number of hits tended to lessen after the initial attempt, but if for some reason the subject generated renewed interest the hits again increased. The subject's boredom and lack of interest were seen to be negative factors. Positive factors included hope, belief in ESP and enthusiasm. Psychic energy was thus seen as a factor in propelling unconscious, synchronistic happenings.<sup>14</sup>

Such events surely feed the superstitious shadow of the gambler. Jung saw such primitive superstition lurking just below the surface of even the tough-minded. We are always ready and willing to witness a miracle. Runs of luck are well known and often

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<sup>14</sup> "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle," *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, par. 838. See also J. Gary Sparks, *At the Heart of Matter: Synchronicity and Jung's Spiritual Testament*.

observed in games. Gamblers who maintain a reasonably conscious, rational state of mind may be quite aware of their runs, thereby having a sense of, as the song says, “when to hold ‘em and when to fold ‘em.” However, those who are possessed by a mana-personality and believe their wish actually causes the luck are unable to hold a grounded intuition and then operate as though they had control of the numbers. Their inflation leads them to believe they are in control of their fate.

Jung’s associate Marie-Louise von Franz notes the belief among primitives that only the gods can count to infinity.<sup>15</sup> Early counting consisted perhaps of one, two and three—paired with objects. Above that, counting was in the realm of the gods. While statisticians today appear to be able to control numbers in some ways, von Franz remains unimpressed, holding to the fact that the individual is lost in the probabilities of large numbers.

The counting gods have positive and negative poles. Von Franz refers to the god of the Bible who purportedly can count the hairs on our head. But she also recounts the prayer of a West African tribe expressing fear of the counting gods. Five archetypal powers are expressed in the prayer: Death, Fire, Emptiness, Wealth and Day. Each of these powers has counting ability and the prayer asks not to be counted—the tribe members wish to escape the counting gods who distribute negative fate; they do not want death to have their number.

In the casino, the power of counting one’s money, exaggerated by the power of imagining one’s wealth after a win, increases the affect. The power of fire can be experienced in the passion for the game—it can become too hot. The negative side

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<sup>15</sup> *On Divination and Synchronicity: The Psychology of Meaningful Chance*, pp. 26ff. It should be noted here that von Franz was not at all impressed with the Rhine experiments. She thought his use of probability statistics to prove his point polluted his thesis. (*Ibid.*, pp. 25f)

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of these counting gods and demons is that because of their ability to count to infinity, the individual soul is engulfed by the archetypes.

Recall Jung's comments on statements from the sacred books of India that related emotional intensity to rain, storm, fire, the power of the bull, and the passion of the game of dice: "In emotional intensity, game and gambler coincide."<sup>16</sup> The emotional intensity surrounding the game melds the player with the game. The gambler lives the game—is enlivened by it—and may be consumed by the game.

In her exploration of the history of numbers and divination techniques, von Franz sees the archetype of the gambler as play.<sup>17</sup> Within play, the gambler can rely on calculation, as in the use of strategies or systems, or on chance, or both. Calculation relies on numbers—probabilities; chance relies on trust in the unconscious, on intuition, or on Lady Luck. Von Franz relates these two possibilities of the gambler to life experiences. You have the opportunity to use reason to organize your life. But there is always the possibility that, by chance, these plans will be foiled. In games played "just for fun," part of the fun is assessing the two possibilities and seeing which works better. Von Franz used an example from bridge in which she tested her intuition—would she get good hands, would she have a run of good or bad luck? She generated unusual interest in her bridge games by playing in this way with her unconscious. According to Rhine's experiments, this increased energy perhaps added to the probability of her being able to guess correctly.

It is important to realize which games allow for a calculating system to work. For example, slot machines are set to pay on a

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<sup>16</sup> "The Philosophical Tree," *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13, par. 341.

<sup>17</sup> *On Divination*, pp. 48f.

random schedule. Nothing the player can do will change that. Blackjack, however, can be played within certain systems—the player can make choices. Poker, now extremely popular in our rationalistic society, has even more nuances to which reason can be applied. In the end, however, chance deals the cards. Part of the thrill of gambling is the mystery—what will chance bring to the table?

The rituals and superstitious behaviors observed in slot play are an example of magical thinking. The players hope or even expect to have power over chance. In spite of the failure of the ritual to produce the desired result more times than not, the behavior continues in a relentless, sometimes aggressive manner (like slapping the machine). The player is hoping for a meaningful connection. Will the energy put into the desire to win make a difference? Or, will the feeling that the next pull will be a big hit be correct? If so, and the bet is raised accordingly, the hunch will have been proven correct for this time.

Following von Franz's notion that the archetype of the gambler is play, it is interesting to look at play from other points of view. In 1996 an issue of the journal *Parabola* was devoted to articles about work and play. In it, there is an article by Johan Huizinga in which he lays out a frame that defines play and helps to illuminate the edge between the recreational gambler and the compulsive gambler.<sup>18</sup> He describes the play of animals, noting how play is older than culture since culture is based on human development. He describes the ceremonial stance of two dogs anticipating play and how rules are followed. For example, biting is not supposed to hurt; as with children, it's "play fighting." However, play often results in the unexpected. One player is

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<sup>18</sup> Johan Huizinga, "What 'Play' Is," in *Parabola*, vol. 21, no.1 (winter 1996), pp. 59ff.



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hurt, or loses, and the rules are broken instinctively. The play becomes aggressive and then it is no longer play.

According to Huizinga, play is a voluntary and enjoyable activity. There is freedom in play, which brings the ability to step out of real life into make-believe. This pretend world may be quite absorbing as well as serious and can carry the players away from reality. Play has limits of time and space, providing boundaries for this special make-believe world. Within the space of play, order is created and this order tends to be described aesthetically. We can become spellbound in our play or in our observation of it. As play progresses, a tension is experienced; the player wants or expects something to happen. During play, the result is unknown; chance is involved. Will the rules be broken? Will play become an aggressive power struggle? Will the monopoly game be lost in spite of best efforts? Will the baby, with great delight, get her little fingers into her mouth? Play may also have an element of secrecy, which Huizinga sees in the joyful “dressing up” of a child—another role can be played. We assume the role of another—is it perhaps the “other” we would like to be but are somehow prevented from being? Who is the trick or treater? Who has on Mom’s hat? Or perhaps, who has on the Mardi Gras mask? Also, in our daily lives we have many opportunities to wrap ourselves in the play of language. This can be an inner fascination with unbounded imagination, or in concert with another. Levity in our dialogues can enable us to expand our thinking—perhaps into shadow areas. Role-playing can let us act out our shadow—that repressed or undeveloped part of ourselves so important on our journey to psychic wholeness, our ability to meet and familiarize ourselves with our complexes.

Jung had something to say about play—at least the way he saw it in America. It seemed to him that the idea of mere play had disappeared, giving way to the gladiator style of professional

sports, while in other parts of the world real play was still prevalent. Jung felt that viewing the sports figures as gladiators brings forth in the spectators the excitement of “ancient instincts that are akin to bloodlust.”<sup>19</sup> The prevailing attitude was of a heroic ideal—the great and famous were revered.

That essay was written in 1930, before multimillion-dollar contracts for athletes, and before steroids (one of an athlete’s biggest gambles) were commonplace! America continues to admire the hero and many organized professional sports continue to be brutal. In addition, as we watch international sporting events, it seems to me that other countries have been seduced to the same attitude. In exploring play in our world today, there remains Jung’s thought about the disappearance of “mere play.” In the sports world, has the ability to change body strength through drugs injected an irrational level of aggression? Would professional players maliciously kick and maul one another if the games were about “mere play”? Does the continual search for power ignite such aggression and spoil the frame of play?

Certainly today the “great man”—especially the sports hero—receives great wealth. The excitement from primitive instincts and the power gained from wealth are often built around the world of play, and clearly enter the arena of the gambler. And as we worship our “great men” of today, we come face to face with the money god—the sacred and the profane meet. Lady Luck with fate in her hands rolls the dice for the heroes of today. Play on the fields of competitive sports can possess the fans as well as the players. The game contains the enormous combined energy of both players and fans.

Taken to the casino, play can be defined as having prescribed

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19 “The Complications of American Psychology,” *Civilization in Transition*, CW 10, par. 977.

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rules and space. Within this play space the gambler may imagine himself to be everything but the man who prescribes moderation in all things in his daily life. He may be able to leave behind, at least for awhile, the Apollonian, intellectual constraints of order, structure and clarity. Here, if he stays within the space and rules of the game, he may experience a Dionysian ecstasy that loosens constraints and brings the rapture of life to the surface.<sup>20</sup> He may experience a love affair with Lady Luck, or abundant gifts from the Great Mother. It is possible to experience the beauty of play, the creative fantasy of play, in the casino.

Often, in our materialistic world, play may be subverted with aggression and greed, leading the gambler to fall under the negative archetypal pole of Lady Luck. He may be face to face with the Terrible Mother who, in her various images, has the power to devour or dismember. Or, he may experience the counting gods von Franz discusses. Thus the seductiveness of Wealth, the inflation of Day, the destructive passion of the Fire that consumes, and the Emptiness that creates the vacuum within, all give rise to the counting by Death. Then the gambler finds that his or her "number is up." Lady Luck, in her gray hooded cloak, has departed. The counting gods, with their supernatural ability to count to infinity, leave the individual behind to be consumed by unconscious energies. Thus the prayer of the West African Yorubas:

Death counting continually, counting continually, does not count me!  
Fire counting continually, counting continually, does not count me!"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Jan Bauer, *Alcoholism and Women: The Background and the Psychology*, pp. 52ff., for an informative discussion of Dionysian and Apollonian archetypal patterns.

<sup>21</sup> Von Franz, *Number and Time*, p. 217.

This prayer is a call to the gods to respect individual consciousness. In terms of our own process of individuation, our call might be the same.<sup>22</sup> We resist being “just a number” because the number consumes the individual. We experience this acutely in contemporary culture where we are unknown if we cannot produce the appropriate identification number. We have a whole series of numbers with which to identify ourselves in different circumstances. To have your identity stolen means that a thief has taken the series of numbers that are unique to you, usually to steal your money or other resources. Sometimes it is not the financial loss that brings the trauma, but rather the invasion of the sacred space that surrounds our personal identity.

The fact that money has a great deal to do with our identity is very evident in the casino where the high rollers are given special rooms—even special slot machines. In considering our inner gambler, our personal beliefs and values surrounding money become important.

Jan Bauer, in recent presentations on both the sacred and profane histories of money, tells the story of Juno, the Roman Queen of Heaven, the goddess who presided over money. But Juno was also a moon goddess, a goddess of childbirth and an advisor to couples contemplating marriage—a goddess of relationship. At least during the time of the Romans, money and relationship were connected. Bauer tells the story of the Romans who came to Juno seeking her counsel because they were fearful of lacking money to engage their war with Pyrrhus. Juno replied that there would be no lack if the war was “just.” Here, power and relationship, as well as justice, were considered. Out of

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<sup>22</sup> “Individuation: A process of psychological differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality.” (Sharp, *Jung Lexicon*, pp. 67ff.)

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gratitude for her advice, the Romans minted money in her temple and called her Juno Moneta.

In discussing the place of money in our world today, Bauer's premise is that

the incessant talk of money in the collective has not made us at all more conscious of money's archetypal mysteries, any more than incessant talk of sex has demystified the awesome mystery of human sexuality. We all have sexual complexes, we all have money complexes.<sup>23</sup>

Bauer views the sacred, qualitative side of the archetype as having all but disappeared, having given way to the quantitative influence of money in the Western collective. And with this cultural view, the more emotional sides of the money complexes are left unexplored. In a similar fashion, the sacred side of the gambler archetype has given way to the secular images of Lady Luck in our materialistic society.

Again, this unfamiliarity with the mystery of the archetype leaves us vulnerable to its power. In the gambling world, some may see money as the answer to all ills or as the completion of all fantasies. Greed and the hunger for power are alive in all socioeconomic classes. Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian author and notorious gambler, noted this with some distain in speaking of the "rabble" he observed converging around the roulette wheel with the aristocracy.<sup>24</sup> As for the sacred side, we do see large sacrifices made in the temple of Lady Luck.

Money is clearly another god in the gambling world. Significant wealth has been accrued in our society. Jungian analyst Bernice Hill notes the immense wealth to be inherited:

It is now estimated that in the United States . . . the next genera-

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<sup>23</sup> "Money," unpublished paper, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *The Gambler*, p. 20.

tion will inherit in the range of \$41 trillion. We can gain an appreciation for this figure when we compare it to the \$7.54 trillion held in *all* of the United States mutual funds in 2004.<sup>25</sup>

Recognizing the success of the warrior archetype operative in our culture, Hill makes the case for an integration of money with the warrior as the basis for a spiritual champion—one with the best interests of humanity in mind. But with monetary success there is the danger of a destructive shadow that may fight against the spiritual warrior.

As I read Hill's book, I thought of the downfall due to greed of certain corporate executives in the last few years, and the generosity of the many philanthropists during the same time period. One of the real spiritual warriors, James Barksdale, has put millions of dollars into a literacy program for at-risk children in his home state of Mississippi. Barksdale, once CEO of Netscape, estimates his net worth at \$700,000,000 and says he expects to give it all away before he dies.<sup>26</sup> As a warrior, he continues to challenge government to fully fund education. This man appears to have the best interests of humanity in mind. Is he a gambler? Can you reach the position of chief executive officer of a large corporation without taking chances? Some reach the top and are toppled by greed—or by a belief that they are in control of their fate—walking with the gods.

As I thought more about the spiritual warrior, my thoughts settled on William Bennett, and I wondered—I just wondered. William Bennett, author of a best-selling book, *The Book of Virtues*, wrote with the intent of guiding adults in the teaching of core values to children. Then, a few years ago, Bennett was re-

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<sup>25</sup> Retrieved from the internet, *C. G. Jung page*, December 26, 2004. (See Bibliography for internet sources)

<sup>26</sup> *New York Times*, January 20, 2000.

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ported to be a high-stakes gambler, visiting casinos, playing the slots late at night. The media had a field day. This man had served as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the Bush administration and as Secretary of Education in the Reagan administration. The first chapter in his book is entitled “Self-Discipline.”<sup>27</sup> One of the stories in this section is that of King Midas who, in his greed, was granted a wish that everything he touched would turn to gold. This effectively removed all relationship from his life and left him miserable, unable to embrace his daughter, unable to eat. Another entry is a piece by Aristotle taken from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where two kinds of virtues are discussed—intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtues grow from teaching, and moral virtues from habit. Further, moral virtues lie between two extremes—excess and deficiency—with the goal being to find balance in our feelings and actions. In Jung’s terms, we could say that one-sidedness results in neurosis. Finding psychic balance, the ability to hold the tension of the opposites, is the steady road to psychic health.

Now Bennett is not a criminal. It was his own money. Why then would he be seen by the media in a negative light? Apparently he went late at night and played the slots alone. So what? Was he hiding from the public? Did he not believe in what he wrote? Was this a marriage to Lady Luck—a marriage that left him oblivious to the rest of the world? Was there any consciousness of his other side, the spiritual warrior? Was he seeking the spirit that brings to us our authenticity? Was it that the cycle of winning and losing stirred his creative juices? Was it an escape from a complex world of work? Was it the belief that gambling for long enough would bring control of fate? Was it the shadow responding to the “goodness” of his public persona?

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<sup>27</sup> *The Book of Virtues*, pp. 21ff.

I still wonder whenever I see the quiet, expressionless faces of people after the midnight hours, carefully working the slot machines . . . why? This does not look like play, and there seem to be few winners. What is the energy that holds them? Is it filling a spiritual void? Perhaps it fills the masochistic need proposed by Freudians—Edmund Bergler, for example, thought gamblers had an unconscious desire to lose.<sup>28</sup>

Another story of a public figure gambling huge sums of money is that of the golfer John Daly. As opposed to the negative press for Bennett's gambling, Daly is a very popular man—one to whom the collective seems to show compassion. Like Bennett, Daly's gambling sprees reach into the millions—\$50,000,000 according to his autobiography, *My Life In and Out of the Rough*. Unlike Bennett, Daly is visible in the casinos and at every turn in his life he is an open book. Is he a puer catching the heart of the public with his boyish naiveté? Is he simply a revered athlete, talented but unable to reach the top?

Our attitudes about gamblers sometimes reflect our inner beliefs, and at other times simply reflect our publicly stated values. As for myself, I know I must wrestle with many questions as I struggle to know my inner gambler. In considering my own beliefs and values, I wonder just where in my life would I take my biggest risks? In which areas would I be unlikely to gamble? Would I take risks for love or for money or for a special political stance? What kinds of conflicts might cause me to take a chance? Would my gambles be in the service of ego—it's all about me—or in the service of the Self?<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The Psychology of the Gambler*, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> "Self. The archetype of wholeness and the regulating center of the psyche; a transpersonal power that transcends the ego." (Sharp, *Jung Lexicon*, p. 119)



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These questions bring to mind the Self versus ego conflicts of the fallen corporate heroes and of the spiritual warriors, as well as my own. Jung discussed how love—in its wider sense—is frequently the cause of human conflict. He pointed out the failure of individuals to recognize the significance of love conflicts, thus placing such conflicts in an unconscious shadow land. This is an unsettling idea since the unconscious, instinctual side of Eros as a personification of love can be demonic—bewitching and possessing. For the gambler, the demonic possession by Lady Luck is a dangerous embrace. Jung shows us a path to a conscious Eros working in the service of self:

If people can be educated to see the shadow-side of their nature clearly, it may be hoped that they will also learn to understand and love their fellow men better. A little less hypocrisy and a little more self-knowledge can only have good results in respect for our neighbour; for we are all too prone to transfer to our fellows the injustice and violence we inflict upon our own natures.<sup>30</sup>

Jungian analyst Marion Woodman speaks of her deep concern about the destructive power of archetypal possession in today's world. She makes the point that we, as individuals, must be able to recognize those places in ourselves that may be overtaken or possessed by the archetype, and thereby we would have insight into our leaders who have been caught in that numinous power. She relates her thoughts to the gambler who is seized by an excitement through an archetypal god-energy that takes him out of his humanity. The chase, the intense archetypal energy, can create a state of unconsciousness that results in a total disregard for others.<sup>31</sup> Her view supports the idea that consciousness of our

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<sup>30</sup> *Two Essays on Analytic Psychology*, CW 7, par. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Interview in *Caduceus*, retrieved from the internet, December 2004.

personal and potentially destructive energies is of utmost importance.

Another Jungian analyst, Greg Mogenson, discusses Jung's thoughts about knowing the human psyche.<sup>32</sup> He reminds us that Jung suggested that we throw away textbooks and visit the horrors of the world: gambling-hells, lunatic asylums and prisons, as well as stock exchanges, hospitals and churches. In these places, we would experience the passions of life in every form. Through dream analysis Mogenson follows the manifestation of these powerful experiences from the unconscious. He does with dreams what I, in some way, will do here later with stories of the gambler. Whether we are caught in the throes of the intensity of the gambler or not, I trust that through an analysis of stories over the gambling continuum, we can experience some of the power that can challenge our conscious attitude. We can become aware, as Mogenson says, that when we are acting out of our collective base, our moral sense may be slow to check in. In fact, it may not check in at all and leave us wondering, as we will see in some of our gamblers' stories, "What got into me?"<sup>33</sup>

At the pathological end of the gambling continuum, the loss of moral sense will be acute since the gambler is caught in the power of the archetype—ego-consciousness is unavailable. Some thoughts from Jung regarding an alcoholic client give us a peek into his view of the psychic conflicts of an addict. The story of this client resulted in Jung's pivotal role in the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous, and his analysis of the needs of alcoholics seems to hold true for the addicted gambler as well. Jung felt

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<sup>32</sup> See "Of Brothels, Gambling-Hells, and the Salons of the Elegant: Collectivity, Individuality, and the Dream," in *Quadrant*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 27ff.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

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that for the alcoholic, alcohol had become a substitute for spirit.<sup>34</sup> The same may be said for the gambler who seeks to be enlivened and transformed, to touch or be touched by the spirit.

Today there are many Twelve-Step programs for a variety of addictions, one being Gambler's Anonymous. Jung's client was an alcoholic who had been unable to stop drinking. Jung eventually told this client that he saw little hope for him in medication or therapy. When the client asked Jung if he knew of any way that he could recover, Jung explained his understanding that, for some alcoholics, a vital spiritual experience had resulted in recovery—new inner forces appeared to make recovery possible.

Bill W. wrote Jung that Jung's client, Roland H., did subsequently have a conversion experience that released him from his compulsion to drink.

In Jung's terminology we could say that psychic energy was released from the controlling addiction complex and made available for a creative escape from his drinking. The compelling forces of the addiction had been depotentiated (made inactive) by the numinosity of the new experience.<sup>35</sup>

Any numinous experience suggests an encounter with the greater personality within, a connection to one's authentic nature. It is that transforming presence of the spirit that guides us toward rebirth. Any addiction may become a substitute for spirit. Thus Roland H.'s recovery would feel like a spiritual experience.

Bill W., in the letters to Jung, explained the importance of this story to the founding of AA. A container for the expression

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<sup>34</sup> See Bauer, *Alcoholism*, pp. 123ff., for letters between Jung and Bill W., a cofounder of AA, which clarify Jung's ideas on the subject of addiction and his dealings with Roland H.

<sup>35</sup> "Numinous. Descriptive of persons, things or situations having a deep emotional resonance, psychologically associated with experiences of the Self." (Sharp, *Jung Lexicon*, p. 92)

of one's spirituality became the hallmark of AA, with the container being regular group meetings. In response to Bill W.'s letter, Jung, wrote as follows:

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God . . . . The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality, and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, or through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism.<sup>36</sup>

Where the alcoholic finds a spiritual connection in the bottle, the gambler may experience the numinous connection—the invisible, enlivening spirit—with Lady Luck, in her temple, the casino.

A numinous connection is often discussed by Jung as coming from the archetypal patterns that break out of the unconscious, manifesting as emotion. These tend to be primitive affects that result in a lowering of consciousness, thus elevating the archetypal content.<sup>37</sup> This concept is important in considering the gambler who is caught in the power of the archetype. This intense experience, that may be imaged as an infatuation or love affair with Lady Luck, has a spiritual connection with both the divine and the primitive nature of the archetypal instincts. The energy for the numinous experience is gathered from other areas of consciousness and the gambler is thereby likely to give dimin-

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<sup>36</sup> Bauer, *Alcoholism*, p. 127. I should note here that Jung was not referring to a “born-again” Christian experience, but an inner awareness beyond any organized religion or dogma.

<sup>37</sup> See “Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle,” *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, pars. 841ff.

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ished energy to everyday responsibilities. In the clutches of the goddess, a gambler will give no attention to calls from home, the amount of money wagered, or other concerns of daily life.

Addiction has been the topic of several books by Jungian analysts. Jan Bauer identifies some of the archetypal patterns in women alcoholics and traces these through case histories. She makes the point that suppression of the Dionysian destructive elements behind the drinking can also suppress the potentially creative Dionysian side.<sup>38</sup>

Marion Woodman, in *Addiction to Perfection: The Still Unravished Bride*, explores the archetypal patterns that manifest as witch images in the individuation processes of women. The positive, creative spiritual animus can be waylaid by the power animus. The Demon Lover with tricksterish aspects can appear with both positive and negative qualities. She discusses the relationship of a woman's journey in view of our culture's emphasis on patriarchal values. As with other writers on addiction, there seems to be the inevitable search for the transforming experience—in this case thwarted by chasing the ideal of perfection. As with gamblers, there is the chasing of an illusion.

Another Jungian, Linda Leonard, from the depths of her own addictions, has written about the relationship of addiction and creativity in *Witness to the Fire: Creativity and the Veil of Addiction*. She traces the inner struggles of several artists, including the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky, who was also studied by Freud. Dostoyevsky was a compulsive gambler who often lost everything at roulette and then would write, for example, *Crime and Punishment*, only to repeat the process over and over again. In her book, Leonard brings to life many archetypal figures of addiction. These include the Gambler and the Romantic, both

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<sup>38</sup> See *Alcoholism*, pp. 67ff.

figures who may succumb to the seduction of Eros energy.

Eros energy surrounds the characters in Dostoevsky's book, *The Gambler*. His writing style teems with the aliveness of characters and the reader may feel like the ball jumping from number to number on the roulette wheel—the cog of his story.<sup>39</sup>

Dostoevsky wrote during the nineteenth century. *The Gambler* is known to be autobiographical and is often studied by those seeking insights into the psychology of gamblers. The book itself was written as a result of one of Dostoevsky's biggest gambles—an agreement with a publisher that he would have the book completed within four months or would give the publisher all rights to his works for the next nine years. With one month to go, the manuscript was not yet begun. As a result of this agreement, the author was filled with a frenzy that then characterized his writing..

The protagonist in *The Gambler*, Alexey, narrates the story from his position as a tutor for an aristocratic Russian general—a tutor who left his post to become an insatiable gambler. The characters are flooded with the intensity that surrounds love, wealth and the game of roulette. Initially Alexey was caught in the web of Polina, a woman playing the game of the debt-ridden Russian aristocrats. The game was of course to find wealth at all costs. Alexey became her slave, and her indifference drove him to threats of homicide and suicide and to inappropriate, humiliating behavior.

The story expresses the urgency that surrounds such intensity and passion—at a moment's notice anything can change. Alexey could be a big winner or a pauper on any given night. A win at

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<sup>39</sup> The game of roulette was Dostoevsky's addiction. Interesting in that the perfectly balanced wheel gives some order to the madness surrounding it. There is usually a great deal of chaotic activity around the game as people rush to place their bets.

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the table gave him an excitement so fulfilling that he let his beloved go so he could continue in the game. He was now caught in the compulsion of a different kind of love—gambling. Yet he was still a slave.

An Englishman, rational and generous of spirit, is a key character throughout the story. This man, perhaps a bright shadow personification of the author, is willing to sacrifice his own love for Polina if Alexey could change his life. But the Englishman, with his sophistication and objectivity—as compared to the impulsive emotionality of the Russians—is unable to stop the passion for gambling that boils in Alexey. Because he is caught in a complex with a life of its own, Alexey is unable to direct his flow of psychic energy into a creative stream. With no energy to escape, he is caught in the disorder and chaos of his complex.

In Dostoyevski's novel, the pinnacle of the intensity and exuberance of gambling is personified in the grandmother of the general—a paralyzed old woman who comes to the casino town to show the family that she is nowhere near death. Her appearance dazes the characters who had been expecting her demise and their inheritance. Grandmother's play follows the path of the prototypical early winner. Initially, with high odds betting on the zero (roulette), she wins—and wins again by repeating the bet. It is as though she controls her fate. She wishes the ball to land on the zero and it does. She is in an omnipotent place. Her demands become loud and her excitement draws crowds. Her intensity spills around the table, attracting the poor people who stayed near, hoping to be tossed a few coins—hoping to gain favor with the winner. The surge of excitement from her initial winnings sweeps the grandmother into a whirlwind of emotion; it was a walk with the goddess of luck.

She leaves the casino a winner the first night but cannot contain the thrill of the moment. She is back the next day and con-

tinues with feverish impulsivity until she loses heavily. But, in spite of being caught in the unconscious power of the complex, which initially rendered the sensations too overwhelming and too intense to control, she finally finds the ability to connect consciously to the destructive pattern she has been in and is then able to break loose and return home.

Not so for Alexey. He tasted the wealth of the winner, gave it back, and continued with each new day to look forward to the risk that could—and surely would!—change his life in one way or the other. Here we have the notion from Jung's theory of the search for rebirth, and the numinosity that comes with this. Something will happen and it will bring about the desired change. Alexey's fascination with the women in his life became less and less important than his fascination with Lady Luck. The thrill of the risk was compelling. Though his goal was freedom of choice—his independence—he remained a slave to his own autonomous gambling complex.

*The Gambler* is filled with the passion of the characters who are seeking a new life through the luck of the games. The general sought wealth in order to gain the hand of his beloved. His beloved sought money from any man. Alexey was impassioned by the action of the game and the fantasy of being accepted by the aristocracy. Perhaps grandmother assumed, in the minds of the family, the role of the Great Mother: she could give or she could take away. But then she fell under the spell of Lady Luck, whose capricious nature left no doubt about the workings of fate. Grandmother went home lucky to still have the barest of assets.

Lady Luck, however, did finally smile on Dostoevsky in his external life. After finishing *The Gambler* on time and thus winning his bet with the publisher, he went on to write one of his major works, *Crime and Punishment*. In the long run, his bet with the publisher was even more important in that Dostoevsky,



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in the interest of time, was forced to hire a stenographer. This young woman later became his wife and with her he had the family he so yearned for. And the greatest jackpot was that he was finally able to beat the gambling compulsion. Perhaps writing *The Gambler*, and thus exploring his own dark side, provided that spark of consciousness that brought psychic balance. Perhaps it was a starting point for holding the tension between the ever-present conflict of ego and shadow.

### Freud and Freudians

Psychoanalysts were among the first to work with gamblers in the early part of the twentieth century. In 1936, Edmund Bergler wrote his first article suggesting the gambler was not just a weak person looking for easy money even in the face of failure, but was, in fact, a “neurotic with an unconscious wish to lose.”<sup>40</sup> This idea was referred to as “psychic masochism” and it remained a predominant concept for many years. Bergler took great pains to define the kind of pathological gambler he was describing and to separate this type from both racketeer gamblers and social or recreational gamblers. He contended, as do I, that everyone in our society has the potential to gamble. The characteristic markers of Bergler’s pathological gambler were very similar to those used in later medical models. These include: chronic gambling activities, a preoccupation with gambling that excludes other life matters, an optimism about winning even in the face of loss, and an inability to stop with a win. Eventually the pathological gambler risks too much and becomes focused on the pleasure-pain tension between the bet and the outcome.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Bergler, *The Psychology of Gambling*, p. vii.

<sup>41</sup> Mikal Aasved, *The Psychodynamics and Psychology of Gambling*, pp. 30f.

Freud's own explanations for gambling appeared later than those of some of his followers and began with his ideas about Dostoyevsky. As early as 1897, Freud wrote of masturbation as being the primary addiction that replaces or substitutes for all other addictions. In his commentary on Dostoevsky's addiction to gambling, he spoke of psychopathology based on neurotic and instinctual fantasy. Instinctual fantasy was the type he ascribed to Dostoyevsky's gambling addiction.<sup>42</sup> This type of fantasy was said to have expressed itself in unconscious altered behavior rather than as neurotic symptoms related to body and mind. This then was the basis for the connection to infantile masturbation that includes fantasy and other behavior that will result in self-gratification at the height of the fantasy. Richard Ulman and Harry Paul see this as groundwork for their fantasy-based theory of addiction.<sup>43</sup> At first glance their concept seems to echo Jung's idea about alcohol addiction, namely that there is a misplaced attempt to find a balance between spirit and matter and thus to experience a more cohesive self.

To continue with Freud's ideas, he believed that gambling was displaced masturbation based on intense feelings of guilt as a result of repressed Oedipal memories.<sup>44</sup> Freud also noticed a connection between Dostoyevsky's destructive gambling and his subsequent creative work. From a Jungian point of view, one might see the self-gratification as allowing for a release of the psychic energy caught in the autonomous complex, thus making available energy for a creative escape—a Dionysian loosening of life's constraints.

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<sup>42</sup> "Dostoesvsky and Parricide," in *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21, pp. 177ff.

<sup>43</sup> *The Self Psychology of Addiction and its Treatment*, p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Freud, "Dostoyevski and Parricide," p. 194.

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Following his destructive gambling experiences, Dostoyevsky would write some of his finest books. In Freud's opinion, his gambling was not about money but about self-punishment.<sup>45</sup> This, Freud felt, indicated a deep unconscious connection. Thus when destructive gambling had almost ruined him, guilt was alleviated, and he was free to pursue his creative work. This follows Bergler's idea of "psychic masochism." On this point, it is interesting to note that a number of gamblers I have spoken with describe an "orgasmic" thrill associated with the game, and certainly many speak of the pain and pleasure experienced with winning and losing—especially at the pathological end of the continuum.

Otto Fenichel, also a psychoanalyst, agreed with Freud on the ideas of masturbation fantasies and Oedipal conflict.<sup>46</sup> But he pointed out the fact that the gambler was excited and found the game enjoyable and did not want to stop. Thus he saw the activity of gambling more as an impulse disorder than an obsessive-compulsive disorder. He compared gambling excitement to sexual arousal, as with Freud's masturbation theory, comparing winning to orgasm, and losing to castration or death by the father—thus acting out the Oedipal conflict. Fenichel saw Father Fate and Lady Luck as sublimated parent figures. He saw as narcissistic the oft-held false optimism of gamblers—the belief that they will win in spite of the odds. Fate was in the hands of the powerful father figure. Others in Fenichel's camp saw Lady Luck as the symbolic mother and gambling as an appeal for her love. Still others were not sure if Fortuna (Lady Luck) was mother or father. Several psychoanalysts noted the oral narcis-

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>46</sup> Aasved, *Psychodynamics*, pp. 29f.

sism of gamblers.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, eating, drinking and smoking are prominent activities of casino patrons.

Another Freudian, Ralph Greenson, in endorsing the theory of mental masturbation, suggested that both masturbation and gambling start out as play, thus supporting the idea of the continuum of gambling from play to pathology.<sup>48</sup> He thought that initially the play is a tension discharge but as it continues the playfulness is destroyed by destructive fantasies—fantasies of a forbidden nature. Then anxiety and guilt decenter the ego, and the activities are no longer pleasurable as originally, but instead are a threat to the ego. In Jungian terms, we would say that the ego is displaced by a complex, resulting in a lowered level of consciousness. Rational thinking becomes unavailable.

Greenson also presented a continuum of sorts by proposing three types of gamblers on the basis of their motivation. The normal gambler is one who can stop at any time, one who plays for entertainment. The professional gambler is one who has chosen gambling as a profession. And the third is the neurotic gambler who is not able to stop and is motivated by unconscious needs. One of these motivations would be primary for any individual gambler, but Greenson also felt that all gamblers had all three motivations to different degrees. I find this assessment to be similar to my own way of thinking and helpful to those who may be reflecting on their inner gambler.

Another psychoanalyst, D.W. Winnicott, pioneered studies on creativity and play in his book *Playing and Reality*. His work is based particularly on the mother-infant interaction. From Winnicott we have come to know something about the “good-enough Mother” and the “transitional object.” His area of special interest

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29ff.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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here is that of play. Play, for Winnicott, is not about the content of play but rather about the relationship involved in playing. This could involve the relationship of a child to an object, or it could be about the playing that takes place between analyst and client.

Winnicott makes clear his renunciation of Freud's connections between playing and masturbation. He feels that playing is a subject to be studied on its own. He also contends that his work with the playing of children is just as applicable to adults.

The play space in this theory is potential space between baby and mother—both internal and external space. Play is immensely exciting because of the interplay between these spaces—internal fantasy versus outer reality. There is a certain magic that can arise when a fantasy is indeed a reality. And yet, as the baby develops, the magic can disappear. Mother does not always fill baby's needs. This is the point where perception and consequently acceptance of the "other" is introduced. It is the beginning of playing in a relationship—a relationship that furthers the development of imagination, one not stuck in fantasies.

Fantasies, for Winnicott, have a fixed form that is repeated again and again and goes nowhere, such as: "When I win the lottery I'll quit my job and fly around the world in my private plane." Imagination would play off the interactions between people and in the process of examining ideas, expanding and questioning them, would finally create new possibilities. More realistically this lottery fantasy might be played with to come up with different job opportunities, a sound investment of some kind, and an exciting trip next summer. The fantasy (or idea, or opinion) if held in an "either/or" position, creates conflict: "If I don't win the lottery, my life will go down the tubes. I won't be able to pay my gambling debts. I am surely the most unlucky person in the world and I might as well be dead." This dilemma is based on a one-sided point of view—inability to broaden the

possibilities. Jung calls this neurosis. In other words, one is unable to change or alter the terms of the dilemma and no other possibilities are allowed to enter. The person is unable to play with or imagine other possibilities—to be creative. This creative process described by Winnicott is akin to Jung's theory regarding the mediation of opposites—to bring balance to the one-sidedness of the personality.

Jung's idea was based on his belief that as conflicts are explored—as the opposite sides of an idea appear—one will experience a tension between the opposites. If one has the available psychic energy to hold the tension of these opposites, a symbol can appear—an image that shows another way of looking at the conflict. Thus a new piece to the puzzle, a third thing, has been created and it has the potential to mediate the two sides of the dilemma with a synthesis—a new possibility holding parts of both points of view. There is then the possibility of transcending the neurotic, one-sided conscious attitude—overcoming the complex that was holding one in a “stuck” neurotic position.

The gambler thinks, “If I stay here long enough I'll win back the money I've lost—the probability is there. It is my turn to win.” But maybe this dilemma is not just about winning and losing. We could change the terms of the problem and assess whether it is worth losing one's self-respect, one's family. This new possibility, the opposite of the first assumption, is then explored—“I could also lose—probabilities are about large numbers and have nothing to do with the individual. I might lose more than I can afford; I could even lose my family.” A vivid image of this predicament could move this gambler into a place of imaginative play—a space to create other possibilities. To remain a conscious gambler, one must be able to negotiate the creative play space, the position between wishes and reality.

Winnicott suggests that it is perhaps only in playing that one

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is free to be creative. Playing involves trust and allows for creativity. This statement requires a consideration of what creativity implies. Here, and this is the point of connection to our exploration of the gambler, creativity is thought of as the necessary ingredient in one's search for the Self. If then, the gambler's chase is a misdirected or perverted quest for wholeness—the search for the spirit of life in the belly of the casino—we could wonder if there is a place within the gambler's psyche for creative play. Or has this been precluded by an inability to separate fantasy from reality? Or, another possibility: is the fall into the abyss necessary to produce the transforming image?

It is in playing, according to Winnicott, that one is able to be creative and to use the whole personality. Thus the journey to wholeness is awakened and energized through the creativity that emerges in play—play as a form of relating to oneself, to objects, and to others.<sup>49</sup> This play is not always fun; it can be very serious. One of my favorite passages from Winnicott is this:

Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.<sup>50</sup>

I think this is food for thought when applied to any significant relationship. On the gambling continuum from play to pathology, how important is this type of play? Can the pathological gambler separate fantasy from reality?

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<sup>49</sup> I wish to express my enduring thanks to Mel Marshak, my friend and mentor, who by her own love and understanding of this theory has brought to life this concept for me.

<sup>50</sup> *Playing*, p. 51.

### 3

## Romancing Lady Luck through the Ages

*Man is a gaming animal. He must always be trying to get the better of something or other.*

—Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia*, 1823.

The thread that guides my work is that of the exceptional energy within the game and the gambler through time and across all cultures. The behaviors portrayed in a variety of stories about the game allow us to derive various concepts about the psychology of the gambler and the archetypal energies propelling such activities. Hopefully we may be able to relate the essence of some of the stories to our own experience or observations, thus moving us to a closer relationship with our own inner gambler.

In my review of the history of the game, I have chosen to follow the lead of Peter Bernstein in his book *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*, and separate time periods into pre-Renaissance, Renaissance and post-Renaissance. These time periods are important because it was during the fifteenth century that mathematicians began to work with numbers in a way that would allow for determining probabilities—which meant, for the gambler, the ability to establish odds. This was a powerful tool, the potential ability of humans to control or influence fate. It was a role previously reserved for the gods.<sup>51</sup>

From a Jungian perspective, in following the gambling stories across these time periods there is movement showing the growth of consciousness in the collective. The darkness and supersti-

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<sup>51</sup> Bernstein, *Against the Gods*, pp. 1ff.



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tious nature of the medieval pre-Renaissance years was jolted into a rebirth with the coming of the Renaissance. We could say that psychic energy was released from the tight container of rigid thinking and mysticism to find new gradients in awareness. Intellectual life was now moving toward a higher level of consciousness that allowed some control over fate. Fate was not only in the hands of the gods—or of nature. Humans could use the newly discovered laws of probability to predict the future. We had some choices—some power. Post-Renaissance culture can make predictions but always with the possibility that chance might upset the apple cart. We cannot know which chance events may occur and erase the predictions. It's like human nature. When we walk for too long along the straight and narrow rational, Apollonian path, Dionysis appears.

One of the interesting things that Bernstein makes clear about risk is that our faith in risk management results in our taking more risks than we otherwise would. He uses the example of the increase in aggressive driving since the mandatory use of seat belts.<sup>52</sup> Another would be the example of gamblers stubbornly holding to laws of probability. How well then does our science understand the role of the individual in the equations of risk management? Can we, in today's fast-paced world with more choices for individuals than we can ever acknowledge, forego some of this power to maintain our relatedness—our humanity? Have we lost contact with our souls? Perhaps, as we are caught in the patriarchal power of a materialistic world, we find ourselves taking more risks in searching for that vital connection to our authentic selves. And so we see that search evolve in the history of gambling.

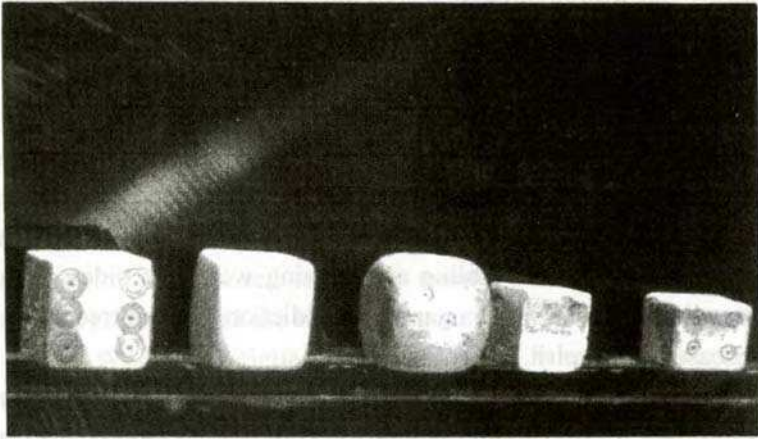
In the pre-Renaissance period, as early as 3500 BC, dice

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

## Romancing Lady Luck through the Ages 49

games were shown in Egyptian paintings. These Egyptian dice were made of the knucklebones of sheep. During this time period, it was said that compulsive players of the game were made to hew stone for the pyramids as their punishment. At the same time, pharaohs were known to play with loaded dice.<sup>53</sup> Thus it seems that morality issues surrounding the game of dice are longstanding, as already noted in the story of the Sri Krishna and the good and evil kings dated around 3200 BC.



Dice from the wall of a house in Pompeii. Photo by David Balch.

Early dice games were often connected to the sacred. A board game has been found in a Sumerian cemetery dated around 2600 BC. Drawings have been found in Egyptian tombs showing figures playing games with their fingers. Also, in China, in ancient temples, patterns that corresponded to the diagrams of *yin* and *yang* were found (possibly not a game but a representation of the divinatory oracle known as the *I Ching*). There are numerous

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

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examples of gambling games being seen as sacred play, a part of the idea of divination.

This continues to be affirmed in our culture in a variety of ways. Bingo games may give rise to feelings of being special in the eyes of god when you win. This is particularly true for those who in fact have very little. The winnings are revered and mementoes from the occasion are often saved. Today, elderly people are preyed upon, seduced, through advertisements from lotteries and fortune tellers. They cling to the hope of winning the wealth they failed to make in their lifetime—the hope that the gods of fate will smile on them. They become superstitious and ritualistic with comments like, “I’m sure I’ll win something big. I’ve lived a very good life.” Winners often see themselves as special, or blessed, whether it be from the Christian god or pagan gods such as Lady Luck. Kathryn Gabriel makes the sacred connection, saying, “Gambling and praying were two sides of the same coin. Even today, a gambling addiction is often treated as a disease of the spirit.”<sup>54</sup>

Further evidence of gambling has been found on Greek vases and other artifacts dating around 1000 BC. A gaming board was cut in a step of the Acropolis. In addition, some drawings on the walls of houses in the ancient city of Pompeii show dice and fighting cocks. During this time, the populace was excited into a kind of Dionysian frenzy by stories of athletes competing sometimes to their death. Perhaps the most telling story of a gamble of pure chance was the rolling of dice by the three brothers, Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, to determine who would rule the universe. Zeus, the supposed winner, became ruler of the heavens; second place went to Poseidon, who became ruler of the seas; and third place to Hades, ruler of the underworld. Thus the Greeks contin-

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<sup>54</sup> *Gambler Way*, p. 11.

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ued, as did the more ancient groups, to rely on the winds of fate for answers.<sup>55</sup>

The oracles of ancient Greece were considered to be “of the gods.” Both Greeks and Romans were heavily involved in betting on games of skill, especially physical prowess. This did not, however, take away the importance of the gods. Even today, athletes are seen crossing themselves or pointing to the sky before a contest or after a success, giving regard to their god. The sacred connection is apparent. The first century AD brought about the rise of Christianity and a shift in the beliefs of the Western world. The Christian god became the guide to the future and fate derived from moral behavior and faith.

In another part of the world, around 500 AD., the Hindus had invented a number system more sophisticated than that of the Greeks and Romans. With the addition of a zero it allowed for calculation as opposed to simple counting. In 622 AD, Arabs took over India, and the numbers became known as Arabic—the system Western societies use today. Thus when the Crusades moved across the continent pitting Christians against Muslims, new games were brought into Europe. These games were often referred to as “hazard,” the Arabic word for dice. It is from these beginnings that Americans invented the dice game of craps.<sup>56</sup>

In the tenth century, dice games were popular in all cultures. Then, as today, the popularity had its shadow side. The intensity of the desire and/or impulse to gamble led to the army leaders of the Crusades having to prohibit dice games among troops because the soldiers were likely to gamble away all possessions, including their clothes.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bernstein, *Against the Gods*, p. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> Casino history. Retrieved June 17, 2005, from the internet.

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During the Crusades, from the eleventh through the thirteenth century, as the soldiers brought home the culture of the Arabs, the sophistication of their numbering system was recognized by Western intellectuals. Indeed, the Arabic numbering system was crucial to the work of Renaissance mathematicians.

It was during the Renaissance, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, that gambling acquired a different focus. Rather than simply being a process of divination, a plea to the gods, mathematicians used Arabic numbers and began the study that resulted in the theory of probability. Bernstein tells of a French nobleman, a gambler, who approached the mathematician Blaise Pascal, asking him to solve a puzzle.<sup>58</sup> Accounts of the content of this puzzle differ. One had to do with the odds of roulette and how to beat the wheel. Another, as described by Bernstein, posed the question of how to divide stakes from an unfinished game of chance when one player was ahead. In any event, this work led to the discovery of the theory of probability that Bernstein views as “the mathematical heart of the concept of risk.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, today this theory is at work in society in any venture or business based on risk, insurance for example, and it is the predominant tool for research evaluation.

In short, the laws of probability allow for the measurement and control of risk. Bernstein traced the etiology of the word “risk” to an Italian word meaning “to dare.” Here, then, is implied the idea of choice in risk taking. Bernstein writes:

The actions we dare to take, which depend on how free we are to make choices, are what the story of risk is all about. And that story helps define what it means to be a human being.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Against the Gods*, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

What, then, does this mean for the individual gambler?

The freedom to make choices is key for the gambler; it is also the gambler's enigma. Even when the odds are known, when the resources are diminished, the autonomy of the gambling complex may prevent rational choice. This extremely important "edge," and the confusion surrounding it, is discussed here later. In terms of the history of gambling, the laws of probability provided the road to profit for the business side of gambling. Thus the face of gambling was changed.

At this point, I will narrow my focus to the history of casinos, as that is the focal point of the gambler in this work. Casinos are now big business, readily available and legal across the country—without the criminal element so often associated with them in the past. The laws of probability make it clear that taking advantage of individual gamblers is not at all necessary for the business to profit. However, as will be seen, casino owners today still promote a seductive atmosphere.

### **The Rise of Casinos**

Early information about casinos begins in Italy where card houses were common in the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Again, in Italy, there were attempts to abolish gambling in the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, as it became less acceptable in the moral structure of the culture. Nonetheless, in 1626, in Venice, the first gambling house was legalized. They were called *casini*, meaning "little houses," and within their walls there were a variety of dealings including politics, gambling and prostitution. "Casino" was associated with vice and ruin—even to soul damnation.

With the Venice casino as a model, gambling houses spread throughout Europe, often located in spa resorts. In Spa, Belgium, the namesake of the resorts, casino houses became legal in 1650

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and catered to European aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. When Venice casinos were disgraced, Spa became a boomtown for new games and longer hours. At this time, casinos were also flourishing in France, Germany and England.

Napoleon legalized casinos in 1806. They featured high security while catering to the rich and famous. Gambling was the thing to do; casinos were the place to be. In 1837 casinos were declared illegal in France, so they began to prosper in Germany where, for the first time, chips were used for betting purposes. At this time the first roulette table, with its single-zero wheel, was introduced.

Gambling dens were operating in Asia as early as 1850. In 1962 Macao became a gambling empire in Asia by virtue of winning the monopoly for issuing gambling licenses.

Nineteenth-century Victorian England was prudish and moralistic, but its decadent wealthy class was known for its excesses. When the working class also began heavy gambling in the 1840s, the government became concerned and passed a Gaming Act. Primary forms of gambling were casinos and horse racing. After the Gaming Act, which ended the games of hazard, card games held in private homes became popular.<sup>61</sup> Some historians believe the controversy in this century, the attacks against gambling, may have been because English society made every attempt to present itself as ordered and rational while gambling clearly exposed the chance and speculation at the center of the culture. In any event, for the latter part of the century, Victorian prejudices prevailed and gambling was seen as a vice in the same class as swearing, drinking and immoral sexual behavior.

Interestingly enough, from a gambler's point of view, the most famous casino was opened in Monaco in 1863, when the

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<sup>61</sup> Flavin. Retrieved June 17, 2005, from the internet.

## Romancing Lady Luck through the Ages 55

country was in deep financial trouble. It was intended to overcome the financial misfortune and, even today, Monte-Carlo remains one of the most glamorous places for gambling.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the British aristocracy began to find recreation in Monte-Carlo and this led to the practice of today where private rooms were opened—rooms for high rollers—with unlimited bets. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, in the United States, there was an attempt to legalize gambling on the Louisiana riverboats, but the first legalized gambling was not until 1931, in Nevada. Bugsy Siegel became the first to offer legalized gambling in Las Vegas.<sup>62</sup> Organized crime was associated with Las Vegas casinos in the early days. Other states were slow to follow the trend. However, in 1978, casinos were opened in Atlantic City, and in 1987, native Indians were allowed to open casinos on reservations.

In 1992, Mississippi passed the Gaming Control Act that allowed dockside gambling along the Mississippi River and the Gulf coast. In addition, the state has two Choctaw Indian casinos in the center of the state. In 2004 there were over 30 casinos in the state and over 42 million people visited them. In August of 2005, hurricane Katrina destroyed the thirteen casinos on the Gulf coast. Casino owners were determining whether or not to rebuild and made known their preference for building on land in order to better withstand hurricanes. Immediately the legislature, knowing the economic impact of the casinos, changed the law to allow casinos to build on land within 800 feet of the water. All have decided to rebuild—three opened again in December of 2005. Three more have reopened as of August 2006, the first anniversary of Katrina.

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<sup>62</sup> History of gambling. Retrieved June 17, 2005, from the internet.



## **56 Romancing Lady Luck through the Ages**

Presently, thirty-two states have legalized casino gambling.<sup>63</sup> Casinos are easily accessible to most people in the United States. In addition, the industry is quite competitive and spends time and money to bring in players.

In the next chapter, we look at the rational and the seductive elements of the casino business.

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<sup>63</sup> Gambling features. Retrieved June 26, 2005, from the internet.

## The Casino Experience

If you bet you can make three spades, that's entertainment. If you bet cotton will go up three points, that's business. If you bet on a horse, that's gambling. See the difference?

—Blackie Sherrod, newspaper columnist.

### The Casino as a Business

One of the first things that gamblers, or players if you prefer, should remind themselves of before they walk into the casino, is that it is a business.<sup>64</sup> The first concern of a business is to make money, not to give it away. If you can walk in knowing that, you have significantly raised a part of your consciousness that will be important to your play. The casino is billed as an entertainment business, which in fact it is. But as you walk in, you will notice pictures of winners holding up checks with values up to millions of dollars. Then you will see flashing lights surrounding the jackpot prizes simply waiting for your bet. There is something tricksterish about this, for suddenly your expectation of entertainment becomes winning. You might not even be aware of the shift unless you let yourself wonder. If your expectation were to win, or to get something for nothing, you would do better to attend the Oprah Show since Winfrey lavishes free gifts on her audiences.

The casino business engages you through an amazing illusion.

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<sup>64</sup> My information regarding the casino as a business was enhanced through personal communication with Dexter Phelps, Director of Slot Operations in a major hotel and casino in Nevada.

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It is a little like frequent flyer miles. You get “comps” based on the amount of time you play and the amount of money you bet. They may include “free” rooms, massages, golf rounds, meals or prizes. The operative word here is “free.” Of course, you may get lucky and win and also get a free room. However, you may also lose \$40 or \$4000 and get a “free” drink. At least with airline miles, you know how much the ticket costs. Nevertheless, people cherish the “player cards” that enable the casino to count your every move. This is simply good business in an extremely competitive arena. Traveling gamblers know which casinos offer the most lucrative “comps.”

Gamblers who earn “comps” appear to have a sense of getting something free. In fact, the casino encourages patrons to “use your card to get your freebies.” There is an aura of importance around the high rollers who are treated like royalty with many lucrative “comps.” It is like walking with the goddess of luck, walking with the gods. The illusion that Lady Luck is by your side has nothing to do with whether you won or lost because “comps” are given based on your time of play and amount of bet. This feeling of importance may be hard to give up.

The growing numbers of casinos are all competing through the use of more and more amenities for their players. In this business, as long as there are a sufficient number of people coming in the door, the casino, given any kind of proper management, will make money. Naturally it's better if you stay awhile, so there are teams of people, probably including psychologists, who develop plans to maximize the length of visits. Not only do individual gamblers go in with the hope of romancing Lady Luck, the casino will help you get there. Just take a look at these section heads in a book edited by W.R. Eadington and J.A. Cornelius titled *The Business of Gaming: Economic and Management Issues*: “Casino Design and Ambience,” “The Spell of the

Sensuous: Casino Atmosphere and the Gambler,” “Story Spaces: Any Casino’s Romance and How It’s Told,” “Toward More Adventurous Playgrounds,” and, “Promoting the Premium Player: An Evolutionary Process.” Sounds like great marketing. If the sights, sounds and smells are all programmed to romance the player, the casino has hit on a way to nurture our fondest fantasies—money and love—or maybe just love of money.

Speaking of money, in the fiscal year 2003-2004, the casino industry in America generated about \$72 billion in gross revenue. In 1995, the gross revenue was \$25 billion. The increase mirrors the rise in the number of casinos across the United States. Approximately 80% of the adult population reportedly has participated in gambling activities. With TV promotion of the World Series of Poker and the availability of games, there seems to have been an upswing in acceptance.<sup>65</sup> Casinos, no longer linked to organized crime, have become an accepted part of mainstream America.

### **The Casino as Entertainment Center**

Contemporary casinos offer a large variety of entertainment, excellent restaurants (often five-star), arcades for children and a multitude of theme parks. I wish to focus on the games themselves, and the incredible increase in the number of slot machines across the country. The increase in games of very kind mirrors the growth in participation, which includes all social classes, many senior citizen groups and a large number of women. A plane flight is no longer required. Often it’s possible to get to a casino for a few hours after work, or even on your lunch hour.

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<sup>65</sup> Fong, *The Biopsychosocial Consequences*, in. *Psychiatry* vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 23ff.

## 60 The Casino Experience

Full service casinos include table games such as craps, roulette, black jack, baccarat, and a variety of poker games. High levels of emotional energy can always be observed among the table players. Suspicious and superstitious behaviors, anger and joy, frustration and exasperation are readily apparent. But most of the gamblers are found at the slot machines, where the players tend to be more isolated—loners—but the range of emotions can still be seen. Senior citizens are bussed in from nursing homes, and some who can barely walk will jump from the wheelchair with a jackpot win. Others will run screaming down the center pit waving hundred-dollar bills. Slot machines have such a patronage that some casinos figure there is no need to offer table games, which require staff and so are more costly to run.

The creators of slot machines continually change the face of the machines and keep familiar images in sight. Many slot players look for something familiar and choose, for example, Wheel of Fortune machines. There are also Spam machines for those persons attached to computers at home. You will find Elvis machines with his songs to keep you distracted while you lose, icons from the World War Two era for senior citizens, race cars whizzing noisily for Nascar fans, even “I love Lucy” machines. Video poker machines continue to be big favorites and people assume (incorrectly) that an element of skill is involved in choosing the draw cards. It is from the slots that casinos make the majority of their money. And this take is based on the laws of probability.

It is interesting to wonder just what the average person who walks into the casino knows about the laws of probability or about the risk of being caught in the power of a destructive complex. Walking into today's casino is vastly different from walking into a 1950s' casino. Today, it is unnecessary to travel to Nevada to find a legal casino; they are spread throughout the

country. You certainly do not have to be rich to play. In fact, you can be a welfare recipient.

Computer technology has enabled “one-armed bandits” to be transformed into noise-making machines with sounds of everything from oinking pigs to mooing cows, screeching racecars and the human voice. The lever may still be part of some machines, but more often it’s a touch screen or a button that begins the play. Fewer and fewer new machines drop coins. Rather, when you cash out, you receive a receipt that may be put into another machine or taken to the cashier. Table games are not that different though there are more choices and more mindless games for—as I was told by a floor manager (pit boss)—senior citizens and women. Since I fit both of those categories and play only mindless games, I “took it like a woman.” I prefer not to put my fragile gambler’s ego on the blackjack table with a man who, with utter certainty, no matter how I choose to take a hit, knows that I am the cause of his bust card or the dealer’s twenty-one.

More often than not, television screens are placed around the casino so bettors can watch sporting events while remaining at the slot machine or the table. Of course security cameras are everywhere, as are, unfortunately for problem gamblers, ATM machines. One thing that is constant at casinos is counting. Everything is counted, and computer counting is double-checked by pit bosses who count. Money is counted continuously. When black, purple or orange chips leave a tray (high denomination chips of \$100, \$500 and \$1000), the pit boss must know where they go—who won them or who cashed out for them. Individuals count their money and let the chips slip easily between their fingers as though shuffling. Computers are used to enable the pit bosses to average your bets and show how long you play (thus determining your types of comps). Payoff chips are arranged carefully on the table so the cameras can count the payoff for accuracy.

## 62 The Casino Experience

As I thought about all the counting (oh, I forgot the gambler counting on his way out to see if he has bus fare or gas money), I remembered the West African prayer mentioned by von Franz.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the gods of counting do flourish in the casino temples, along with Lady Luck. Recall that von Franz noted five archetypal energies that can count: Fire, Death, Emptiness, Day and Wealth. Clearly the casino gods are counting Wealth continuously, and they count on the laws of probability.

### **Probability, Chance and the Casino Gambler**

The laws of probability are extremely important for the casino, and very tricky for the gambler. Slot machines are set to pay out about 90-98% of the money played. That means the casino will keep from two to ten percent, and with billions wagered, that's a considerable amount. Gamblers may read this percentage, often emblazoned on the machine, to mean they will get back at least 90% when they play, and in the meantime they may win. Von Franz argued, I believe correctly, that the laws of probability do not readily apply to the individual case because they are based on an accumulation of trials.<sup>67</sup>

For example, if a coin is tossed hundreds of times, the probability is that heads will appear 50% of the time and tails 50% of the time. This has nothing to do with the fact that a coin may be tossed 15 times and land on heads 15 times in succession. Thus, while very helpful in some situations, probability is not the whole picture. In fact, with some poorly informed gamblers, the expectation of the odds in an individual case can lead them badly astray. This is often true with young people or others in their early gambling experience. They expect that after a certain num-

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<sup>66</sup> See above, pp. 21, 26.

<sup>67</sup> See *On Divination*, pp. 25f.

ber of misses in any chance game, they “must” soon win and therefore will bet accordingly. If by some fate this doesn’t happen and they continue to lose, they may recite the probabilities and then become angry, suspicious and place blame.

Von Franz used Jung’s example of a jar full of stones to show that the laws of probability have nothing to do with the individual.<sup>68</sup> If every stone were carefully measured and an average size calculated, there would be no certainty of finding any stone of that specific size in the jar. Science, she says, is not concerned about the individual. Problems occur when people rely on statistics as truth. Among the general population, the laws of probability inherent in statistics are poorly understood. My own observations of gamblers certainly support this.

Individual gamblers often appear not to know the odds—for example, the probability of a certain number appearing on the roulette wheel. The wheel most often used in the United States has 36 numbers, half red and half black. The payoff for hitting a number is 35 to 1. Players may then believe their chosen number will hit according to these odds. But these odds were determined by many repetitions and have nothing to do with the upcoming turn. Failing to understand this, a player may hold bets for several rolls, and if the number has not hit, will bet heavily for a succession of rolls because “the odds are 35 to 1 so it’s time for my number to hit.” (Remember grandmother and Alexey in Dostoevsky’s *The Gambler*—they were playing these big odds). Actually, it is the casino owners who understand the odds, and these always favor the house. The table has 36 numbers and 2 zeros. Therefore, given sufficient repetitions, the odds are 38 to 1 that a number will hit. The house, however, pays only 35 to 1. This is referred to as the “house edge.” It is the difference be-

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 28.



tween the true odds and what the house pays the player. Or, a player may bet on whether the number will be red or black, each of which pays “even money” because half of the 36 numbers are red and half are black. With two choices, the expectation is that red will hit 50% of the time. However, within the next 30 minutes, red may hit only 10% of the time. The casino, however, has even here increased its odds as we cannot forget the 2 zeros that are neither red nor black. The zeros are green. It is these seemingly small percentages that give the casino, over time, the winning edge and enormous profits.

Casino games move quite fast, allowing little time for thought. Gamblers often double their bets when they lose, thereby “chasing” their losses. So-called smart betters make bets on streaks—lucky streaks—thereby ignoring the statistical probabilities. They count on their intuition and, of course, Lady Luck. The Rhine experiments Jung mentions in his essay on synchronicity would seem to give some credibility to this approach. Perhaps there is a field of energy with possibilities of ESP and psychokinetic control.<sup>69</sup> In any event, a gambler would do well to know more about probability. Misunderstanding the laws of probability can lead to much anguish.

I watched this anguish when a group of four college students sat down to play at a purely chance card game one night. Three of them won enough to maintain their money. The fourth, however, was on an unlucky roll. He went four times to the ATM, withdrawing \$100 each time. The fifth time, the ATM would not pay as he had apparently reached his credit limit for a twenty-four-hour period. He was furious and threatening because he was now unable to play the hands that “probability” assured would be

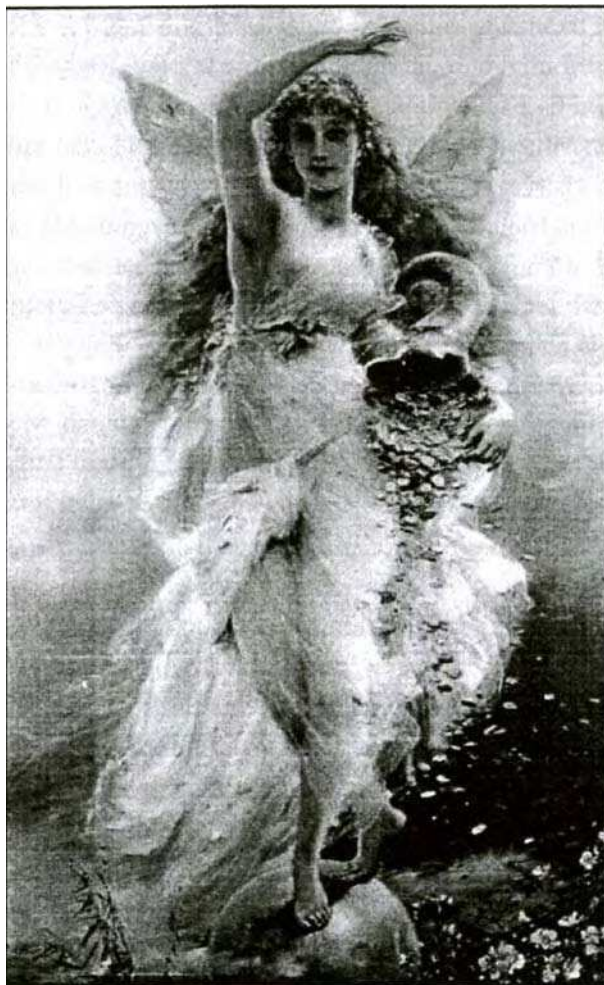
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<sup>69</sup> See “On Synchronicity,” *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, pars. 975ff.

winners. He had to be escorted from the casino by security. I noted with interest that his hand (his place at the table) did not win for ten more deals! This young man was caught in his complex, unable to see that he could not control the chance component of the hands as they were dealt.

This young man did not know how to play. Rather, he strived to win. His expectation to win, his attempt to control when he did not win, and his blame and anger when all else failed, were clearly visible. Why, I mused, was his behavior so different from that of his friends? Perhaps he had not realized that he was in the temple of Lady Luck and that she could turn her back on him.

As we look at the continuum from play to pathology, we see that it is necessary, if we are to remain on the “player” side, that we show respect for Lady Luck. It is her unpredictable nature that brings the emotional intensity to the game, so why seek to control her? That would be domination, not play. It is better to approach the goddess with humility and in a collaborative spirit.



Lady Luck with her cornucopia.

## LADY LUCK

*Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered.*

—William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*.

Casinos, as we have seen, rely for profit on the laws of probability and percentage edges in their favor. They do not depend on Lady Luck to reward them for their humanitarianism, such as providing tax money for education. Instead, the business face of casinos does not hesitate to take advantage of the fact that gamblers believe in luck, and this is used to romanticize the Lady in every possible way. The gambler's romance with her is tied to an amazing number of superstitions that may be observed everywhere in a casino. Whether related to a body movement (rubbing the face of the slot machine), a verbalization ("Come to me, baby needs shoes"), or an object (lucky coin), superstitious behaviors are often observed in casino patrons. This is true across the continuum of gamblers—from play to pathology. Superstition can play havoc with a person's rationality because there is the surety that if you follow your ritual you will win. For example, if you tap your hand on the table three times before you pick up your cards, you will win; or if you put your right hand over the slot reel as it rolls, you will win. These rituals persist in spite of continued losses. Added to this shadowlike superstitious behavior, there is the suspicion that if losing continues, someone (the dealer or the gods or the machine) is out to get you.

Sometimes pit bosses playfully encourage superstitious behavior. However, they also become cautiously alert to behavior that may be a forerunner of aggressive accusations, such as fail-

ure to pay correctly. Aggressive behavior, as discussed earlier, indicates the cessation of play—a breaking of the frame and the boundaries that allow for enjoyment. When something in the game hurts one player, the rules may be broken—instincts take over as with the example of dogs playing until one gets hurt. The gambler who had been paying homage to the goddess through carefully created superstitions felt special in the arms of Lady Luck as the games went his way. He felt powerful. He had done everything right and the goddess had touched him. He was special. But when Lady Luck turned her face, when she showed her dark, rejecting side, the gambler became aggressive. The power he experienced as a winner stirred up paranoia and his aggression was projected onto the “other”—a dealer, another player, the machine. Perhaps he had moved a little too close to the goddess, who in one throw of the dice can change from “good mother” to “terrible mother.”

The player, feeling abandoned, may become suspicious and lose control—a dangerous place to be in the face of the powerful goddess. Her shadow emerges and a dark power consumes the player. Play becomes secondary to aggression and greed. Certain types of superstitious behavior, when appearing with suspicious behavior, can indicate a move from play to pathology.

Perhaps we can see a kinship between analysts and pit bosses in that both are attentive to the shadow. In fact, as analysts, we may also see ourselves as gamblers when it comes to engaging the shadow. Can we, can our client, hold the tension in our work between creative play and pathology? Where is our client on this continuum? Sometimes we may also wonder, where are we? We gamble as to how and when we should intervene with our clients.



*Lady Luck*, engraving by Albrecht Durer, ca. 1502.

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For me, gambling in my analytic work has to do with the handling of the relationship with the client—especially the transference/countertransference—and the timing of interpretations. Can the shadow be faced? How well do I recognize the superstitious and suspicious behaviors of my client? Will our session's play turn to aggression? Is there adequate trust in our relationship to allow for movement? I hope for positive results—maybe to a fault—but also give attention to the idea of doing no harm. Of course, the risk may be more obvious with some clients than with others—but therein is the slippery slope. A countertransference that blinds me to hidden conflicts—that leads me to a too-comfortable position in the consulting room can contaminate the analysis. It becomes the same as with any love relationship. Projections leave us blind.

A more obvious gamble is working with clients who may be exposed to domestic violence. As the client makes progress—begins to individuate—this change may not be well received by friends and family. This can occur with adult clients in conflict with significant others or with adolescents from families where violence is a part of their life. Progress in the personal journey of such clients may put them at risk. Perhaps it would be safer to hold them in supportive therapy—thus precluding transformation. I would say that analysis is a matter of skill and intuition—with a little luck being much appreciated.

The affect surrounding the superstitious and suspicious behaviors of the gambler may match those seen in the consulting room. There is powerful archetypal energy connected to the origins of Lady Luck. In ancient times, games of chance were not considered to be just a matter of luck. The spin of the wheel or the throw of the dice was supposedly controlled by the gods. For the Greeks, divination was at the center of their religion. Sophocles wrote about a challenge to the oracles as being a challenge to

religion. Romans believed that their gods sent meaningful messages not only for the individual but also for the collective.<sup>70</sup> Throughout history and even today, there is a sacredness, a ritual, that hearkens back to the goddess.

Many stories about Lady Luck may be found today, especially on the internet where gambling is often romanticized. There is the story of a retired English teacher who studied the game of blackjack and learned where to go for the best comps. She is known as the “Queen of Comps” and receives so many freebies that her living expenses are very small. She also has learned to take her winnings and bank them—following predetermined rules for play. She now is said to have about a million dollars in the bank. She herself says she has a peanuts budget but lives like a millionaire. She insists it is not just luck—her rules of the game are carefully followed. She has great respect for Lady Luck—break the rules and lose control. She gives grief to financial planners when she says she does not do nearly as well investing in stocks as she does at gambling.<sup>71</sup>

Music and literature have also portrayed numerous images of this sought-after deity. James McManus in *Positively Fifth Street* provides action stories of current high stakes poker games from his perspective as a participant. The intensity of the author screams through the pages—the ecstasy of his wins brought me chills of excitement. But I realized as I read that he knew the strategy of the game. He was a student of poker and had played all his life. There was strategy in his game—not just blind luck. I laughed at the worn-out stories given by those who had endured “bad beat hands.” Most defeating, according to the author, are

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<sup>70</sup> Simon Price and Emily. Kearns, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*, pp. 177f.

<sup>71</sup> Retrieved October 10, 2005, from the internet.



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the ludicrous calls that end up with “3-7 sucking out on A-A.” (A-A refers to a pair of aces in the pocket—face-down cards hidden from the other players.) This means the player with the 3-7 in the pocket took a rather dumb luck chance that the draw would yield a 4-5-6 and complete his straight! Well, it happens, just as some people win the lottery—but not often. Throughout the book, sex stories in a variety of forms are woven in. This reminds me of the historical connection between gambling and sex. And is Nevada not the only state with legalized prostitution? Eros energy seems to thrive in the gambler—excitement may be difficult to differentiate. McManus admits to finding himself in a bar with lap dancers—and then facing the hard task of being honest with his wife.

In the music world, Frank Sinatra popularized the song, “Luck be a Lady Tonight” when he was cavorting in Vegas in the 1960s. In his shows he often introduced it (originally written by Frank Loesser for the musical *Guys and Dolls*), as “the song about dice.” A famous verse is as follows:

A lady doesn't leave her escort  
It isn't fair, it isn't nice  
A lady doesn't wander all over the room,  
blowin' on another man's dice.

For a different look at Lady Luck, we can go to Whitesnake with his hit song “Sweet Lady Luck.” Here the message is:

You hold all the aces,  
I never got a chance to deal . . .  
I'm spinning like a roulette wheel.  
You say that love's a gamble . . .  
Bet you play with loaded dice.  
You hide behind a good girl smile  
With a heart stone cold as ice.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 1994, unpublished.

Music and literature portray both the positive and negative sides of the archetype—the good mother and the terrible mother. In following the origins through classical mythology, the Greek goddess of luck was known as Tyche. Her Roman counterpart was known as Fortuna.<sup>73</sup>

Carl Kerényi makes reference to Tyche in his discussion of the eldest daughters of Tethys, the sea goddess, and Okeanos, the river god. He states,

Tyche was a goddess whose name means “what may hap” or “Chance”, a deity of whom no particular stories are told, but whose power—like that of the three Moirai and the threefold Hekate—proved stronger than the rule of Zeus.<sup>74</sup>

Hekate was independent of the Greek gods. She was a dark divinity linked to goddesses of the Underworld and known for her witchcraft, holder of the barking “hell hounds,” and protector of graves and crossroads. The power of the three Moirai lay in the belief that they regulated the length of life of each person from birth to death. They were known to be as inflexible as destiny. The Greeks had a deep feeling for the power of the Moirai—the three fates. Thus there was the realization of the importance of the role of Tyche—Fortune or Luck—in determining their destiny.

With Tyche, there is always the element of chance. She personifies fate—fortune both good and bad. Some stories personify the split as daughters of Tyche: Tymora with her good aspects and Beshaba with her bad aspects. In one story, Tymora is portrayed as Lady Luck and Beshaba as Lady Doom. Tymora is fickle but playful and never vengeful or malicious. Beshaba is

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<sup>73</sup> Barbara Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, pp. 102f.

<sup>74</sup> *The Gods of the Greeks*, p. 41.

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known for her random mischief, bad luck and misfortune.<sup>75</sup>

Sophocles,<sup>76</sup> in *Oedipus the King*, portrayed Oedipus also as a child of Tyche (Fortune). In this story she is a spirit who governs human affairs and is seen in a favorable light. Still, her personifications remain vague. Her power has seemed to rise and fall with world events. Tyche's cults spread across Greece in the fourth century when rapid change occurred in the world as the Macedonians rose to power. This led to a belief in Fate as being irrational—a chance happening. Both the abundance and the capriciousness of Tyche are depicted in history. Tyche was often presented standing on a sphere holding a cornucopia representing her never-ending abundance. Her darker side is shown as capricious, senseless and cunning. She is sometimes pictured as blind, as in the blind indifference of Fate. It seems as though Fate or Chance was seen as both reasonable and unreasonable.<sup>77</sup> The gambler, it seems, tends to hold to a belief in the reasonableness of Fate. There is the optimism that winning is just around the corner—it is, after all, his or her turn.

Fortuna is known as the Roman Goddess of Luck or Chance, and was considered of great importance in Roman and Italian religion. Her blessings were invoked under different names according to the situation. There were times when each emperor would have his own personal Fortuna (Fate), who governed his soul. These rulers had a golden statute of the goddess before them. Fortuna, like Tyche, was also sometimes pictured as blind and often was shown with a rudder (she steered the course of lives) and with a cornucopia. Fortuna, however, was more often associated with the wheel of fortune. The Roman name, Fortuna,

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<sup>75</sup> Tymora. Retrieved March 23, 2005 from the internet.

<sup>76</sup> Charles W. Eliot, ed., *Nine Greek Dramas*, p. 229.

<sup>77</sup> Price and Kearns, eds., *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 562.

is said to have descended from Vortumna, the Etruscan goddess who turns the wheel of fate as well as the celestial wheel of the stars. She is the Great Mother, also known as “She Who Turns the Year.” In addition, Fortuna was assimilated over time with Isis, the Egyptian goddess with combined features of the Terrible Mother and the Good Mother.<sup>78</sup> Erich Neumann notes the correspondence of Isis to the Great Mother and also to the primordial archetype of the feminine. He refers to Isis as a fundamental form of the Great Mother.<sup>79</sup> Further support for the Great Mother origins of Fortuna is found in mythologist Gertrud Jobe’s work. Here Fortuna is said to be a deification of the elements of risk and is assimilated with Seimia, a Syrian Mother Goddess and Goddess of Fate.<sup>80</sup>

There is considerable mythological support portraying Fortuna as an archetypal image of the Great Mother. Fate, then, is in the hands of the Great Mother—one may live or die by her whims. The gambler enters the casino with all kinds of preconceived ideas about the magic within—about the abundance of the Great Mother. Magic and omnipotence are expected. The gambler plays with the belief that the Great Mother will cooperate. Magic is in the air. The gambler wishes for a million dollars but fate and circumstances intervene. The slot machine does not deliver the jackpot. Now the gambler must separate from the wish; reality is a “no win” spin. With the Great Mother there are two possibilities—she may give and she may take away.

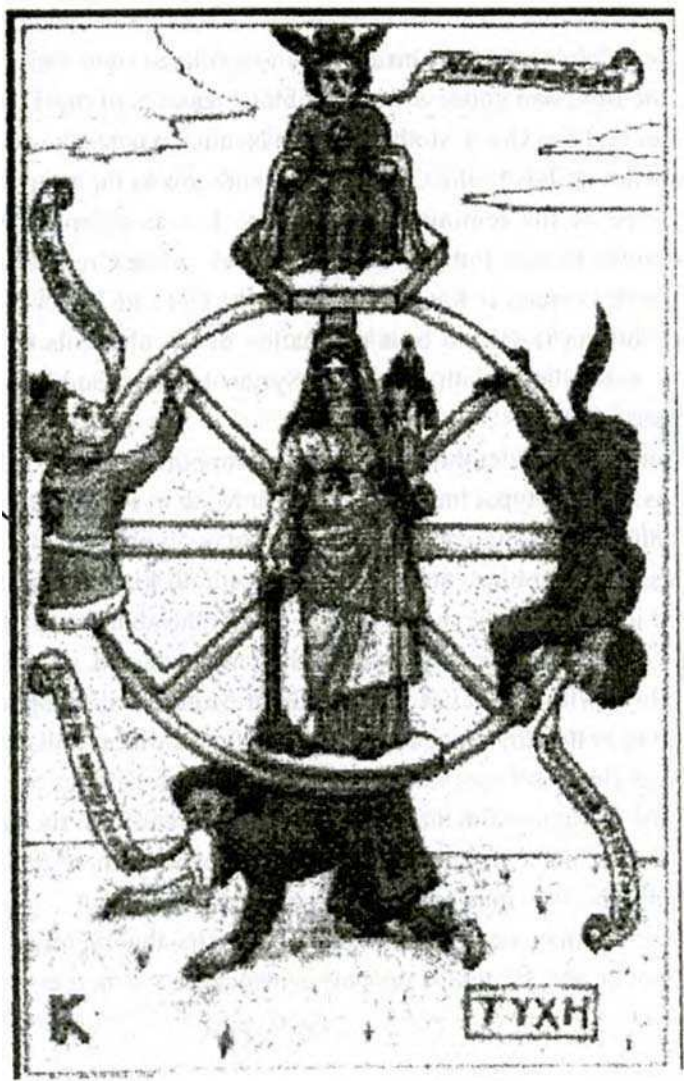
Here we may be reminded of Winnicott’s theory regarding play and creativity and of the power resting in the mother-infant

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<sup>78</sup> Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, p. 166.

<sup>79</sup> *The Great Mother*, p. 22

<sup>80</sup> *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, p. 1616.



Fortuna/Tyche as wheel of fortune.

primary relationship.<sup>81</sup> Fate coming through the hands of the personal mother guides the development of the infant's ego—the development of consciousness—as she responds to the baby's needs. Initially the mother may anticipate and provide for the baby's every need. There is no gap between what baby needs and desires and what it receives. It is magic—when hungry, milk comes. This is the idealized place where the inner world of the baby matches the reality of the external world. There is no human relationship—no space between inner and outer—the archetypal mother provides. But at some point the “good-enough” mother must begin to have a separate identity so that there is a gap between them and a space to negotiate what is “me” and what is “not me.” The baby learns that it is not magic—not omnipotent. This is the gap that provides space for play between the two. The power of this relationship is that the child begins to play within the process of negotiating the separation of the internal world and outer reality.

The child can build up inner confidence when all expectations are not met but comfort is still available from the mother. It is the space from which the baby's sense of self begins to emerge as inner needs separate from outer reality. The child can play alone because the mother is available. The mother is projected onto others over a lifetime—maybe significant others, maybe analyst, maybe Lady Luck. When one can negotiate relationship through creative play, one can live with the disappointments of reality.

When in the grip of the archetypal mother, as with Fortuna and her wheel of fortune, there is no relationship with one's own consciousness, no play space. This is the fate of pathological gamblers who enter the casino expecting magic. Underneath this

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<sup>81</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pp. 55ff.

## 78 Lady Luck

image of power is Fortuna's flirtation with death—one lives or dies by the turn of the wheel.

This powerful image of the Great Mother was gradually chipped away until today it has been trivialized in numerous ways. As monotheism worked to displace the pagan gods and goddesses, Fortuna became secularized as Lady Luck, goddess of the roulette wheel. She remains today as the goddess of gamblers,<sup>82</sup> and she may be seen nightly in the long-running television game of both skill and chance, *Wheel of Fortune*.

In fact, Lady Luck, with another of our gods, Money, is rarely, if ever, out of our current consciousness. The goddess may have been trivialized, but the power of the game and the gambler appear to be, as in the *Bhagavad Gita*, equal to that of the rain, storm, fire, and the strength of the bull. In fact, perhaps as a result of the trivialization of the goddess, she is now entering the mainstream of our society with the full power of the dark feminine. This aspect of the goddess, countering the rationalistic society we live in, pulls the errant gambler into the darkness and isolation of the unconscious. The journey may result in rebirth or death. Her lavish temples, the casinos, are widespread in the United States. Her seductive calls, like those of the mythical Sirens who tempted Ulysses, are broadcast worldwide with the use of twenty-first century technology. Millions of worshippers respond daily to her call.

This goddess has been trivialized in a society that has lost its connection to the wholeness of the Great Mother, degrading her, and resulting in one-sided connections. The healthy gambler is in synch with the mother goddess, respecting her power.

In considering our country's love affair with luck and gambling, with risk taking in general, and the historical connection

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<sup>82</sup> Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia*, p. 321.

with the sacred, a 1969 videotape is relevant. It is a discussion including quotes from Jung and interviews with Jungian analysts who discuss addictions and the spiritual quest. Following is a summary of this discussion from the tape *A World of Dreams*.

There is consensus that the metaphor of height as a place for the gods is universal. Gods over the ages have frequented the mountains and heavens. For the Greeks, it was Mount Olympus. Here then is a mental state suggesting we seek height to be able to touch the gods. This idea falls easily into the modern vernacular of "let's get high." In this case, it would seem one does not feel high, does not feel in touch with the gods (the soul, the life force). This life force is being sought through artificial means, in addictions to everything from money to drugs. Indeed, I even heard recently that preteen children are choking themselves or each other until they feel "high"—light-headed.

There is euphoria in highs of various kinds and at times it is like touching the death experience. At high altitudes, we become light-headed—the brain does not have enough oxygen. Could this apply to the high the gambler feels on entering the casino, and how does such light-headedness affect the rational mind?

In any event, many are driven to seek a way to become high. In the tape interview mentioned above, Adolph Guggenbuhl-Craig talks about how we have moved to many new heights—some of which result in epidemics of inflation in people who hold positions of influence, such as politicians, athletes and journalists. On the tape, Jung comments that the gods lost their divine place in the prevailing culture when Mount Olympus was dismantled, and with that happening, symptoms took their place in humankind. We will have our gods; the spiritual quest will continue. But in our world; the gods manifest as diseases—addictions, compulsions and physical ailments.

Guggenbuhl-Craig, Zurich analyst, also speaks of our arche-



typal quest for gods, for soul—to feel soul—to experience this essence of life. He suggests that many today believe the life essence can be found in money—more money, more gold, more soul. The archetypal quest for communion with the gods—for that elated feeling that comes when our soul is touched—can flow through the business world which is primarily masculine driven. Jung, on the tape, wonders what has happened to the feminine principle in our modern age. This lack of the feminine—the animating aspect of our quest for wholeness—is perhaps lodged in the many temples of addiction.

Fortune, Fate and Luck are usually portrayed as feminine. History identified Fors as the male principle of Chance and Fortuna as the female principle. Eventually the two were combined and the female image prevailed.<sup>83</sup> Lady Luck stands shadowy, but tall, among the sights and sounds inside her temple as she beckons to those seeking the life energy connected to the gods. She offers to fill the emptiness. If you're lucky, she can provide the power of the money god. If your need is to find the resources of the Great Mother—just open the casino door and before you, within reach, are all her resources.

Perhaps it's like the old story of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." In this tale, Ali Baba, a poor man, was hiding in thick brush as a band of thieves came near. He watched quietly as the captain of the thieves separated the brush, said the words "Open, Simsim" and a huge cave door opened. When the thieves left, Ali Baba took his place before the door and said the magic words. Right before his eyes, within the mother cave, were all the riches imaginable.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Grimal, *Dictionary*, p. 165.

<sup>84</sup> Charles W. Eliot, ed., *Stories from the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 443ff.

Now the gambler entering the casino would do well to follow the example of Ali Baba. He took what he could carry to his home and he and his wife buried the treasure, planning to use it in moderation. But a greedy relative persuaded Ali Baba to tell him the secret. Caught in a greed complex, this man forgot the magic words to close the cave door and was hunted down and dismembered by the thieves. Ali Baba found the body parts and took them back to be buried. For many years the thieves tried to find this “accomplice” who had taken away the body parts, but each time they came close, their plan was thwarted by Ali Baba’s female servant, who was always able to see through their disguises. Saved by the feminine, Ali Baba and his family continued to benefit for generations from their moderate use of the cave’s riches.

The abundance of the cornucopia of Dame Fortune awaits the gambler in many ways. If she smiles on you, if she touches you, the Lady brings a supernatural power to the game. The power of money is all around. Or suppose you seek the Lover, the one who possesses your soul, who takes you “out of this world.” The Lady can do that too. As a romantic, you can be seduced by the gifts and exaltation in the temple of Lady Luck. She can overwhelm your ego, taking you to the highest of heights, until, with uncontained passion, you are consumed by the archetypal power of Fire who has your number.

The archetypal quest for the gods—for the soulful, divine feeling of the ecstasy of life—poses many dangers. It is a spiritual journey that requires an ego solid enough to confront the irrationality of the unconscious as it bubbles and boils with the fire of passion. Otherwise the dark side of the feminine—of Lady Luck—will interfere with the spiritual journey. She can become the devouring mother or the Demon Lover. In Jungian language, the anima or anima, our inner psychic other—the func-

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tional complex that is supposed to relate us to the Self—has not been differentiated from our shadow. Thus projections onto the external other are filled with the numinosity and psychic energy of both the shadow and the anima/animus, resulting in an attraction to a figure who is “extraordinarily powerful, fascinating, and fearsome.”<sup>85</sup>

Certainly Lady Luck can be understood as one manifestation of a Demon Lover. Thus, we might find the missing feminine in her arms. But with the lack of feminine relatedness in our culture, it is no surprise that the dark side emerges in a powerful manner. In her casino temple, Lady Luck can ignite the divine spark of Eros. She can animate the soul and inspire the spirit. She can entangle one’s psyche with such a fascination that it seems to lead to wholeness. There is a tremendous sense of power in uniting with this goddess. Even though, when the Lady turns her back, there is the inevitable fall into the dark hole that holds death, the fascination, the vitality, the ecstasy, can be so compelling that the gambler returns again and again. No matter how many rejections, the gambler eagerly reenters the lover’s web. That part of the psyche that can unite with the seductive Lady will do so; and other parts will disappear from consciousness. There is no wholeness except in a distorted shadow form. As with any addiction, once in the arms of the Demon Lover, it is extremely difficult to extricate oneself. The addictive gambler is drowning, gasping for air, but continues to believe in the promise of the Lady’s abundance.<sup>86</sup>

Divination, seeking knowledge from the gods, is historically a ubiquitous activity in the quest for the sacred—the spiritual jour-

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<sup>85</sup> Haule, *Pilgrimage of the Heart*, p. 107.

<sup>86</sup> My thoughts about the psychological aspects of gambling addiction were furthered in an interview with addiction counselor Paul Schoen.

ney toward wholeness. It is this quest that lends power and intensity to the game and the gambler. For it is the archetypal energy of Lady Luck, goddess image of the Great Mother, who beckons. There is the feeling that if you come to her, you can manage your fate. It will work this time. It will be different; luck will be with you. But she is capricious.

There is something absolutely magical about the dance with chance. Within the dance the gambler has the sense that this time Lady Luck will give a reward. The dance itself is so seductive that it does not take much of a monetary reward, if any, to keep the gambler in thrall. In fact, he or she may continue until the last dollar is bet and lost. It is the illusion that the treasure will be won—whatever form that treasure may be—that can take away our humanity—can render us unconscious. The thrill is in the quest. If money payoffs were the only source of this compelling energy, and if chance were left out of the dance, the fascination would diminish. It would be like working in the masculine, factual world of statistical payoffs. The erotic dance with Lady Luck leaves many a gambler rather happily taking losses. This same dance can be experienced in dirty back alleys or in glamorous casinos. But it is the casinos, enticing large numbers of patrons from all walks of life, that put the goddess of luck within reach of the mainstream of society. The dice, cards, numbers and reels—all provide the experience of randomness and unpredictability that touch off the exhilaration of the dance with Lady Luck. It is the desire to control random fate.

The harmony of the dance can be destroyed when the play loses its balance—as with the play of dogs or children—and aggressive behavior breaks the frame. It is similar to sexual energy which may suddenly turn to aggression, sometimes even to the point of dangerous violence. When the power complex of the gambler is constellated and the boundaries of the game are bro-

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ken, if Lady Luck turns her back, the dance may look more like a boxing match. The gambler staggers and the complex takes over. Inside the casino, as we observe the players, we can perceive the harmony, or disharmony, of the dance.

## The Dance of the Gambler with Lady Luck

*If you must play, decide upon three things at the start:  
the rules of the game, the stakes, and the quitting time.*

—Chinese Proverb.

The psychology of the dance and dancers is an interesting study in itself. For some, just dancing is a gamble. For others, the first note of music invites a connection of beauty and grace in perfect harmony with an other. To watch a group of people dance is somewhat astounding. Though they all dance to the same music, their movements often appear to originate from different planets. There is, however, abundant energy with little need for words. In dance at its best, bodies talk one to another in sensuous, soulful delight. A similar observation can be made upon entering the casino, where an animated excitement fills the air. Players and dealers move to an inner rhythm. The energy itself is seductive.

It seems that the game and the dance find an avenue to the soul that is enlivening, animating. My sense is that Lady Luck is forever available in the casino, and she is always ready to dance. She is exactly who she is at all times—capricious, seductive, unpredictable, powerful and enchanting because she knows the way to your soul. She can find it through the energy of the Great Mother—in either her good or terrible aspect. Or, as is her way, she may approach you with both in rapid succession. The Great Mother, holder of Life and Death, always stands waiting.

The gambler can put everything on the line and feel the sting of death. In the shadowy background, Lady Luck wears her hooded cloak of death. Or, the gambler may, on the next roll,

win her approval and win. There, in the light of the pit, Lady Luck stands behind the dealer, with her come hither smile, beckoning—her bright clothes, net hose, lace top and seductive moves setting the hook. Here Lady Luck enacts her designated role as casino hostess, urging the gambler on. No wonder the gambler is likely to experience the numinosity of meeting with chance, of not knowing which of the many aspects of this goddess will visit tonight.

The critical question is not about life or death per se, but rather about the choices that can be made, as a gambler, to hold the tension of the archetypal poles—to allow for the transcendent symbol to emerge. Otherwise, the connection to reality may be lost to the inflation of winning or to the despair inherent in chasing losses. The unmitigated power of the Terrible Mother can take over and leave the gambler indifferent to his or her responsibilities in daily life left behind. The challenge in the casino is to manage the play space provided by the Good Mother, where there is sufficient room for reflection.

In our society, we tend to emphasize the extremes in gambling—the big winner or the big loser, the recreational player or the pathological gambler. This dichotomy keeps the moral conflict surrounding gambling alive and well. It looks like an “either/or” phenomenon. The game and the player are seen as either able to fully enjoy the spirit of life in exciting and harmless activities, or as sinful or “diseased.” The therapeutic community tends to focus on the negative behaviors involved. I believe this tendency does not acknowledge the myriad range of energies at work in individual gamblers. In the make-believe world of the casino, there are infinite roles being played.

In an attempt to bring about a broader awareness of the gambler, I will present here four short “dance” vignettes and discuss the relationship of the manifest behaviors to psychological char-

acteristics and underlying archetypal images. My method of study is qualitative and in some way takes the shape of dream analysis. First, I will present a narrative without comment. This allows the reader to have his or her own fantasies about the characters. The second step will consist of my reflections on the story, moving from the specific behaviors to patterns of a more general nature. The third step will be further reflections that move the patterns to an even deeper, archetypal level. Of particular interest will be the subject's conscious or unconscious relationship to Lady Luck and the direct bearing this has on the choices available to the individual.

These examples will show how rituals work for and against the gambler, and also how psychic energy can manifest from ultraviolet to infrared. Jung described the instinctual—physiological—energies as infrared and the archetypes—psychological—energies as ultraviolet.<sup>87</sup> In some of the stories, the gambler will be seen to have the capability of an inner dialogue—the ability to reset rationality even when the chase has begun. In other cases, when the splintered affects begin to crystallize into fragments of the personality with enough strength to overtake consciousness, the fall is inevitable.

### **Dance One: Sue and Cher**

Two women, Sue and Cher, friends and business partners, enjoy visiting the casino periodically, maybe six or seven times a year. They always anticipate the big hit on the nickel slot machines, and this anticipation has an exciting edge for these two who work long hours. They say that just being in the noisy activity of the casino is fun. Once they even saw a man hit a million-dollar

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<sup>87</sup> See "On the Nature of the Psyche," *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, pars. 384ff



jackpot. That really stirred the pot for the crowd and was energizing and awesome for Sue and Cher. Asked if they had ever been angry in the casino, one answered, "Oh yes, I had been playing one machine for about an hour, getting small hits now and then. I got up and changed machines and this woman sat down and hit \$700 on the first pull. I was mad and thought that that should have been my jackpot. Now that's unlucky—for me, but lucky for her. Luck is fickle you know."

Very conservative in their business life, Sue and Cher remain conservative with their casino habits, taking a maximum of \$40 a visit. If they happen to double their money, they quit with glee, high-fiving and laughing as they go to enjoy the casino buffet. If they fail to hit and their money is almost gone, they slow their play to be sure they get their free (\$40) "Bloody Mary" before the money is gone. When asked what the casino visits mean to them, they talk about the fantasies they have about the "big hit," making sure to explain that anything over \$1000 would be considered big. They often drive the sixty miles feeling the excitement of the possible round the world trip, the big home on the lake with a boat, the freedom to cut down work hours, and so on. But, if they lose it all, "Oh well, we're just losers, for the hundredth time." Asked if they consider themselves to be risk takers in other areas of life, they are clear in their denial. Even in their frequent competitive tennis play, their approach is to be consistent, to stay with the high percentage shots. Their thinking is, "We work too hard for our money to throw it away in the casino, and without wasting money we have enough to live satisfactorily and to plan for our future. We win at tennis by waiting for others to make mistakes." Like the casino business, they play the percentages.

Sue and Cher enjoy each other. There is a soulfulness to their relationship and a commitment to each other. They are enlivened

by the mindless play of the slots and the ever possible big win that is omnipresent with casino gambling. Playing the slots, their interactions are with a machine and their play can have the secret pleasure of the child talking to or playing with a doll. It's fun, in this make-believe world, to talk to the machine, pat the machine, beg the machine to recognize the power of fate. They are also enlivened by the excited energy in the casino.

Sue and Cher demonstrate a clear ability to set limits both in terms of money and time—number of visits to the casino as well as time spent there. Both claim never to have felt compelled to go to the casino. Their competitive need to win and disappointment at losing is a significant part of their lives, but this is lived out in their sport, competitive tennis. In the game of tennis, strategy and mental toughness are as important as physical skill. In addition, money is not wagered on the tennis matches. Even though they play a calculated, high percentage game, they take the risk of losing. There is always risk in competition. So for these two women, the casino is an easy, mindless way to let go of their everyday tasks—but in a responsible manner. Sue and Cher know how to “play,” and for them, money is a valued part of their lives. It is not to be wasted.

In an archetypal analysis of this story, it is clear that these two women respect Lady Luck. She is the playmate in the machine with whom they can safely reveal their puella personalities. Their chosen game is one of chance only—a passive game. Lady Luck calls all the shots. She gives and she takes away. These women recognize the capriciousness of gambling and are not absorbed in a grandiose fantasy that would leave them prey to possession by the archetype. In the temple of the goddess, they can enjoy the rich resources the Good Mother provides in the form of food, drink and play space.

For Sue and Cher, playing in their casino make-believe world

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is quite opposite to the active mental and physical game of tennis. When playing slots it is appropriate to relax and play from within a lowered state of consciousness. It is an easy, mindless way to enter into another world—an animated imaginal world. In a sort of euphoric state, play can take place in the space provided and within the rules. They keep away from the seduction of the big win by maintaining a rational approach to time and money. They are clearly excited if they win, but in fact, a \$20 win is as energizing for them as a \$5,000 win for the man playing the \$10 machine nearby. They salute rather than worship the money god. For these two women, life is a ritual and chaos is tempered by Eros within the dyad of the couple. The counting of money is done not in the casino, looking for a nod from Lady Luck—something for nothing—but in their business. There seems to be no spiritual void opening the door to the destructive forces of Lady Luck.

I have noticed in my observations and interviews that recreational gamblers usually participate with a friend or partner. They share their experiences with each other even when they gamble separately. There are no secrets about time or money spent in the activity.

### **Dance Two: Pat**

Pat is a man in his sixties, recently retired from a large brokerage firm. He has been a gambler for as long as he can remember. He says he has never gone “off the deep end,” at least in gambling for money. He did, however, get caught with another woman early in his life and this broke up his marriage. Pat admits to having been so fascinated with the other woman that he lost his head—completely disregarding his family. Two years into the affair Pat realized he had to give too much of himself to please the whims of his new lover. He went through a long depression

in working to extricate himself from his fascination. Several years after the affair and his ensuing divorce, he remarried and this twenty-year relationship is described by him as “healthy and happy.” Since his retirement he has more leisure time; and he and his wife take frequent gambling trips together. Pat has always spent time at horse races or at casinos, often going to race tracks and thoroughly studying the racing forms. He says he doesn’t bet as much money at the races as he does in the casino because he feels a powerful thrill just by being at the races, seeing the horses and the people involved, feeling a part of the race, and when he picks a winner, he says, “That’s just gravy.”

We might call Pat a studied gambler. He is well aware of the laws of probability that form the basis of his business, and he also has his hunches which may be triggered by internal as well as external factors. For example, he often shoots craps, a game on which you can bet for or against the shooter (the one who rolls the dice). If he feels negative energy from the shooter, he will bet against him—on the “Don’t Pass” line. The game has all kinds of odds, according to the numbers you play, and he knows the odds and therefore is not prone to “sucker” bets. Craps has no element of skill except for the understanding of the bets placed. All the other games he plays have an element of skill.

Pat is an excellent club golfer and says he learned all about wagering on the golf course while growing up. Then, of course, there was always the nineteenth hole (the clubhouse card room) with its gin rummy or poker game. In the casino, Pat admits to betting more than he should at times. His safety net is in his refusal to stay at the tables chasing losses. He always makes dinner reservations for himself and his wife, Kay, and no matter what is happening at the table, he stops for dinner and calls it a night. Kay doesn’t play at the table with him—she prefers mindless games. There are no secrets, however; they know where each

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stands at the end of the play. Kay bets smaller amounts but she admits to being much more upset with herself when she loses than he ever is. He tells her she would have spent much more money in the mall and to just enjoy the game. One more rule for Pat—he never drinks alcohol while he plays. He may drink at club poker or gin games, he says, but never at the casino.

Pat is considered a high roller because of his frequent play and the size of his bets. He is therefore privy to the top level of comps that would include room, food at the finest restaurants and other amenities. Pat is seen as a gentleman gambler, quiet and nonintrusive at the tables whether winning or losing. He tips the dealers, win or lose. They are, he says, providing him a service and making his game enjoyable. If he gets a dealer with an attitude or one who spills his woes, Pat goes to another table. This is his entertainment, not a place to hear sob stories. In addition, it is negative energy of the kind avoided by Pat.

Pat seeks action and he is confident of his skills as a player. Money is not primary for him. His excitement comes from the game itself—the anticipation of the roll of the dice and the draw of the cards. It's that time of "not knowing" that fires him up.—the time between the bet and the roll of the dice. Wagering is a way of life for Pat and he feels confident in this role. For him, it is entertainment at its finest. His calm external demeanor, his bodily response, seems to deny his described exhilaration. His body moves about smoothly, in harmony with the game. There is a rhythm, and he sinks into it. When the rhythm breaks, he moves to another game for then it ceases to be fun.

The archetypal image behind Pat would seem to be that of the Player, the gentleman gambler. He knows how to dance with Lady Luck and the excitement of her capricious ways is bonding. Lady Luck is like a veiled belly dancer—erotically exciting in her moves—first you see her, then you don't. He never gets all

he may desire, but he takes with him each time the tantalizing illusion of the dancer. He maintains a balance of passion for the game with rituals to impose rules and provide boundaries—a safety net that keeps the seductive Lady at bay. He does not get caught in the mana personality in spite of his high roller status, but he does enjoy the attention and numerous amenities.

Pat lost his first wife and family following his affair with a woman who might be thought of as his Demon Lover. He was in a complete state of *participation mystique* and lost all touch with his external world.<sup>88</sup> It was a devastating loss—the worst gamble of his life. He was ridiculed and ostracized; his family was shamed. Pat dealt with the suffering that was the result of his fascination. He faced the Terrible Mother and came to know his shadow. Perhaps the affair provided the jolt, the intensity, that set him on a new path. Eventually he met and married the woman he considers to be his soulmate. Now he seems content with who he is and seems to be enjoying this stage of his life. Controlled gambling continues to give him the thrill of the chase.

Pat shows respect for others and in return expects respect from others. Perhaps this is from the shame of the ridicule he lived through. This gambling man continually plays with fire, but he has a fire extinguisher on his back. He does not lose complete control and he has rituals that keep him from Dionysian frenzy. He knows he cannot win every night. Pat, we could say, is a man who is following his bliss—his daimon.

### Dance 3: Mary and Joan

One afternoon as I entered the casino, Betty, a pit boss who knew I was studying gamblers, motioned me toward a particular

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<sup>88</sup> “Participation mystique. A term derived from anthropology and the study of primitive psychology, denoting a mystical connection or identity, between subject and object. (Sharp, *Jung Lexicon*, p. 96)

table. I sat down and quickly found myself in the midst of two gambler stereotypes. The first, Mary, a seductively-dressed woman about fifty, was talking nonstop, flailing her arms in all directions, cooing her luck and gambling wisdom to an elderly woman, Joan, sitting beside her. It seems that Joan had never played before and Mary was taking credit for Joan's incredible streak of luck at three-card poker, a game which involves only chance. Mary told the story of how she had helped Joan, a destitute woman who came in with only \$40 to her name, build her winnings to \$800. This was so wonderful, said Mary, because Joan's husband was ill, there was no money for medicine, and she had come in with hope and a prayer. The Lord had taken notice. The story line, of course, was intriguing and received much attention from the other players. Joan, who, according to Mary, lives from paycheck to paycheck, picked up each win with shaking hands and a look of total astonishment. Eventually she left with her winnings and Mary turned her attention to a man at the table.<sup>89</sup>

This man, in his fifties, was constantly grumbling that he was the only one not getting good hands, though this was not the case. He felt that the dealer had something against him and it was just not fair. Mary engaged him in flirtatious banter that became loud and obscene as each tried to have the last, and I suppose, the funniest word. The man, whose incessant smoking and flailing arms matched Mary's behavior, finally left the table when the pit boss reprimanded him for his obscenities. He refused the request of the dealer to turn his chips in for larger value chips so he wouldn't have so many to carry, then he accidentally

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<sup>89</sup> I had a gnawing sense that Joan's luck would turn, because the odds were high that she would return to the casino within twenty-four hours and lose everything. Her fantasy was fed—just as it was for the grandmother in Dostoevsky's tale, *The Gambler*..

dropped his chips on the floor and pouted like a little boy, saying he was not going to play here anymore.

Soon a sharply dressed and very articulate man sat by Mary. He was a young man but totally bald and Mary could not let that go. She reached over and patted his cheek and head. Although he had been pleasant initially with her nonstop talking, the touch to his head was more than he could handle. He let her know in no uncertain terms that she had invaded a very personal space. Again, Mary could not let it go, and in attempting to defend herself, she touched his head again. He became more insistent that she refrain from any and all touch. She offered to bring him luck. She let us all know that she knew the ropes and that in fact she gambled for a living. Certainly, she said, all one needed to do in order to win was to believe you could win. The man left after losing five straight hands. Mary said, "Good riddance, bad luck man."

Mary's luck then changed, and as she lost she began to increase her bets. Before long her chips, which had amounted to about \$600, were gone. She moved toward a young, clean-cut African-American man who had been playing quietly beside her during this scene. She rubbed his arm and the back of his neck, whispered something in his ear, and he handed her five red (\$5) chips. She began to play a minimum bet, hit on several hands, and paid the man back. He immediately left the table.

During the two hours I was at the table, Mary received seven calls on her cell phone. Each time she looked at the caller ID, said, "It's my husband again," and hung up. Finally Mary and I were the only ones at the table. Mary told me that she and her husband had made good money in real estate, had retired, and now they were both professional gamblers. I asked her a few questions about gambling. Since she said it was the way she made her living, I found it most unusual that she would play this



particular game of chance which involved no skill. I asked about how many hours a week she usually played, what games she played, and when she told me her choices, I asked if she had ever won a “bad beat” hand in poker.<sup>90</sup> She was curiously avoidant and looked at me suspiciously. The pit boss told her of my interest in gamblers, but Mary continued to look at me warily. Later in the game she lashed out at me, accusing me of saying something to her that was rude. She continued to look at me suspiciously and as I left she mumbled that I had brought a negative influence to the table. When Mary was winning, she was drinking coffee. As her losing streak accelerated, she asked for shots of bourbon to go with her coffee.

My interaction with Mary was initiated by a pit boss whose job it is to know what’s going on in their assigned area—a group of about eight tables, arranged in an oval or rectangle. Sometimes, as I observe the chaos in the pit (requests shouted by dealers: “black out,” meaning someone is cashing out and leaving with a black, \$100 chip; requests from patrons for credit or comps; security checks; money counts; changing decks of cards), it seems like a snake pit with incredible coiling, movement and energy within a small space. It has a mandala shape and the pit boss keeps order. Pit bosses know their regular players by name and by habits. Betty was excited when she saw me arrive—she had the perfect table for me to join. The stereotypical gamblers were Mary, the table “goddess” who felt she could control fate, and the older man who was reprimanded by the pit boss and left

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<sup>90</sup> A “bad beat” hand is a very good hand which is beaten by an even better hand. Sometimes the win occurs when a poor player or an aggressive player makes a long-shot draw—a maddening occurrence for the astute gambler. A regular player in casinos would know that special jackpots were sometimes given to the “bad beat” hand; i.e., both hands were allowed to win.

in a huff—the puer.

The older woman, Joan, who was the recipient of the luck supposedly bestowed by Mary, was an initiate. She had never played before and fell gratefully into the arms of “mother Mary”—now overly identified with Lady Luck. Joan’s large stack of chips demonstrated Mary’s success in bringing luck. My fear was that Joan, by virtue of her large win, would be seduced to return. She represents both the senior citizen and low-income groups who often fall prey to the magic of early wins. They are perfect examples of the strength of intermittent reinforcement and, unfortunately, are the ones least able financially to handle a string of losses. Mary’s effusive demeanor gratified the woman and the table responded to Joan’s humble stance. She was quite anxious and her hands shook to the point that she could barely pick up her chips. Her excitement was intense.

Mary’s histrionic invasiveness drew the ire of the one big loser at the table. His blame placing at first brought motherly support from Mary. He was acting like a child and she treated him like one. Then she challenged his anger with sexually-tinged obscenities—such as “Let me show you another way to grow up,” as she moved her breasts toward him. It was interesting when the pit boss reprimanded the man for his language and never said a word to Mary, who actually started the off-color banter. Indeed, women may have privileges!

Mary’s magical sense of herself was often shown by her comments, for example, “Bad luck man, good riddance.” Maybe he brought bad luck on himself by rejecting “mother”—she had been on a roll. She clearly felt responsible for Joan’s luck. Mary was spinning the wheel—controlling luck through her beliefs. But maybe, as the Rhine experiments suggested, the effect of the positive energy diminished with trials.

Mary’s shift to the African-American man came when she ran

out of money. She did touch him in a seductive manner but it was quiet and not designed to attract the attention of the table. She was able to make her bets in a reasonable manner. She changed her game. It was interesting that the man left so quickly after his payback. It was as though he were protecting himself from the web of the black widow. I pondered why Mary had not turned her attention to him earlier. I suspect it was because he was African-American and her background had taboos against the crossing of racial lines with her seductive demeanor.

I think Mary identified with the seductive image of the prostitute, but she shape-shifted in response to each person she approached. These changes, from mother to admirer, to lover, to little girl, were all a part of seductive play. She failed miserably with the bald man. Her invasiveness touched a vulnerability in him that almost led him to physical aggression. He rejected her and separated by leaving the table. For him, she became the mother who just couldn't ignore a blemish—a sore spot—an intimate vulnerability. Her perseveration took over and she could not keep her hands off him.

Mary's failure to answer the phone calls from her husband attests to her over-identification with Lady Luck—there is no other world that matters.

Joan, the initiate, was overwhelmed with the illusion of luck. But it is an illusion—here today and gone tomorrow. She was taking home the wealth, which in fact might turn out to be more “luck” than she could handle. It is not unusual for people who have runs of luck when they first begin gambling to have difficulty giving up the fantasy that fortune is with them.

My interaction with Mary aroused quite a negative transference. I was alone at the table with her and asked her a few questions. I suspect we were both caught in a negative field because my questions were much more pointed than usual for me. For

example, in wanting to explore her statements about being a professional gambler, I brought up the bad-beat winning hand—a tricky question, since only in the special jackpot event would a bad beat be a winning hand. Her reactions to my questions indicated to me that she exaggerated her gambling prowess. In addition, had I not been there for the purpose of observing gamblers, I would never have remained at the table as I found her behavior quite offensive. Mary did not revere Lady Luck. Rather she had taken on the magic of the mana personality and wanted to be the goddess herself. When her illusion was broken, she sought relief from a different spirit—alcohol.

#### **Dance four: Sally**

Sally, a young woman in her thirties, daughter of a gambler, began to play blackjack as the casinos spread across the state of Mississippi. At first she played for small amounts of money. But as she continued to play, it was clear that she was good, disciplined and prone to play by systems designed to keep her from losing more than she could afford. She often told people she had to play carefully within her system because she was just an unlucky person by nature.

Over time, Sally began to accumulate some winnings following her plan. Consequently, she increased her bets until her minimum bet was \$25 and she would increase bets, according to her system, to several hundred dollars per hand. She began to be seen as a high roller and received many casino comps consisting of free rooms, meals in the five-star restaurants, massages, limousine service and free show tickets. In one twelve-day period, with a long run of luck, Sally won \$72,000. She was treated like a queen by the casino staff and began to see herself as magical in her ability to beat the odds. She lost her grounding and decided that she no longer needed her system. Losses began to mount.

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She became angry and blaming at the tables, and chased her losses by playing the \$25 to \$100 slot machines. She cursed her bad luck—the roll was downward.

Sally quit her job and within six months she had lost all her winnings. Within six more months, she had lost \$50,000 more, an amount made available to her by five credit cards, each with a \$10,000 limit. She disappeared and would not return calls to her family or contact them in any way. She eventually let a sister know that she was planning suicide and the sister brought her to a psychiatrist. In one short visit, in which, according to the sister, Sally was in a rage, blaming everyone from the credit card companies to the casinos to her genes, she was prescribed a potent antipsychotic medication to which she had a severe physical reaction. In her anger she refused to go back to the psychiatrist.

Sally is now living with her sister and is beginning to build her life again. She has, however, not given up the desire to gamble and is seriously studying the “art of gambling” as it applies to “Texas Hold ‘Em,” the poker game popularized by television coverage of the World Series of Poker. Unfortunately, her discipline is endangered by her significant mood swings. Fortunately, she no longer has credit.

This is the story of a woman who went over the edge and lost her boundaries through the experience of winning. Her wins brought more than money; they also brought attention and status in the casino community. Even though she knew the only possibility of winning over time would be to control her bets and leave the tables according to her system, she became inflated and highly excited about the attention received from staff and other players. She was “walking with the gods,” and yet she was filled with tension and the stress attendant on being able to remain a winner. Her excitement escalated and she admitted that the more she won, the higher were her expectations and the larger her

bets—there was never enough. As Lady Luck left her, she spiraled into a deep void. Chaos swirled with her fatigue and mounting debts. Relationships were severed. She was alone.

At a deeper level, Sally's psychic energy can be seen to have been fueled by all five of the archetypal powers that von Franz named as being able to count. In the beginning there was Day, the consciousness that enabled a rational beginning to the game and the excitement of the wins. But she flew too close to the light. Inflation began to dismantle her ritualistic defenses. She had carefully planned her rituals—her systems—and was certain she could hold her boundaries, but in the heat of success, power interfered. The winds of chaos fanned the Fire and heated up her relationships within the casino, the temple—the connection with Lady Luck—and finally the identification with the archetype. At this point, her emptiness seemed to be filled. She had Wealth, but beside her stood a smiling Lady Luck taking back a little at a time—pushing the boundaries, extending the limits. The void deepened again and Lady Luck, in her gray cape, beckoned through the darkness, just as in the West African prayer—counting, counting—Death has your number.

Finally, within the darkness, a light appeared and Sally's psychic energy shifted enough to reach out. Eros responded in the form of her sister. The question remains: will the void be filled with substantive spirit or will the pattern be repeated, searching always for the soulful connection through a dangerous high?

This young woman's consciousness was not well grounded. Without a solid ego, the walk with Lady Luck is very dangerous indeed. Sally's poorly developed relationship between consciousness and the unconscious was not stable enough to hold the tension—the rudder did not go deep enough. Inflation moved in as the mana personality. Then she became one with the goddess, of the casino temple, Lady Luck. Sally began to partake of

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and to expect to have the abundant resources of the Good Mother at her beck and call. She was possessed. Snap your fingers, ask to be pampered, and the fire of the goddess makes it so. “I am a winner, a special person smiled on by the gods. This is my temple too. I can control my Fate.”

But control was just a fantasy. She expected to win more and more. Her system went by the wayside. Losses began to mount. Lady Luck spun her wheel and the trickster appeared: “Loosen your boundaries, play all night, bet the limit, things have to change, get in the chase so you can cover the debts. Your luck will change.” She was caught in the frenzied chase of the dark side of Dionysus—the chase that dismembers. Here she was overtaken by an autonomous complex that marginalized her ego—she was rendered mindless and fell into the void of the unconscious—the world of delusion. Death was counting; wealth decreased to the minus side as it transformed into debt. Emptiness prevailed. But just slightly, through the darkness, there appeared a tiny light—a spark of hope. And it was fueled by Eros—not the dark side of Eros who married Lady Luck, but the life energy—relatedness to her sister.

When does the gambler go over the edge? When the balance between the ego and the Self tilts and the unconscious takes over consciousness. The passion of the instincts enters with a voracious appetite, leaving no room for logic. For Sally, it brought about a transformation. Sally needed to hide, to suffer the shame, to feel the pain. Something was not right—not even ethical. The critical inner mother brought a spark of consciousness—let her feel the guilt and loss—the rejection by the dark side of Lady Luck. It was a hot shame—like boiling oil. It was a death, this time resurrected through love. The Great Mother, in the temple of Lady Luck, recycles death and rebirth.

## Discussion

*If one is forever cautious, can one remain a human being?*

— Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle*.

My intent with the above stories was 1) to direct attention to the differing images and manifestations of the archetypal energy and patterns of Lady Luck that may be experienced by gamblers; 2) to direct attention to the differing patterns of play that exist among gamblers; and 3) to expand our personal images of the gambler to include the life-affirming as well as the destructive energies on the continuum from play to pathology.

Sue and Cher are recreational gamblers, enlivened in the presence of the goddess, knowing fortune could come their way and knowing they would not wager more than planned. They delighted in their fantasies of possible wealth but knew realistically that wealth was more likely to come as a function of their work. There were rules related to play and they followed the rules—not only in the casino but also in their business and competitive tennis. Lady Luck was respected and acknowledged to be fickle. A big win would be a tremendous surprise, as there was no belief that they could weave a magical spell around themselves to gain her special favor. There was also no sense that they were skillful gamblers. It was all luck for them. There were no secrets connected to their play. In addition, these women led active and healthy lives with no indication of depression or anxiety. For them, the casino is an entertainment center.

Pat, in example two, is a skilled recreational gambler. His deep shame from an extramarital affair appears to have had a transforming effect. He remains aware of the abyss lurking just under the stream of consciousness. His shadow has been exposed—he knows that part of himself. In pursuing his games, he establishes boundaries and he includes his wife, his playmate.



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Once having fallen under the spell of a woman in his external world, he is careful not to fall under the spell of Lady Luck. He is respectful in her temple—a true gentleman gambler. None of the three recreational gamblers abused alcohol.

Mary, in example three, is a woman on the edge. Within her delusional play, she believes she has the magic to control fate—not only her own, but that of others as well. She has poor boundaries with others as well as with the game itself, and isolates herself from her partner. She manifests the seductive, prostitute image of Lady Luck. I suspect that she is chronically dysthymic and having retired, is now looking for life in all the wrong places. Her manic defenses push people away from her, which causes her to increase her abrasive approaches. Mary became overly identified with the goddess, and later, having lost her magic, her mana, she turned to alcohol.

Sally, in the fourth example, has been over the edge—has fallen into the darkness of the unknown and has survived. Her mood swings add a heavy load to her recovery. She is now seeking spiritual warmth and meaning through a television evangelist and family connections. Interestingly, she has become a very obsessive mother to two dogs. Within this role, an abundance of energy has been released—a nurturing part of her has come to life.

Some gamblers get close to the edge. They may fall into a Dionysian frenzy, running off into the darkness of the temple—getting lost in the chaos, but somehow, after some hours, they remember there is a tomorrow and it will bring consequences and responsibilities. For them, it may be important that their gambling trips be shared with someone who cares. It is important that they remain conscious enough to think of the reality of family and work. The secretive gambler is most in jeopardy with no one to “know” until it’s too late. For them, the part that’s broken

is the timing of the reappearance of consciousness. The delusion—or the superstitious behavior that keeps saying, “It’s my turn, got to stick it out, odds are in my favor,”—may allow a deep hole of debt to open up. Consciousness needs to return before that happens.

Some pathological gamblers—as in other addictions—lose their capacity to care. When this is the case, instead of following their bliss—accepting their own desires to gamble in an appropriate manner in respectful play—they deny it openly and pursue it secretly. Within that behavior and response, the caring attitude becomes lost or fades entirely. Within the secret gambler there is the possibility of a terrifying emptiness.

As gambling enters the mainstream of society, it seems important that mental health professionals develop an awareness of the complexities of the gambler archetype. Many people love to gamble, and love itself is a gamble. As the popular song says, “If you haven’t gambled for love and lost, then you haven’t gambled at all.” We can imagine the gambler to be in a stormy relationship with Lady Luck. In his essay on “The Eros Theory,” Jung describes Eros as a questionable fellow and goes on to say:

Too much of the animal distorts the civilized man, too much civilization makes sick animals.<sup>91</sup>

The instinctive nature of Eros energy is difficult to contain. Uncontained Eros may break the rules, create lust, and wound those in its path. But without Eros energy, there is a soulful deadness. We need the play of our instinctual nature even though it is difficult to contain. It is perhaps our ability to enjoy the imaginative place and stay within the boundaries that separates the recreational risk taker from the problem gambler.

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<sup>91</sup> *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, CW 7, par. 32.

Play space is initially defined by the mother. In this exploration and amplification of Lady Luck, she is imaged as an aspect of the Great Mother. Thus she is the source of life.. Within her are abundant resources. She comes into our lives through the experience of the personal mother who introduces us to the world of play in the Winnicottian sense. This should not be seen as a technique but rather as a way of being. It is similar to the way an analyst and analysand might engage while in the field of symbolic play, a place of mystery, a sacred space. In this sacred container, play evolves over time. It is there that we can exclude obstacles to our imagination from our external and internal worlds. Mystery play can enliven us across the emotional continuum, from suffering to ecstasy. The analytic couple, like the mother-infant dyad, is drawn together through a seductive symbiosis. Time and space contingencies are extinguished. And so it is as we enter the temple of Lady Luck.<sup>92</sup>

Lady Luck reigns supreme in her temple, the casino. As it was with Tyche in classical Greece, hers is still a timeless world. It is a place of mystery—the mystery of not knowing—the mystery of wondering, hoping. Will Lady Luck dance with me tonight? The fantasy that she will in fact smile on me provokes a sensory excitement that has to do with the lack of predictability, the taking of risk. The fantasy lives. And in this sacred, timeless play space, soul can be touched.

When soul is touched, when experiences are heart-felt, a cellular memory trace is awakened. Perhaps it is the memory of creation—of birth. Or perhaps it is the fascination of love. In any

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<sup>92</sup> I wonder if the proliferation of gambling in our society is in some way related to our devaluation of symbolic, imaginal play. Today's schools are all about the rigid teaching of academics. Money and competition are valued by adults. Have we robbed ourselves of the kind of play most important to psychological development?

event, it is a peak experience sought by numerous individuals who find themselves caught in an overly scheduled, robotic world. Where can the animation of life be found? For millions and millions of people today, it is sought, and found, at least temporarily, in the temple of Lady Luck. And yes, the emotional experience may range from suffering to ecstasy, but it is an animating experience with the potential to be transforming.

Throughout history we find amazing stories about dice games and the seduction of games of chance. With dice, we have the concept of unpredictability—the mystery of not knowing. Dice have mana energy, an intensity described in the *Bhagavad Gita* and many other stories from a variety of cultures. It is an energy not to be found in the mundane daily world. We humans seek transformative energy and find it in many guises.

In Jungian theory, psychic energy—libido—can be channeled from a lower level, or even a dormant state, to a higher level by way of symbols, thus freeing energy from the unconscious to be utilized by the ego, the center of consciousness. When this occurs, when symbolic engagement assigns meaning to the symbol of Lady Luck, energy from the unconscious may then become available to the ego—to be used consciously. Pat is an example of this. He had taken risks—had engaged with Lady Luck since childhood and had experienced both her abundance and her capriciousness. He had developed a high level of consciousness and reverence regarding this image.

Lady Luck—our personal image of her—can rev the psychic engine to a high pitch. With the Great Mother behind her, she enlivens consciousness. Dormant libido, resulting in a bored or robotic orientation to life, often responds to the animation of her image. By seeking stimulation, individuals may be susceptible to possession by the archetype. We might see this in the person frightened of taking risks—a person who leads an overly con-

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strained life with little opportunity to develop a positive attitude toward risk taking—a life-affirming experience of Lady Luck as a symbolic image has not been experienced. Such a person has not experienced luck symbolically, and so is apt to fall under the spell of the archetype.

Most compulsive gamblers are identified with the archetype, believing that Lady Luck can be called at will. This leads to an inflated state. As with Sally, unconscious energy takes over consciousness. Mary's behavior suggests boredom with life, but also greed—like the risk taking of corporate executives looking only for profits. They believe that no matter what, the gods will always smile on them. A person possessed by the archetype, rather than being grounded in personal experience, may begin to live out archetypal values rather than personal ones. The Self, the organizing factor of the psyche, is no longer engaged with the ego and the relationship with Lady Luck is disconnected from life experience. If this kind of gambler suffers heavy losses, we might expect violence or aggression.

Psychic energy may be experienced as anything from simple laughter to overwhelming lust. We can dance with the Lady, or we can be held prisoner in her symbiotic embrace. Either way, there is a shift away from emptiness toward vitality. Why do kings wager their wives after losing their kingdoms? Why do soldiers lose until they have to go to battle naked? Why are so many people seduced by Lady Luck? Because with every throw of the dice, there is the excitement of the chase—the possible touch of the goddess—the look of love from the Great Mother. It is an aspect of the hopeful search for the spirit of life that can become destructive if unconscious energy controls the psyche, or life affirming if there has been conscious engagement through the symbol of the goddess of fate and fortune.

We must face our shadow to know our inner gambler—our

risk-taker. This is part of our work on the journey to wholeness—the process of individuation. There need not be a casino gambler we have to face, but without a willingness to take risks of some kind, we find ourselves in a dead place. Somewhere between our acceptable persona and our primitive instincts, I believe we will find a gambler able to hold the tension of the opposites and to play in the treacherous space of transformation.



Lady Luck holding in balance the opposites, symbolized by sun and moon. Relief print by Vicki Cowan.

## Epilogue

*I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work,  
the more I have of it.*

—U.S. President Thomas Jefferson.

As I was reflecting on my work around the gambler, I found myself befuddled, struggling to get a handle on my thoughts for an epilogue. I went to bed irritated with my lack of production—one or two simple pages—why could I not write? Then, as Lady Luck would have it, I had this dream:

I was with a group of people in a large—huge—room, like a community center. Warren (a rational dream figure) was there and Lady Doc was there. The room was decorated with all kinds of huge trees and plants—some decorated Christmas trees too—sort of like the Beau Rivage casino that was flooded by Katrina. I was dancing around, teasing and having fun—then I dragged the decorated Christmas tree around like a dance partner. Warren was watching me. I danced toward him smiling and pointing my finger. Finally I danced away and put the tree back up. Then I went to the room with the Lady Doc. Another couple was with us. They were analysts.

I think of Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Christ and, for me, a symbol of the formation of Self. Here I was, dancing around in front of all these people feeling great glee, embracing the authentic part of myself that can become completely lost in toxic shame. How freeing is that? Then I left the room—not toward the casino, not with Lady Luck but with Lady Doc. Perhaps this is my newly born inner analyst who can enjoy the freedom of being real, even under the gaze of the critical masculine.

Walking away with Lady Doc is self affirming. It's not about luck alone because it also took hard work to bring about the level of consciousness necessary to embrace myself—and to bring my long disabled feminine into center stage.

The tree can represent Mother and dancing can be analysis itself, the analytic rhythm, the dance between two people. Dancing in the Mother world gives me life; this is the authentic connection with the Mother world—not the false self who runs to Lady Luck and lives and dies by her capricious hand.

And perhaps it is as simple and as difficult as this. In the gambler, patterns repeat themselves. If these patterns invade consciousness without being integrated—if they bubble up from the unconscious and take over, the result tends toward destruction—or addiction. Our own grounding, our own sense of self, enables the gambler to play imaginatively between the world of illusion and the world of reality—to stay within the powerful energy of the game.

Yes, it's not all luck—skill and consciousness are necessary in managing my emotional self. The strength of the gambler, in any walk of life, may be measured by the authenticity of the person. Has my true self or my false self come to play? Is there a sense of unity between my inner and outer worlds? In Winnicott's terms, is fantasy differentiated from reality? In this space there is room for creative play which links inner and outer. Here the mind and body come together in imaginative gambols. This inner dialogue constitutes my way of being. I find my life inside myself. As I experience this, I feel a rhythmic cadence—a dance is in the making. The trick is to keep my feet on the ground as I face the many gambles that confront me. Too much of the illusory world is dangerous and addictive. Too much of the rational world is deadening.

As I complete this work, I wonder what it will mean to me—



how will it change the way I live—the way I work? Looking back on my life, I know that every issue that has really fascinated me has evoked the gambler in me—has prodded me to take a chance. This more often than not has resulted in moving me into some life-changing place—not always for the better. As I ponder, I am somewhat surprised to find how I reject risk taking in several parts of my life. One of the most prominent of these is the delay in speaking my mind.

As I think about the difficulty of finding my own voice, I realize I have taken some hard falls in my life because of my erotic fascination with people who can express opinions with great facility and self-confidence, people who can summon up eloquence and passion in a mini-second. While I, standing tall, can only look and listen longingly; my way is to filter every sentence through each cell in my body before I can utter a sound. Am I afraid that what I say may be wrong and leave me vulnerable? Have I lived this piece of the gambler through another? Excitement has come to me on the tennis court or golf course, at duplicate bridge or in a casino. In such places you can clearly tell if you are a winner or a loser. And there, someone always has to lose, but the loser still has value for having played the game.

In working on the gambler, I have been enlivened by the spirit of play that surrounds the game—even the word “gambler.” I am delighted by the curiosity of those interested in my work. I speak with them with a kind of assurance I have rarely felt. Now, I thought, that is interesting. Am I finally comfortable talking with people—expounding my opinions in a self-assured manner?

I believe this work has opened me to a part of myself that was hidden by shame—the kind of shame that kept my twenty-first birthday experience a secret for forty-five years.. I was never, to my mind, as smart or competent as others seemed to think I was. I had to work hard to live up to those expectations. It put me in a

place of shame-based humility. I felt like an imposter. Not only that, but in order to balance this inferior feeling, I took it upon myself to find all kinds of exciting life experiences in a more physical world—a world where I could gamble and expect to win much of the time.

With this in mind, I took one of the biggest gambles of my life when I applied for training as a Jungian analyst after working for thirty years as a psychologist. The interesting thing is that when I did it, I did not know it was a gamble. I thought I knew who I was. The most difficult task was to shake hands with myself and to embrace my shadow parts. The most difficult analysis was my own. It resulted in resculpting of the ego—at times a harsh chiseling. I have learned that I was not who I thought I was.

And through this process I have also learned that winning and losing are not always apparent—and that it does not matter. I can fail miserably and still have value. There is always enough hope to start again. What *does* matter is that I no longer feel like an imposter. That is the most liberating feeling I have ever had.

I have met and played with my inner gambler. I hope my story and my study of gamblers will help others to embrace theirs.

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