

CELEBRATING THE CONTINGENT: THE MODERN LOTTERY AS COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION IN LATE CAPITALISM

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Abstract: Lotteries have become the most popular form of gambling worldwide since (re-)legalization and expansion began in the 1960s and 70s. Lottery jackpots have increased significantly in national lotteries in the last twenty years, and large lottery jackpots stimulate greater ticket purchases. The discussion locates contemporary state lotteries in relation to economic structures and ideologies in which the state itself participates, while providing justification for the lottery form. The (re-)distributional and circulatory form of lotteries is theorized as in tension with (neo-)liberal economic ideology and an individualist imaginary. The analysis draws upon the work of Emile Durkheim and other classical sociologists. In particular, lotteries are treated as examples of what Durkheim termed “institutions” and “collective representations.”

Keywords: lotteries, Durkheim, collective representations, money, late capitalism.

Résumé: Les loteries sont devenues la forme de jeux d'argent la plus populaire depuis le début de leur re-légalisation et de leur expansion dans les années 1960 et 1970. Les cagnottes ont augmenté de manière significative dans les loteries nationales ces dernières vingt années, et les gros lots stimulent de plus importants achats de billets. Cette discussion situe les loteries d'état contemporaines en relation avec les structures économiques et les idéologies auxquelles l'état participe lui-même tout en apportant une justification au système de la loterie. Le système (re-)distributionnel et circulatoire des loteries est théorisée comme étant en tension avec l'idéologie économique (néo-)libérale et avec l'imaginaire individualiste. L'analyse s'appuie sur les travaux d'Émile Durkheim et d'autres sociologues classiques. En particulier, les loteries sont traitées comme des exemples de ce que Durkheim a nommé « institutions » et « représentations collectives ».

Mots clés : loteries, Durkheim, représentations collectives, argent, capitalisme tardif.

INTRODUCTION

Lottery participation is the most popular form of gambling worldwide. State lotteries are found in over one hundred countries, with typically one or more large-scale lotteries and often a variety of smaller lotteries available to citizens (Naspl 2014). Along with the many national or state lotteries, there are interstate lotteries, such as Mega Millions and Powerball in the United States, and interprovincial lotteries such as Lotto-Max and Lotto 6/49 in Canada. Lotteries run by hospitals, health research agencies, and other organizations are also found in many countries.

The expansion of lotteries in the late 20th century was a response to cultural dynamics allowing gambling liberalization, and globalizing economic forces. The national lotteries are not only examples of state and nation-building (sometimes designated as “national” lotteries), their capacity for generating revenue within national boundaries is situated in a context where the increasing global character of capital flows has put financial pressures on nation-states (Major 2014). In the 21st century, transnational lotteries are increasing; along with the European Viking-Lotto (launched in 1993) and EuroMillions lottery (launched in 2004), which includes the participation of Austria, Belgium, Britain, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland (Euromillions 2014), there is also the Eurojackpot (launched in 2012). As gambling enterprises use the internet and as internet gambling moves toward broader legalization, it seems likely that more transnational lotteries will emerge. With the closure of land-based gambling, such as casinos, in many jurisdictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, internet gambling and lotteries have been marketed more intensively by states and private industry.

Lottery advertising often depicts jackpot winning in terms of an individualist imaginary – typically, a lucky winner who, with newfound wealth, is now free to consume to their heart’s content. This discussion of lotteries proceeds sociologically, treating them as a *collective* phenomenon that 1) must be addressed in relation to social structure and culture, 2) has the power to mobilize widespread social action (ticket purchases), and 3) is often used in relation to some collective or public objective or “good.” Lotteries have been analyzed in terms of their relation to liberalism (Goodwin 1992), and also from Marxist (Nibert 2000) and neo-Marxist (Neary and Taylor 1998) perspectives. The discussion here draws upon other sources of classical sociological theory, namely Emile Durkheim and scholars influenced by him, as well as Max Weber and Georg Simmel, to explore lotteries as a collective cultural-economic phenomenon. Large-scale state lotteries are the basis for this discussion,

as well as the lottery form itself and its significance for late capitalist societies. Late capitalism as used here refers to the era encompassing the influence of financialization on capitalist countries, i.e., the relative decline of manufacturing and the rise to prominence of the interests of the financial sector in shaping global economies.

Despite their varied moral and legal historical career, lotteries have persisted as institutions even in periods of illegality, particularly in urban environments (Morton 2003; Sweeney 2009). Aided by legalization in the late 20th century, lotteries have become widespread in late capitalism. Indeed, in this context – and recognizing the state’s role in promoting lotteries and deploying the revenues — the symbolic expression of the economic valuing of wealth (large jackpot amounts) has become prominent in lottery advertising.

While the concern with forms of social solidarity (Durkheim 1982: 45; 2014), and the rituals and symbols that support them, was a paramount interest in Durkheim’s work (particularly in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, henceforth EFRL), he was also concerned with the economic anomie that he considered “chronic” in industrializing societies, where the pursuit of economic ends and wealth had become a predominant (dis-)organizing value (Durkheim 2006).

Durkheim is considered one of the progenitors of economic sociology (Steiner 2008; Swedberg and Granovetter 2011: xv). By focusing on lotteries as cultural-economic phenomenon, this discussion also contributes to analyses of the relationship of Durkheim’s work to political economy (Steiner 2008; Datta 2018). This relationship is explored by developing the tension between Durkheim’s moral concerns about the centrality of economy in modern life (Durkheim 1967, 2006), and the collective representations that emerge with the development of modern economic societies (Simiand 1937; Durkheim 1995; Steiner 2008). The place of lotteries in late capitalism, particularly state lotteries and their relationship to economic structures and ideologies which the state participates in, is explored to flesh out the theoretic tension. The cultural-economic significance of lotteries is theorized particularly in relation to Durkheim’s concepts of “collective representations” and “institutions” (Durkheim 1982, 1995).

DURKHEIM ON COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

There are no references to lotteries in Durkheim’s oeuvre (they were illegal in France during Durkheim’s lifetime), and only one reference to gambling, which appears in *Suicide*, in a table of suicide statistics for

Saxony (Durkheim 2006: 153). Durkheim does briefly mention games and recreation in his discussion of “The Positive Cult” in EFRL. He says: “It is well known that games and the principal forms of art seem to have been born in religion and that they long maintained their religious character: We can see why: while pursuing other goals directly, the cult has at the same time been a form of recreation” (Durkheim 1995: 385). This reference to games is significant: Roger Caillois (1962), strongly influenced by Durkheim and a founder of the College de France, would later take up the relationship of games and gambling.

While Durkheim did not refer to gambling as a topic in his work, important theoretical concepts he developed serve the analysis here. Durkheim’s (1982) formulation of “collective representations” is a central feature of his sociological theory: along with “social facts” and “institutions,” collective representations are intended to indicate the ontological and epistemological (prior) existence of the “social” – society is a reality “*sui generis*” (Durkheim 1982: 39). Durkheim intends that collective representations are *collective* in their source and not reducible to individual representations: “what collective representations express are the ways in which the group thinks in its relationships with the objects which affect it...” (Durkheim 1982: 40). Collective representations are shared ways of seeing that are central to a culture or society (Stedman Jones 2001). It is through them that collectivities engage in the ongoing work of constituting themselves (Fields 1995: xviii-xix). As discussed below, the “objects which affect” the group emerge as economic objects: the group’s collective representations take on an economic cast.

Relatedly, the discussion addresses lotteries as institutions. Durkheim says: “...one may term an institution all the beliefs and modes of behaviour instituted by the collectivity; sociology can then be described as the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning” (Durkheim, 1982: 45). Here we find again the primacy of the collective. But Durkheim’s emphasis on the collective and structural dimensions of society was not opposed to the phenomenon of action. For Durkheim, institutions and social facts emerge from collective activity. They are actions which have “become habitual and crystallized” (Stedman Jones 2001).

Lotteries are collective in their form in that they require a pool of participants who are willing to fund them through ticket purchases to make them operable, and the funds are applied to some collective end or public or organizational good. The participation is premised on the ability of lottery operators to solicit players – while the players thus share similar subjective meaning orientations that guide their action (Weber 1978), e.g., the valuing of money, the ability to mobilize a significant population to participate speaks to, and expresses, the institutional power

of lotteries. Larger lottery jackpots generate greater public participation and higher sales (Turner and Ferentzy 2010).

The purchasing of tickets by many individuals indicates collective social action oriented to and embracing the aleatory (chance) mechanism of the lottery form and the particular valuing of large sums of money—an expression of the “sacred” value of money in late capitalism (Durkheim 1995). As will be discussed, the emphasis on the winning of (lots of) money, and the embedded and routine use of chance as allocative mechanism in lotteries, speaks to beliefs and modes of conduct that have emerged historically, and come to be morally acceptable.

LOTTERIES, MORAL SENTIMENTS, AND ECONOMIC SOCIETY

The lottery is an institution that preserves chance as a phenomenon and values it as a means toward some end, or as an objective or goal of social action itself. To support the analysis here, a brief historical overview of lotteries is provided. Lotteries have an ancient lineage, rooted in the early uses of lots in divination practices and also as a method of resource allocation. In terms of means, the use of lots as divining or decision-making method has a very long history, and is referred to in the Old Testament, with references also in ancient Chinese and Roman cultures. Proscription of gambling is found in the Koran (Willman 1999). Lots, however, were linked to providential conceptions of the world: as such, chance itself was not a discursive characteristic of these uses (Ottaway 2006). Lots were used as a form of knowledge production or decision-making insofar as they could render opportunities to act, either as a consequence of divining God’s will or for having to distribute resources. The notion of one’s “lot” in life was a formulation derived from both the providential and allocative framing (Ottaway 2006).

The modern history of lotteries reveals periods of legality and prohibition, varying by national context. Lotteries were used in the early development of capitalism as a form of state financing, prior to the development of banking systems (Willman 1999; Sweeney 2009). The Dutch were early users of lotteries, starting in the fifteenth century. The Dutch state-owned *Staatsloterij*, established in 1726, is the world’s longest-running lottery. Italy also has a long history of lotteries, its first (pre-unification) lottery appearing in 1530. The Italian State Lottery was established in 1863 following Italian unification. The first English state lottery appeared in 1569, but lotteries were illegal from the late 17th to the late twentieth century. The French National Lottery ceased in 1836.

Late 18th and early 19th century England saw a period of widespread speculation and gambling activity. Lotteries were imported to North America from Europe, with the British colonies using them to raise funds for public works (Willman 1999). The funds were used to finance roads, canals, and bridges, etc., but also for the foundation of universities: Princeton and Columbia Universities in the 1740s, and the University of Pennsylvania in 1755. Public lotteries were also widespread in post-revolutionary America (Sweeney 2009). However, corruption and fraud marred the reputation of American lotteries, and the development of banking and finance contributed to their demise in the mid-19th century. The Louisiana lottery was the last to be prohibited, in 1893.

The development of finance and banking in early 19th century America prompted an “era of speculation” which “translated into lottery schemes that blanketed cities across the country” (Sweeney 2009: 39). A particular development in America was lottery “insurance schemes” which were “parasitical upon the lotteries themselves (and) were the principal way the less affluent people could participate in state lotteries” (Ottaway 2006: 44). In cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, lotteries were popular, but the cost of a ticket could be prohibitive; for those who could not afford a ticket there was the option of playing “policy,” which was a side bet (typically costing pennies) that allowed the individual to choose numbers related to the winning lottery ticket or some other significant numerical signifier (Fabian 1990; Sweeney 2009). Policy was largely an illegal urban phenomenon, which, like lotteries, came under attack from urban reformers who decried the immorality of these forms of gambling, claiming they pulled individuals, particularly the poor, away from “honest labour” (Sweeney 2009). Policy persisted into the 20th century as the illegal “numbers racket” (Sweeney 2009).

The 20th century further demonstrates an uneven history, although, with a few exceptions (such as Las Vegas), most forms of gambling were illegal until the later part of the century. The late 20th century reintroduction of lotteries in the United States was, in part, a response to the popularity of games like policy: “...policy is now the property of governments” (Sweeney 2009: 86).

France starts a new state lottery in 1933 and Germany re-establishes lotteries after the Second World War (Willman 1999). The Irish Sweepstakes was established in 1930: although illegal to play in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, it was nevertheless very popular. It ceased in 1986. Spain’s Spanish Christmas Lottery has continued uninterrupted since its inception in 1812, and is the second longest-running lottery after the Dutch Staatsloterij. In Italy, the Enalotto was established in 1950 and re-launched as SuperenaLotto in 1997. In 1956

the International Association of State Lotteries was founded. It sought to implement an international lottery in the early 1960s, but was rebuffed, due to a perceived conflict with national lotteries (Willman 1999). The International Association of State Lotteries merged with International Association of Toto and Lotto Organizations in 1999 to form the World Lottery Association.

Legalization or reintroduction of lotteries occurs in a number of countries later in the 20th century as an expression of cultural liberalization: the United States in 1964 (New Hampshire), Canada in 1969, and the United Kingdom, which liberalised small lotteries in 1934, does not see a new state lottery until the National Lottery in 1994. They were an ideal solution for governments and states looking for non-tax revenues: they could poach at least some of the business of organized crime and tap into covert gambling participation, such as policy and the numbers racket in cities (Morton, 2003; Sweeney 2009), offer significant prizes for an inexpensive outlay, and advertise that the revenues could bolster important public needs such as education (Sweeney 2009).

Aside from general Protestant disdain in Britain and North America, with particular hostility from the Quakers (Sweeney 2009), there have often been social conflicts between those who denounce the lottery's temptations away from industriousness and honest labour, and the working class and poor's enthusiastic participation. In those periods when lotteries were legal and promoted by governments, governments had to manage the ambiguities that stemmed from their own involvement (Sweeney 2009). To be sure, these ambiguities and tensions are pronounced when capitalism has not resolved the "cultural contradiction" that it requires disciplined labour and diligence, but also pleasure-seeking consumers whose characterological attributes come to undermine the labour ethos (Bell 1976). This tension however, largely vanishes in late capitalism, where lotteries and gambling are integrated into the social, economic, and cultural fabric. Indeed, lottery advertising directly addresses the desires and fantasies of the pleasure-seeking consumer (McMullen and Miller 2009; Binde 2010). As discussed below, in that money is the means through which late capitalist desires will be fulfilled, money itself becomes a central feature of lottery collective representationality.

The preceding discussion of lottery history provides a tableau for grasping the emergence and development of this representationality. The possibility of the economic uses of, and legitimate participation in lotteries however, is predicated on their freedom from particular social ethics that conceive of economic action in ways that may carry residual religious framings (Weber 1978, 1992). Within a burgeoning economic, i.e., market, society, the manifestation (or prohibition) of lotteries is rooted

in moral sentiments that shape the moral and ethical dimensions of economic activity (Weber 1992; Durkheim 2014). For example, as market societies develop, lotteries are associated with the historical distinction between illegitimate gambling and “legitimate” speculation; however, this distinction has not been clear-cut, as speculation has required significant discursive efforts in order to be viewed as distinct from gambling and economically useful in order to be legitimated (de Goede 2005; Preda 2009; Stäheli 2013). In terms of “the objects which affect” the group, the *economic* use of lotteries emerges historically as the religious/providential worldview recedes. What “affects” the group is its emerging *economic* self-interpretation.

Lotteries, particularly state lotteries, have expanded due to their economic usefulness, primarily for the state purpose of revenue generation: they are instituted as a vehicle for economic circulation and redistribution. Lotteries thus bring together two representational poles – state/collective and individual/consumer – without necessarily uniting them in a coherent sense: the objective of winning the jackpot in the advertising is not to celebrate the state’s economic uses of the lottery, nor does the typical ticket purchaser (or winner for that matter) think about their purchase in terms of their contribution to the state economic uses. The “gap” between the two poles offers itself as a resource for analyzing the lottery as collective representation. Focusing on the lottery *form* (aside from states’ particular use of lotteries and the revenues they generate), the gap can be approached between the circulatory and redistributive structure of the lottery (or its collective purpose) on the one hand, and the individual motives and desires for lottery participation on the other.

While individuals may imagine the possibility of winning, the purchase of lottery tickets is, in its mundane, everyday life occurrence, largely a form of unproductive expenditure (Mauss 1954; Bataille 1991). However, the collective role of such expenditure (see, e.g., the institution of the potlatch (Mauss 1954; Bataille 1991) is not oriented to by the purchaser, nor, with a few exceptions, such as the British National Lottery’s “Life Changing” advertising campaign (Camelot 2012), are the collective uses typically represented in the state advertising. The utilitarian and consumerist (manifest) representations of the lottery, thus conceal the collective and circulatory role of the lottery form.

Latently, the collective representationality is paradoxical: chance is the method to achieve or fulfil dreams of wealth – on the one hand there is effervescence created by the institutionalizing of chance; on the other, there is the paradoxical expression that social structure is not presenting (economic) rewards through the integrative aspects of occupation in the division of labour (Durkheim 2014). Thus, the prompting of a chance

orientation as a form of social action is an effect of social structure, a response to the “forced division of labour” (Durkheim 2014: 293). However, the instituting of chance as a decision-making and distributive method has to be accounted for in terms of its persistence, regardless of the particular organization of the division of labour, dominant ideologies and belief-systems regarding the value of work and labour in society, or the economic actions and policies of neoliberalism. Further, the collective dimension of lotteries – not only in the distributive aspect (whether utilized by the state, hospitals, private organizations, charities, etc.), but in the participatory dimension – whereby lottery participants (tacitly) support the distributive aspect and through their ticket purchases create the conditions of possibility for somebody to win, reveals an institutional phenomenon that is not in itself accounted for by conceptions of a dysfunctional division of labour, worker alienation, or the rupturing of the work-reward equation, even though these latter can prompt lottery participation.

The cultural-moral ambiguity characterizing lotteries in market societies, revealed through the periods of legality and prohibition, becomes understandable in relation to the social and economic ethics market societies have required for their development. Thorstein Veblen (1994: 276-277) stated (in 1899) that “The chief factor in the gambling habit is the belief in luck...it is to be taken as an archaic trait, inherited from a more or less remote past, more or less incompatible with the requirements of the modern industrial process, and more or less of a hindrance to the fullest efficiency of the collective economic life of the present.” However, alongside emerging capitalism’s ideological valuing of discipline, industriousness, and rationality (values rooted in or supported by the Protestant ethic (Weber 1992)), there is the (at times covert) persistence of the chance “ethic” demonstrated by the institution of the lottery. And the lottery form itself has a much longer institutional history than industrial capitalism.

MODERNITY: GIVING CHANCE A CHANCE

Modernity has instituted (and in part been instituted by) the recognition of chance at the epistemological and ontological levels (Hacking 1990; Reith 1999; Ottoway 2006). This recognition is found in the development of probabilistic orientations to knowledge (Hacking 1990). It has also informed influential philosophical perspectives, such as Nietzsche’s, that celebrate the place of contingency in human history, and which have informed postmodern perspectives and epistemologies (Derrida 1976;

Lyotard 1984; Nietzsche 1989). As a discipline that in its origins seeks to understand the shift from pre-modernity to modernity, sociology, in its classical theoretical formulations, has proposed contingency as a central notion through which the relationship of the individual to social institutions and forms can be analyzed (Weber 1974; Simmel 2000; Isenberg 2018). As Marx and Engels (1978: 476) succinctly characterized modernity: “all that is solid melts into air.”

In modernity, chance (*alea*) receives a positive valence – it is liberated epistemologically as a phenomenon not subsumable to a religious worldview, and requiring explanation and understanding on its own terms (Hacking 1990; Reith 1999; Ottaway 2006). The *explicit* conceptualizing of chance as the distributive mechanism in lotteries is thus a modern construct. In the modern context, the allocative and distributional uses of lotteries premised on the chance (random) form of decision-making are deemed legitimate due to the perception of fairness - assuming transparent operations. Chance eliminates any social and ascribed characteristics, such as status or ethnicity, that might influence an outcome (Goodwin 1990). The modern lottery is thus an egalitarian institution in its formal characteristics, notwithstanding the cost prohibitiveness of early lotteries for the lower classes (Ottaway 2006; Sweeney 2009). The modern lottery has become more democratic socially and economically in that the broad legalization of lotteries, precipitated by the revenue interests of states, has rendered participation in them affordable for most people. At the same time, this affordability has not precluded the criticism that lotteries are a form of “regressive taxation” (Clotfelter and Cook 1989; Vaillancourt and Roy 2000).

Lottery participation is voluntary, which further supports the (tacit) legitimacy of their use in the (re-)distribution of resources. The lottery form, in that it persists in the modern context, can be seen to be in competition with other conceptions of allocation and distribution, such as can be found in liberal-capitalist societies (Goodwin 1990). For example, the central role of chance in lotteries competes with conceptions of work-reward (and merit) that support liberalism and ideologies of work in capitalism (Anthony 1977). Chance forms of resource allocation thus challenge societal conceptions of efficacious agency that are grounded in meritocratic economic-individualist beliefs about mobility (e.g., the “American Dream”), as well as modern conceptions of economic rationality that would conceive lottery participation as irrational.

Roger Caillois (1962), drawing upon Durkheim’s work, particularly *EFRL*, analyses forms of play and games, including gambling, and their relationships to social structure and culture. Caillois discusses both pre-modern and modern societies: specific social structural/cultural frame-

works will generate particular game orientations based on the social distribution of the four play types: *agon* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimesis* (mimicry) *ilinx* (vertigo). As with functionalist formulations of gambling, he sees the embrace of aleatory gambling in modern societies based on *agon* (capitalist economic competition) as responses to thwarted mobility aspirations (Devereux 1949; Caillois 1962; Zola 1963). Such gambling is a form of economic action, but it is also a form of play. Caillois (1962: 152-156) provides the example of the *Jogo do Bicho* lottery in Brazil that sweeps the country into collective effervescence and absorbs “an important part of the little money at the disposal of the lower strata of the population” (152). The widespread presence of lotteries prompts consideration of the social distribution of *alea* in late capitalism, as well as their valuing as an economic technique. However, through their institutionalizing of *alea*, lotteries bridge the play – economy divide (Caillois 1962). While late capitalism may be understood to breed the socio-economic conditions for the spread of lotteries, the latter contrast with, if not challenge agonistic economic discourses that characterize neo-liberalism.

The question is raised as to what extent a collectivity can fully legitimate (and embrace) chance as an ethic, ideology, or basis for social solidarity (Downes et al. 1973; Goodwin 1990; Durkheim 2014). Despite its epistemological liberation in modernity, chance – in contrast to risk – has occupied an ambivalent interpretive and ethical space with respect to modern social and economic ideologies and belief systems (Weber 1974; Goodwin 1990; Giddens 1991). Risk conceptualizations are an extension of rationalization, in that they signify a calculative interest in rendering events knowable and manageable (Weber 1974; Beck 1992). The lottery ticket buyer is not taking a risk, or risking their money (given the very long odds), they are orienting positively to and embracing chance. The rationalization of lotteries and the commodification of lottery products does entail the application of (risk) knowledge. But this rationalization exists in contrast to the lottery participants’ embrace of chance. Since lotteries have become widespread in late capitalism—and indeed legitimized and used by states for various public ends, the ethical ambivalence toward chance appears to have been overcome.

CAPITALISM, SPECULATION, AND THE POPULAR

The collective representationality of lotteries is found in its history and shifting contents: the relationship to economic ethics and moral sentiments, the uses to which lottery revenues are put, the stories that circu-

late about lottery winners, and the imagery and themes used in lottery advertising, but in terms of general context, the modern lottery develops within and collectively represents social forces in maturing capitalistic money economies (Simmel 1900). The previous discussion of lottery history gives a sense of the flourishing of lottery participation in the development of capitalism. A discussion of the connection of lotteries to speculation, and their role in popular culture, supports the analysis of their collective representationality.

Durkheim had been a student in Paris at *École normale supérieure*, and later returned to teach at the Sorbonne in 1902. Although lotteries were prohibited in France between 1836 (when the French National Lottery ceased) and 1933 (when the new State Lottery started), gambling was an embedded feature of urban everyday life. The Paris milieu in the 19th century offers a sense of the place of speculation and gambling in the developing urban capitalistic environment. Walter Benjamin remarks in “Paris: Capital of the 19th Century”:

Louis Napoleon promotes investment capital, and Paris experiences a rash of speculation. Trading on the stock exchange displaces the forms of gambling handed down from feudal society... Paul Lafargue explains gambling as an imitation in miniature of the mysteries of economic fluctuation. (Benjamin, 1935: p.12)

The late 19th and early 20th century is an important period in the development of stock markets, as they gain in social legitimacy and become increasingly open to “investors” beyond the upper class (Weber 2000a, 2000b; Preda 2009; Stäheli 2013). The “mysteries of economic fluctuation,” are no less relevant in reference to the early 21st century global financial system, which has witnessed profound crises, such as occurred in 2008. The mysteries appear to resist the rationalistic efforts exemplified in sophisticated mathematical risk modelling used by financial institutions to manage risks (Akerlof and Shiller 2009). Gambling and speculation are not only embedded features of the modern urban environment, they are symptomatic forms of social action in capitalism.

Lottery tickets and “policy” are examples of low-level speculation (in terms of cost), with lottery jackpots typically very large relative to ticket prices, and which have become extraordinarily large. Gambling and speculation are evident, not only in the mundane forms, such as lottery ticket purchases (and its newer forms, such as the scratch ticket), but also in the democratization or “trickle-down” of stock market speculation from the wealthy to the middle and lower classes. This is indicated by the Benjamin quote above: democratization has been proceeding for some time. Max Weber, who published his articles on the stock and com-

modity exchanges at the end of the 19th century, was concerned then with the “fever symptoms” that could be generated by open access to financial investments and stock exchanges (Weber 2000a, 2000b; Preda 2009: 43).

While speculation has its mundane expressions, the “spectacular” aspects of speculation have accompanied developing capitalist economies. There have been many well-known “spectacular speculations” (Stäheli 2013): from the Dutch tulip craze of 1637 and the South Sea Bubble of the early 18th century to the Savings and Loan Crisis of the 1980s and Financial Crisis of 2008.

Whereas lottery participation is a mundane form of speculation, the outsized lottery jackpots available now are an example of the spectacular dimension of money in late capitalist societies. A not often-discussed aspect of capitalist markets is their “popular” dimension – those aspects of markets and finance that are taken up within popular culture (Stäheli 2013). Certainly, lotteries, due to widespread participation and their ability to generate “collective effervescence” (Durkheim 1995) during extremely large jackpot draws, are an expression of the “popular.” Stäheli (2013), in his discussion of the popular dimension of contemporary market societies, does not discuss lotteries in particular, but does consider gambling in relation to capitalism. If capitalist money economies are functionally organized around scarcities of goods and money, gambling does away with the goods to orient to money alone. Gambling not only grows alongside the modern institutionalizing and reflexivity of money, it manifests an “entertaining” orientation to money and celebrates contingency (Stäheli 2013).

Lotteries are not only institutions of contingency, in their late capitalist manifestations they are collective celebrations of (large sums of) money. They purify the capitalist pursuit of money – the neoliberal “sacred” – by envisioning its accumulation through the lightning strike of chance, without recourse to goods, production, or work. They do this by disavowing the ideological supports that capitalism has relied on: work, prudential coping, discipline, and rational planning. In this respect, lotteries demonstrate the dimensions of play that separate play from “real life” (Caillois 1962). Nonetheless, lotteries no longer pose any moral threat to the moral sentiments and social-economic ethics of late capitalism. Lotteries are institutions that are, par excellence, celebrations of contingency – particularly the large jackpot lotteries that offer the radical transformation of life-chances by chance – and, along with their spectacular dimension, offer an entertaining orientation to money. Lotteries ritually celebrate excess and contingency, often through a routinized spectacle of weekly televised drawings. Media advertising of

lottery jackpots is widespread, ranging from television programs that feature the drawings, to radio and newspaper advertisements, to lottery jackpot posters in corner store windows. The media also regularly report on the winners (who they are and how they felt when they won; what they are going to do with the money, etc.) but also on occasion offer tales of woe that have befallen them. These accounts often situate winners in narratives that recover morality from chance, through moral frames such as “just deserts” (Harling Stalker and Cormack 2020). The “typical upbeat stories must defend the theme of the deserving winner and support the interests of lotteries themselves as the just redistribution of wealth at both the level of community and individual winners” (Harling Stalker and Cormack 2020: 6).

The media coverage of lotteries constitutes an important dimension of lotteries’ collective representationality in mass-mediated late capitalist societies. The coverage, particularly advertisements, represents significant aspects of the culture of such societies (e.g., consumerism, the pursuit of wealth, economic freedom, etc.). Further, the central role of chance in lotteries, and the fact of their legalization and legitimation, expresses features of social structure; the institutional, routinized expression of chance and the “celebration of contingency” signifies a particular distribution of *alea* (Caillois 1962) that exists alongside, or challenges, other values, beliefs and ideologies (such as the work-reward equation).

LOTTERIES AND THE COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION OF MONEY

Money is the central signifier in lottery representations, depicted primarily as the jackpot amounts – and indeed, money itself is collectively represented through lottery advertising. The lotteries that emerged in the late twentieth century represent an overcoming of the moral sentiments that previously supported prohibition, thus signifying a resolution to cultural ambiguity. As legitimated institutions, they represent a positive cultural orientation to chance as a form of decision making and method of resource distribution, as well as a vehicle to affect life chances. They also collectively represent an economic worldview, where the pursuit and valuing of money has overcome previous (i.e., social and religious) moral proscriptions against its pursuit (Weber 1992). As morally liberated, money is celebrated in lotteries and collectively represented.

The early promotion of lotteries to support dedicated public goods, such as education, hospitals, and recreation, gave way to the fantasy scenarios and “waking dreams” that are prevalent today: the emphasis on sudden wealth and the consumerist desires this wealth will satisfy

(Clotfelter and Cook 1990; Falk and Maenpaa 1999; Nibert 2000; McMullan and Miller 2009; Binde 2010).

The popularity of lotteries since their reintroduction in the 1960s and 1970s century has seen a rapid growth in revenues and in jackpot sizes. In the early phase of lotteries in the United States, revenues grew from \$50 million in 1970 to \$2 billion in 1979. By 1990, revenues had reached \$20 billion (Sweeney 2009). In 2018 they were over \$77 billion (LaFleur's 2018). Jackpot sizes have also grown – early jackpots started at \$1 million but grew rapidly to \$50 million in the US (Sweeney 2009). Still early in the 21st century, it is common to find jackpots sizes in the hundreds of millions in the US Powerball and Mega-Millions jackpots, and in the tens to hundreds of millions in the EuroMillions lottery and in the various European national lotteries. In early 2021, a winning ticket for the \$731.1 million prize was drawn on the Powerball lottery. The largest US jackpot was \$1.586 billion in Powerball in 2016. In Europe, the largest jackpot was offered in Spain's Sorteo Extraordinario de Navidad (Spanish Christmas Lottery) with a main jackpot of €720 million (US\$941.8 million).

In the United States, winners of the Powerball and MegaMillions, as well as other large lotteries, often accept a cash payout rather than the total annuitized values of the jackpots. The cash payout is significantly less than the total advertised jackpot amount (approximately one-third of the jackpot) (Sweeney 2009). This can mean a foregoing of hundred of millions of dollars, even after taxes are paid on the winnings. This speaks to the huge size of the jackpots: jackpots in the hundreds of millions of dollars (US) are significantly more money than anyone needs. These jackpots not only ritually celebrate money, they celebrate *an excess of money*. Durkheim would no doubt find lottery representations vexatious, concerned as he was with the unleashing of desires precipitated by a burgeoning economically-driven industrial society:

... this liberation of desires was further aggravated by the very development of industry and the almost endless extension of the market... This explains the excitement pertaining to that part of society, but which from there has extended to all the rest. The state of crisis and anomie is constant in it and, as it were normal. From the top to the bottom of the ladder, desires are aroused but have no definite idea on what to settle. ... The real seems worthless beside what is seen possible by feverish imaginations... (Durkheim 2006: 280-281).

These comments echo Benjamin's remarks on the "rash of speculation" in 19th century Paris, and Weber's notion of the "fever symptoms" that increasingly came to characterize stock markets in the late 19th and early

20th centuries (Weber 1924). With respect to the possibility of instantaneous wealth the lottery bestows upon a lucky winner, Durkheim would have been particularly troubled by the anomic potential induced by “sudden prosperity” (Durkheim 1967: 16; 2006). From Durkheim’s (2006) point of view, a sudden increase or loss of individual wealth makes it meaningless and disorienting in that it cannot be tied back morally to “just deserts.”

In contrast to Durkheim’s sociological-moral concerns about unconstrained desires, Georg Simmel offers an ambivalent formulation of the money economy as creating the conditions for the fracturing of personality *and* for greater personal freedom (Simmel 1900). From this perspective, the Durkheimian emphasis on anomie is buttressed, but also countered by the less negative emphasis on the societal processes which enable personal freedom to develop. The Simmelian formulation makes explicit a tension evident in the collective representationality of lotteries. Lottery slogans often encourage potential buyers to “dream” and “imagine”: the slogan for Canada’s Lotto 6/49 is “imagine the freedom.” The freedom depicted in the advertisements is (often) the freedom to consume large ticket items and luxury vacations. On the one hand, such freedom, subject only to whatever limits the imagination might impose on it, raises the Durkheimian concern with unconstrained desires, as the very satiation of wants intensifies them all the more. On the other, insofar as money expresses a real freedom, then the collective representation of money in lotteries symbolizes a form of power. This power was formulated by Simmel in terms of the cultural processes contributing to money as means of exchange and universal value becoming an end (Simmel 1900). On this point another connection to Durkheim is drawn. Given Durkheim’s sociological interest in institutions and his stipulation that any object could be given “sacred” status (1995: 230), an alternative reading of industrial society would see in it new and emergent collective representations. It is significant here to invoke the notion of “mana” as discussed by Durkheim in EFRL. Mana is the collectively generated impersonal force that provides the group with efficacy and confidence: originally expressive of religious solidarity, it can also be attributed to the power of the economic realm in modern market societies (Durkheim 1995: 190-206; Cosgrave 2014). Durkheim (1995: 421) says: “...economic value is a sort of power or efficacy, and we know the religious origins of the idea of power. Since mana can be conferred by wealth, wealth itself has some.”

The collective representation of money found in contemporary lotteries is a consequence of socio-historical and economic developments: notwithstanding the lure of easy money lotteries have always offered, the

liberation of the pursuit of money, the shift away from the representation of public goods, the depiction of consumerist fantasies and scenarios, and the large size of jackpots constitute the collective representationality of lotteries in late capitalism. These aspects of lotteries are contextualized in the next section, but held in tension with the lottery form itself.

LOTTERIES AND LATE CAPITALISM

In the 21st century, the public is well-used to the embeddedness of lotteries in everyday life: from the aforementioned media advertisements, to kiosk line-ups on large jackpot days. The spread of lotteries, and legal gambling more generally, however, has required legitimation and legalization processes. The late 20th century spread occurred approximately in conjunction with the neo-liberalization of capitalist economies and their financialization. The liberalization of lotteries (and other forms of gambling) must be seen in relation to other collective representations, such as those expressing the liberation of money, but also in relation to the decline or weakening of religious collective representations, particularly those originating in Protestantism (Weber 1992). The expansion of state lotteries can be read as a symptom of neoliberalism, but the lottery form also challenges “liberal” economic conceptions. Late capitalism, in its neoliberal shaping, signifies a host of issues relating to taxation, the state versus “free” markets, and the role of charitable institutions and voluntarism. It has been argued that the state use of lotteries signifies the state’s withdrawal from the welfare state. Neary and Taylor (1998) for example, suggest that the introduction of the National Lottery in Britain (in 1994) indicates the shift from the “law of insurance” (apropos the welfare state) to the “law of lottery,” marking the state’s decreased ability to manage the domestic economy. In general terms, the instituting of (state) lotteries allows the state to accrue non-tax revenues in an era and milieu where economic thinking and policy, and significant public sentiment, are hostile to taxation.

Lottery participation is also symptomatic of late capitalism’s exacerbation of social mobility frustration, given generalized enrichment of the already rich, increasing wealth inequality, stagnation of wages, higher housing prices and a host of other economic factors that would see lottery participation as a form of acceptable economic “innovation” (Merton 1968). Lotteries share in the sacralization and collective representationality of money within neoliberalism, found also in the representations of the annual pay of corporate CEOs and the wealth of the super-rich, A-list celebrities, entertainers, and sports stars, not to men-

tion the constant representations of money in business news and coverage of financial markets. But the lottery form also poses challenges to neoliberalism. Notwithstanding the political decisions regarding the particular direction of lottery revenues, state lotteries support collective ends that are disavowed by the anti-collectivist (and taxation) ideology of neoliberalism. The lottery form as institution long predates capitalism and works outside liberal conceptions of work, merit, and social mobility (Goodwin 1990). Participation is voluntaristic and egalitarian and the lottery form is typically used for economic redistribution and collective purposes (Goodwin 1990). Thus, the lottery as institution can be distinguished between its form and its particular historical contents (and uses): its collective representationality will represent the values extant in the collectivity to solicit participation.

Over time, lottery slogans and representations came to emphasize the lucky *individual* (Sweeney 2009). This emphasis, and the focus on the large jackpot amounts has obscured the redistributive goal of lotteries: we can point to particular (paradoxical) collective representations produced in the neoliberal milieu. However, that lotteries support the collective and redistributive ends – “good causes,” public works, or charity – on this, the state appears to mediate the gap between itself and the individual consumer, and works outside (neo-)liberal values.

If money constitutes an important aspect of lottery collective representationality, so does chance: not only is chance instituted to serve as the mechanism for the redistributive ends, but the lottery’s *use* of chance is also a goal: for the individual, the possibility of life, or at least economic, transformation that winning allows values chance as the condition for this possibility, with no other moral or ethical support. Chance is valued on the basis of its potential for radical transformation of one’s life and life-chances.

The individualist-consumerist representations (paradoxically) comprise lottery *collective* representationality; this dimension however can be separated out analytically from the lottery form which serves circulatory and (re-)distributive interests. While the culture of late capitalism may seed the ground for the spread of aleatory social action, the institutionalizing of chance in the lottery form must be viewed in terms of its persistence as a long-standing institution. The collective representationality of money also reveals a critical aspect: as the neoliberal sacred, (access to) money requires sacrifice and austerity for many people in the capitalist economy (Datta 2018; Jessop 2019), but the large jackpots celebrate excess and surplus, supported and financed by the unproductive expenditure of ticket purchasers. The utopia of monetary abundance thus signifies what the economic system makes difficult to access for

many, except for those who benefit most from late capitalist financial policies and monetary distributions.

CONCLUSION

Lotteries are legitimate enterprises, having overcome historical socio-moral sentiments and economic ethics that hindered their societal uses. The (re-)legalization and expansion of lotteries that began in the late 20th century, has corresponded with the rise to prominence of neoliberalism. Lotteries are now fully integrated into late capitalist economies, if often monopolized by states. In this socio-economic context the gap between lottery representations and state uses takes on particular meaning, as states have had to come to rely on lotteries for revenue purposes (Neary and Taylor 1998). The signifiers in lottery advertising represent values extant in this context, particularly the emphasis on individuals winning, the consumerist desires, and the emphasis on (lots of) money. However, these signifiers mask the redistributive and circulatory form of lotteries and the collective purposes to which lottery revenues are put: the advertising signifiers do not usually link up with the revenue objectives.

Paradoxically, the *collective* representation of modern lotteries reveals an *individualist* imaginary. Lotteries may signify economic anomie as citizens pursue economic rewards outside the occupational structure of the late capitalist division of labour, but the lottery form nevertheless persists as a method of resource circulation and redistribution and assumes some *collective* good.

The celebration of money in lotteries, a central signifier in lottery representations, is itself a consequence of historical processes, money having become a “sacred” object in late capitalist societies (Durkheim 1995). While lotteries perform an interpellative purpose in late capitalism through the representation and celebration of money, lottery participation works outside the liberal social and economic ideologies supportive of work and the work-reward equation, that governments have hitherto had to endorse. Chance as redistributive and allocative mechanism has been legitimized.

As paradoxical collective representation, lotteries reveal a latent critique of the (neo-)liberal economic and ideological framework. Durkheim was seriously concerned about the burgeoning prominence of the economic dimension in modern societies. The modern lottery, with its celebration of money, would have no doubt been a vexatious phenomenon for him. However, the lottery cannot exist without a collective basis for its participation, nor can its collective and redistributive uses be fully

concealed. Further, the celebration of an excess of money symbolizes what is made difficult to access or denied for many people through existing ideologies and policies of monetary and financial reward distribution.

While we can congratulate the good fortune of a lottery winner, made wealthy by the lightning strike of chance, it also becomes possible to imagine the use and administration of lotteries differently. As an institutionalized celebration of chance, the lottery form assumes collective participation to function. The issue is the gap between the form and the individualist imaginary which is typically represented. Dedicated public ends and collective uses—which were previously represented as part of the legitimization of lotteries in the earlier phases of legalization— and in particular, uses addressing the financial and resource needs of groups excluded from the economic and material “rewards” of late capitalism, could be instituted: the lottery form could offer the possibility of collective support and solidarity, beyond the individualist imaginary. This would require, however, the removal of lottery money from consolidated general revenues in many jurisdictions, and reconfigured advertising (Dijkema and Lewis 2020).

The lottery form must be recognized for its persistence as an institution, predating the modern state and industrial capitalism, and now a legitimate mode of economic redistribution and resource allocation. Despite their particular, paradoxical collective representations in late capitalism, it is possible to reimagine these celebrations of contingency, where the circulatory and redistributive form and collective ends would be more fully expressed and collectively represented.

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