

# Bets legalization and Gambling Disorder

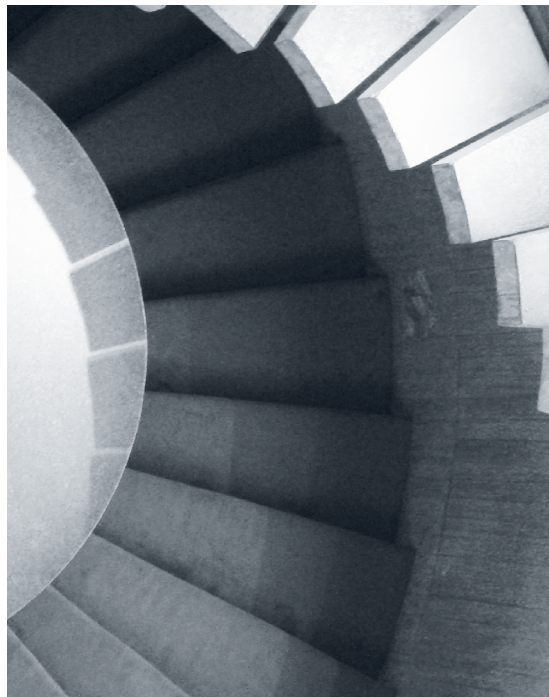
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## Abstract

This paper presents a reflection on gambling and Gambling Disorder (GD). The regulation of Bets, online sports betting, was recently approved in Brazil and the diagnosis of GD and its treatment are still little known. Different positions of encouragement, tolerance or prohibition towards gambling in different eras are addressed. The impact of technology on the improvement of gambling is discussed, as well as the role of the gambling industry. Considerations are made about the constellation of the Lady Luck archetype in its negative pole. The importance of integrating Dionysus and Apollo in the treatment of GD is emphasized, as well as the importance of paying attention to dreams and making room for the Self in this process of transformation. The role of the analyst is pointed out as a privileged one to denounce the

collective shadow and favor the expansion of consciousness, helping to create strategies to identify risks, treat and prevent GD. ■

**Keywords**  
Online gambling;  
Gambling Disorder;  
addiction;  
analytical psychology;  
collective shadow.



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## Bets legalization and Gambling Disorder

“What is chance? Goodness from misfortune, favor from adversity  
Every life is a journey through an ocean of uncertainty” Edgar Morin

The Brazilian government recently approved the regulation of sports betting aiming to increase state revenue. This form of gambling is becoming quite popular without raising enough attention to its consequences. Gambling has become more sophisticated, online betting has spread, and soccer, the Brazilian national sport, is being funded by betting money. Teams display betting sites on their uniforms, and advertisements are freely broadcasted in various locations and media. Alongside sports betting, online casinos and other forms of gambling are indiscriminately entering the Brazilian market. For instance, the Tigrinho game (a slot machine type game) sparked public reactions after reports of children promoting it on social media. Meanwhile, the Congress is advancing the legalization of casinos, bingo halls, and other gambling venues.

Recent studies on the impact of gambling on the Brazilian population are being published in the media. One of them revealed that 38% of respondents bet online, with half placing at least one bet per week. Additionally, 63% of bettors reported having their primary income affected at least once (Chiara e Agrela, 2024). The volume of money involved in gambling is drawing attention, as Brazil has become the third-largest online betting market in the world. Many companies are positioning themselves to enter this market, and its impact is already seen in retail, with many people cutting back on consumption as money is diverted to betting. It is estimated that R\$ 68 billion was spent on betting between June 2023 and

June 2024, representing 22% of families' disposable income, with low-income youth being the most affected (Amorim, 2024).

In Brazil, the diagnosis of Gambling Disorder (GD) and its treatment are still poorly understood, and many professionals do not feel prepared to identify and treat gamblers (Oliveira, Castro, Braga and Raszeja, 2022). A relationship between socioeconomic indicators and spending or losses due to gambling has been observed (Abbott, 2020). Men, particularly young individuals with low purchasing power, are at greater risk for gambling problems. The earlier they start betting, the higher the likelihood they will become compulsive gamblers. Media reports indicate that this is precisely the profile becoming more involved with betting. In São Paulo, at PRO-AMJO, a specialized outpatient clinic for Gambling Disorder at the Institute of Psychiatry of the University of São Paulo, the profile of those seeking help is changing. While previously most of this population was around 40 years old and engaged in electronic gaming (Tavares, 2014), there is now an influx of younger players who are in debt due to sports betting.

### Games and gambling in different eras

Playing is an essential activity for human development. Huizinga (1999) introduces the term *homo ludens*, emphasizing that play is fundamental for preparing for adult life. He argues that playing games preceded culture, representing voluntary activities associated with freedom. It is neither ordinary life nor real life – it is an escape from real life into a temporary sphere of self-oriented activity, a break from everyday life. Games have rules, take place in a limited space and time and have an air of mystery. Related to play and representation, games promote symbolism and imagination.

The thrill of the game lies in surprise; if the outcome is known, it loses its meaning and is abandoned. Games have elements of tension, rhythm and harmony that can fascinate. Tension reaches an extreme in games of chance and sports competitions (Huizinga, 1999). In games of chance, the challenge is to bet some amount, usually money, on an uncertain outcome, determined by chance. If the player literally believes that he will get it right, that he has mastered the variables and can predict the outcome, it is no longer playing, it leaves the symbolic and becomes literal. This is *hybris*, as knowing the future is not the domain of humans. Only oracles know destiny.

Gambling has existed across cultures and eras, sometimes encouraged, sometimes prohibited. There are records of gambling in Egyptian tombs, Chinese temples, and in cities like Athens and Pompeii. The rise of Christianity altered perceptions of gambling, yet it remained popular. During the crusades, new games were brought to Europe and were later banned. There are reports of soldiers even betting their clothes (Currie, 2006). The Church condemned games of chance, claiming that the devil drives the dice, or that Lucifer, head of the church of gamblers, invented card and dice games. The Islamic Koran condemns wine and gambling at once, as seen in Surah V, 91 (Le Coran, p.101): “Satan wants to provoke hatred and enmity among you through wine and gambling and distance you from the remembrance of God and prayer”. By the 13th century, gambling houses appeared in Italy and Castile. The word “casino” refers to “small house” in Italian, and they were present in most Italian towns. From the Renaissance to the end of the *Ancien Régime*, particularly in the era of Louis XIV, have been considered the gambling golden age (Gokalp, 2023).

Capitalism considers gambling as a harmful addiction that prevents savings and planning, which denies values such as work, patience, skill and qualification. On the other hand, it provides hope, offering much more than a life of dis-

cipline and fatigue (Gokalp, 2023). In the 20th century, casinos gained prominence and were built in many countries. They acted like banks, paying premiums, making loans and collecting them. Cinema portrays this period with glamour, as in the 007 films, with James Bond dressed by the best tailor in London, always dressed up in luxurious casinos, winning million-dollar bets in card games or roulette with distracted sobriety. Associated with the elite, with luxury, it evokes party imagery and raises the dream of sudden enrichment, feeding the illusion of another life (Grillet, 2023).

These different attitudes of encouragement, tolerance or prohibition towards gambling that have changed in different eras and cultures can be symbolized by a conflict between Dionysus and Apollo, in which each moment one prevails. Son of a mortal woman, Semele, Dionysus is the god of wine, fertility, ecstasy and madness. His origin and habits denounce a dangerous disregard for limits and boundaries; he represents a version of mother earth in her undifferentiated aspect (Rowland, 2017). The consumption of alcohol and other drugs, betting, shopping, gaming are some examples of behaviors that can provide an intense experience of pleasure and lead to transgression of norms, revealing this disregard for limits and borders. Some gamblers, when betting, become intoxicated, lose track of time and space and have an intense experience of pleasure while gambling. The position of those who condemn gambling, in turn, can be associated with Apollo, commonly associated with order. Apollo is the god of music, poetry, eloquence and medicine, have the gift of the oracle, and represents sunlight (Comelin, 1994). His name has been associated with the Orphic religion, a system of thoughts that promised security and eternal life to initiates (Grimal, 1990).

### **Gambling Disorder**

Just as we discuss drug use, abuse, and addiction, there are social gamblers, prob-

lem gamblers, and pathological gamblers. The issue arises when there is an excess, when there is a lack of parameters, Dionysus reigning unchecked without the guidance of Apollo. Gambling Disorder (GD) is characterized by persistence and recurrence in gambling despite adverse consequences (APA, 2013). The negative consequences impact on health, both physical and mental; family and social relationships; productivity at work and study; economic situation, debts and defaults; and can lead to problems with the courts. The majority of those who gamble do not have problems, however, international research shows that in the general population, between 0.12% and 5.8% meet the criteria for a diagnosis of GD and it is estimated that the percentage of people with problems resulting from this practice is at least three times higher (Abbott, 2020). These people can become as drunk people when they gamble, immersed in a Dionysian universe. They spend the day, or days, involved in gambling, neglecting basic care; they distance themselves from family and friends, are harmed at work, get into debt, and in short, suffer in a similar way to drug addicts. Problems related to excessive gambling are harder to notice, especially online gambling. In the case of sports betting, this modality is associated with a healthy and popular aspect, the practice of sports. The same occurs with those who speculate on the stock market, day trading. They are portrayed as investors, associating it with work, but in reality, it may be pure speculation.

Games, whether they were cards, dice, roulette or any other kind of game, were always a contest with other people. The appearance of slot machines and other gambling machines at the end of the century brought an important change by making it possible to play against the machine and not against an opponent with whom you have to interact. The contact with the game is reduced to pressing a button, enabling a kind of continuous flow, with repeated and automatic movements, in an environment

designed for betting until it runs out (Troche, 2023). The internet, in turn, eliminates the physical limits of face-to-face games and gaming becomes a solitary activity, without the presence of others. The types of games are multiplying and sports betting is currently on the rise. Present in all kinds of competitions, they are highlighted at major events such as the World Cup and the Olympics, being broadcast in real time around the world. As a result, protective factors that could set limits and inhibit excesses were lost.

The Brazilian government regulated online gambling without restricting advertising and without allocating resources to care for the population, whether to fund research on the subject, develop prevention campaigns or provide treatment for GD. The benefits that can be obtained from the foreign exchange generated by taxing gambling were valued and the impact of the activity on the player was neglected, ignoring risks, costs and negative consequences (Oliveira, 2023). It is up to us, as analysts, to look at what is happening around us and try to contribute based on our clinical practice. Locked up in our offices, we forget that we have a powerful tool at our disposal, reflection, and that we can do in the social sphere what we try to do in the office, create awareness and denounce the shadow, in this case, the collective shadow. Jung (1993) in his work makes it clear how dissociation is an evil of modern society. Wouldn't the high prevalence of drug addictions and behavioral addictions be symptoms of a way of life, characteristic of contemporary society, which refers to the dissociation pointed out by Jung?

### **Contemporary society and the gambling industry**

It's important to disseminate this data and relate it to the collective shadow. As Amadiou (2020), a French scholar on the subject, rightly points out, the fact that gambling is so seductive is a sign that society offers no prospects for personal fulfillment or social advancement.

Betting appears as a palliative for a society that does not allow a growing number of citizens to live with dignity. Social and cultural insecurity, the prospect of being replaced by a machine, the disintegration of the old solidarity between people, are mentioned as factors that contribute to increasing dependencies. Capitalist society produces anxiety and risky behavior (Amadiou, 2020).

The gambling industry has been working hard in this direction. They invest in improving games, making them more attractive and addictive. Structural characteristics of the games, such as speed, frequency, bet size, duration, payout interval are more important than the type of game in determining the risk of loss of control (Griffiths and Derevensky, 2017). Electronic casino games present more risk than lottery games, as do online games compared to face-to-face ones. The internet provides greater access, availability and diversification of games; online payment and the possibility of gambling in a private location. It also offers games with attention-grabbing visual stimuli, which are fast and uninterrupted, factors that contribute to the loss of control.

Many countries have legalized gambling or regulated some forms of betting in order to raise revenue from taxes and fees. States' interest in resources to finance policies goes hand in hand with pressure from gambling companies to legalize gambling. Amadiou (2020) points out how these companies seek to control the discourse on gambling, sponsoring research in their interest, in order to influence political decisions and prevent restrictive measures. The diagnosis of GD is used to absolve them of their responsibility, transferring it to the consumer, feeding the idea that there can be risk-free gambling. Gambling Disorder is understood as an individual problem that affects certain types of people. The author points out that addiction is not simply a mental disorder that affects a minority. It is, first and foremost, the product of a political economy favorable to the market and

the expansion of the industry of gambling. It is a cognitive manipulation engineering that relies on social frustrations and feelings of injustice and sells a quick solution. Companies use the concept of Responsible Gambling, in which the player is invited to be the master of their consumption, only seeking to show concern for ethical purposes (Amadiou, 2020).

However, the message conveyed is contradictory to its practice and the advertising makes this explicit. Presented in the most diverse forms, in public and private environments, above all through websites, applications and social networks, they convey the message of immediate enrichment, investment and the fulfillment of dreams. Research into gambling advertising shows that it has a greater impact on young people and teenagers, and reaches more problem gamblers and those who want to stop gambling, making it difficult to abstain from gambling (Griffiths, Estévez, Guerrero-Solé and Lopez-Gonzalez, 2018).

Recognizing the seductive power of these games of chance is essential to creating coping strategies. Dreaming of a better life, of another reality, is legitimate and the Lady Luck archetype can be constellated. If the player's conscious attitude is not solid enough to deal with the unconscious energy of this archetype, he or she can be taken over by an autonomous complex. In its negative pole, Lady Luck, as a terrible mother, dismembers and devours (Currie, 2006).

Many individuals, when overcome by affections or complexes, cannot bear the tension between opposing poles necessary to transcend this state and seek to restore internal balance through behaviors that only soothe discomfort (Oliveira, 2022). Gambling is one of them. Online gambling happens quickly, without explicit parameters or limits, not providing time to think and reflect, facilitating the constellation of Lady Luck in her terrible aspect. Unlike card games, roulette, and bingo, which are associated with gambling, sports betting has been related only to success and achieve-

ments. Young people are gambling more and many are unaware of the risk they are taking. In addition, it is known that young people and adolescents are more vulnerable to addictions due to the very stage of development they are in. Brain maturity is not yet complete, favoring more impulsive behaviors. Addictions involve the reinforcement system and are characterized by a loss of the ability to resist impulses seeking immediate gratification despite negative consequences (Kandel, 2020). Currently, there is no information being disseminated that encourages sensible and considered choices. In a country marked by inequality, advertising has been investing heavily in content aimed at this population on different platforms and social networks, without considering the associated risks.

Therefore, it is necessary to warn and help raise awareness about this activity to prevent GD. It is very common to find players reporting that they have started betting for fun, often among friends. Because they know the sport, or are fans, they are confident in their guesses. Betting on sports allows the individual to feel like they are actively participating in the activity, even though they are not on the field. Magical thinking, cognitive distortion, and the illusion of control, typical aspects of GD, become evident as the gambling frequency increases. Since they can bet at any time and place, without anyone noticing, they often start betting alone. Unlike games with opponents or those that require going to public places, there are no physical boundaries, witnesses or mediators. When they lose, they often feel embarrassed and hide their losses. Then, they start betting to recover the lost amount and end up getting into debt, entering a vicious cycle that characterizes GD.

### **Treating GD: integrating Dionysus and Apollo**

Some gamblers report experiencing intense excitement and pleasure when betting. They

disconnect from reality, some go to extremes, to the limit between life and death. They enter into a state similar to that reported in Dionysian festivals and rituals. Kerényi (2002, p.301) describes this state, reporting how in Late Antiquity the Dionysian religion was experienced: “Men lived and died in accordance with the myth [...] At the culmination points of an exalted life, they experienced what could be the death; and what near death is, they experienced it in sexual exhaustion.” This author refers to Dionysus as an archetypal image of indestructible life, claiming that the experience lived in the Dionysian rite is not one of annihilation, but that the polarities of life and death are within Dionysus himself.

In gambler’s treatment it is necessary to integrate Dionysus and Apollo, recognizing the legitimacy of Dionysian experiences and the need for an Apollonian order. The conflict between the temptation to take risks on an immediate win bet and trying to restrain themselves in order to build solutions that take time and require discipline is a frequent topic in gambler’s treatment. In this process, it is important to raise awareness of their impulsive behavior, to identify triggers that lead to gambling, and also help to create strategies to resist the temptation to bet, to repair damages, and settle debts. Apollo taking care of the house. Gambling as a break from everyday life has fun, rules, and a limited duration, Dionysus and Apollo integrated. The problem arises with excessive betting, the *hybris* that causes punishment. The search for excitement, for “adrenaline to feel alive,” wanting to escape boredom, and escaping from dysphoric states are factors mentioned by gamblers who lose control. The illusion that everything will be all right when they win or pay off their debts overshadows deeper issues. In many cases, they are unable to identify or express what they feel, nor to discriminate what they really need, so that they can seek it appropriately (Oliveira, 2022). The question about the meaning of gambling par-

ticularly at that moment in life is central to the care provided (Oliveira et al., 2022).

Many gamblers arrive at treatment broken, desperate, unaware that there is an opportunity for real transformation. As Hillman (1981, p.120) states, sometimes it is necessary “for life to fail in order for other attitudes, governed by other archetypal principles, to be recognized”. It is up to the analyst to help in this process. Jung (1993), discussing the dissociation of the European spirit, gives an example with a hypothetical patient who could be a GD patient: “You are under stress due to your numerous activities and excessive extroversion. In the profusion and complications of your economic, personal and human obligations, you have lost your mind [...] You need to understand, my dear, that you are completely ruined.” (OC10, par. 296). Jung goes on to say that when all means are exhausted, it is necessary to recognize that this was not the way to go. To get out of the dead end, it is necessary to become aware of oneself, to pay attention to one’s dreams, to make room for the Self.

Addenbrooke (2015), addressing the treatment of addicts, explores this position defended by Jung, pointing out the need for change after an existential crisis, an accident, or the experience of hitting rock bottom advocated by AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). This author states that it is necessary to leave the life of addiction behind to prevent relapses. This measure reflects the universal pattern in which the separation from an outdated state in development is a necessary precursor to growth, and represents a radical change. Addenbrooke cites *Liber Novus*, suggesting that from his personal immersion, Jung came to better understand the existential crisis that addicts go through, after observing that rational willpower is not very successful in helping alcoholics to stop drinking. Jung suggests exploring the inner world as a whole, dialoguing with fantasies and using the technique of active imagination. The crisis opens space for creativity to emerge. The im-

portance of the hero’s murder is made explicit, representing the higher function of the personality that needs to be killed in the name of the life force, so that other aspects of the personality can emerge. This process is intense. We must rely on the bond as a fundamental tool to accompany this process and deal with the inevitable setbacks of the heroic journey inherent to the individuation process (Oliveira, 2017; 2022).

### Final considerations

Gambling is archetypal, the form can make all the difference. Regulating games of chance can bring benefits, as it takes them out of the shadows, makes the activity explicit and promotes clear rules. It could be a way of integrating Apollo and Dionysus, without repressing or releasing indiscriminately. In addition to providing foreign exchange for the country, it can be a measure to combat crime. However, regulation should be restrictive and accompanied by a State policy aimed at ensuring the safety of the population. The policy adopted by some countries, such as the Netherlands, goes in this direction. It postulates that preventing GD, protecting consumers, combating fraud and other crimes cannot be achieved through repression, but by requiring a series of conditions for granting a license for the activity, providing the population with the ability to gamble more safely (Griffiths and Derevensky, 2017). Measures to protect players have been adopted, such as age and advertising restrictions, the need to disclose the probability of winning and losing, sending feedback messages on the screen during the game, and the real possibility of self-exclusion, in addition to explaining the risk of pathology and disclosing treatment. These are measures that help to circumscribe the activity. It is, therefore, up to the State to protect and provide freedom to people, taking into account the benefits and harms gambling can bring. The State must incorporate prevention and harm reduction strategies and also provide treatment.

As analysts, as well as denouncing the collective shadow, we can contribute by reminding gamblers to be prudent like Ulysses and tie themselves to the mast when they pass by the sirens' song. As Morin (2021, p. 57) rightly states, "Every life is an uncertain adventure. Every passion needs the vigilance of reason, and every reason needs the fuel of passion." For those

who, seduced by the challenge of the games of chance, dive into rough waters, we can throw a buoy and hold on to the rope, trying to support it for as long as necessary. ■

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## Resumo

### *A legalização das apostas e Transtorno de Jogo*

*O presente trabalho apresenta uma reflexão sobre apostas em jogos de azar e Transtorno de Jogo (TJ). A regulamentação de Bets, apostas online em esportes, foi aprovada recentemente no Brasil e o diagnóstico de TJ e seu tratamento ainda são pouco conhecidos. Diferentes posturas de estímulo, tolerância ou proibição frente aos jogos de azar em diferentes épocas são abordadas. O impacto da tecnologia no aperfeiçoamento dos jogos de azar é discutido, bem como o papel da indústria do jogo. São tecidas conside-*

*rações sobre a constelação do arquétipo da Senhora da Sorte no seu polo negativo. É enfatizada a importância de integrar Dionísio e Apolo no tratamento de TJ, sendo ressaltada a importância de prestar atenção em sonhos e abrir espaço para o Si-mesmo nesse processo de transformação. O papel do analista é apontado como lugar privilegiado para denunciar a sombra coletiva e favorecer a ampliação de consciência, ajudando a criar estratégias para identificar riscos, tratar e prevenir TJ. ■*

**Palavras-chave:** Apostas online; Transtorno de Jogo; tratamento; psicologia analítica; sombra coletiva.

## Resumen

### *Legalización de apuestas y Trastorno del Juego*

*Este trabajo presenta una reflexión sobre el juego de azar y el Trastorno del Juego (TJ). El reglamento de Bets, apuestas deportivas online, fue aprobado recientemente en Brasil y el diagnóstico del TJ y su tratamiento son aún poco conocidos. Se abordan diferentes posturas de estímulo, tolerancia o prohibición hacia el juego en distintos momentos. Se analiza el impacto de la tecnología en la mejora del juego de azar, así como el papel de la industria del juego. Se hacen consideraciones sobre la*

*constelación del arquetipo de la Dama de la Suerte en su polo negativo. Se enfatiza la importancia de integrar a Dioniso y Apolo en el tratamiento de TJ, resaltando la importancia de prestar atención a los sueños y hacer espacio para el Self en este proceso de transformación. El papel del analista es visto como un lugar privilegiado para denunciar la sombra colectiva y promover la ampliación de la conciencia, ayudando a crear estrategias para identificar riesgos, tratar y prevenir la TJ. ■*

**Palabras-clave:** Juegos de azar en línea; Trastorno del Juego; adicción; psicología analítica; sombra colectiva.

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