

The Future of Gambling

Presentation to EASG
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Olympia, Jan 2007

OUTLINE

- Prediction in the world of things and the world of persons
- Determinants of the future of gambling
- Possible developments in psychology
- Possible developments in technology
- Possible developments in politics
- Implications for the future of gambling
- Specifically European Considerations

Predicting the Future in the Natural and Human Sciences

- All prediction aspires to an understanding of how forces of various kinds interact in relevantly unchanging environments and how they are likely to interact differently in new changed environments, i.e. how things work.
- Natural sciences deal with “ things” (like asteroids, atoms) i.e. phenomena whose behaviour is determined by forces which are purely physical (i.e. lacking in consciousness, e.g. gravity, entropy)
- Human sciences deal with persons (individuals and groups) whose behaviour is determined by the contents of consciousness such as beliefs, understandings, desires and decisions

Predicting the Future of Gambling

- Obviously mainly a matter of human science but some natural science: neuroscience and evolution: some facts about how human beings will perceive their interests and opportunities which are “hard-wired”
- Mostly about choices made by individuals and groups with different interests
- Requires identification of principal determinants of gambling behaviour
- Construction of scenarios about how these may change in ways which affect the future of gambling
- Judgement rather than calculation in assessing the comparative likelihood of different scenarios

Determinants of the Future of Gambling

- What happens to the world
- What happens to economies
- Decisions about the best way to pursue:
 - pleasure by individuals
 - profits by businesspeople
 - power by politicians
- How culture develops (i.e. the beliefs and values which shape individual and communal lives)

Psychology

- Our brains have evolved so that we get pleasure out of engaging in activities which enhance our survival and reproductive capacities even when the activities involved contain substantial unpleasantness.
- Playing games generally promotes competitiveness, cunning, strength, etc even though they are also often exhausting, painful, and involve the risk of losing
- Gambling (playing games for money) spices this up – intensifies the pleasure of winning and the pain of losing and teaches us how to enjoy or endure both (Kipling)
- But amounts and types of games and gambling vary amongst individuals and cultures, according to needs, tastes, opportunities and values - like foods
- A minority of gamblers have a neurophysiological disorder which causes them to gamble compulsively and excessively
- This neurophysiological disorder can in principle be cured pharmacologically
- But NB probably 4 times as many people get into serious trouble gambling because they don't know what they are doing

Implications for Gambling

- Gambling is here to stay but
- Problem gambling may not be
- Where would the debate be if problem gambling were no longer an issue?
- And we could greatly intensify the pleasure of gambling artificially (as with amyl-nitrate)

Gambling Technology/Know-how,

- Games get more complex and sophisticated: more things to bet on, more types of bet,,: e.g. computer games tournaments with side betting
- Delivery systems get more complex and sophisticated: server-based gambling; integrated portable and domestic communication systems; integrated gambling emporia (cp internet cafes)
- Marketing gets more complex and sophisticated: loyalty programmes, pills, subliminal advertising etc

Implications for Gambling

- More home and hand-held gambling
- But not no “going out” gambling
- More gambling
- More skill-based gambling
- More competition
- Lower profit margins
- Cp Movies

Politics

- The Democratic Continuum:
Prohibitionism to permissivism (cp sex)
- Could move in either direction (cp Nelson Rose)
- Based on moral intuitions about threats to society which contain which may be imaginary or diminishing

Implications for gambling

- Presently a state of hysteria, based on existential “bad faith” (Sartre) i.e. self-deception, rationalised self-interest and appeals to the basest elements in human nature, e.g. the relishing of disasters which will happen to others; moral self-congratulation; revelling in the humiliation esp of those in authority
- Democracy might get stupider and nastier and support a new puritanism, including anti-gambling laws
- If Prob Gam disappears from agenda, then the debate will be purely ethical between moral puritans and moral liberals
- Morality is on the side of the liberals: (Kant) Paternalism is the worst form of tyranny: not to treat people as if they were the best judges of their own interests – even when they are not – is to fail to treat them with the respect and dignity due to autonomous human beings possessed of freedom to make choices.
- Not only do the anti gamblers not have a monopoly of virtue: their position is morally indefensible and this is so whether ethics are based on secular humanist values or on a coherent belief in a creator God who has created us with free will.

Coda on Europe

- What ought to happen: Common laws on gambling and problem gambling and taxation, local option about types and quantities of gambling permitted, with no discrimination permitted on grounds of nationality
- What will happen: EU will continue to exhibit the worst features of democratic government without being a democracy and will remain a federation of competing, self-interested nationalist states united only in their hostility to America and their determination to continue to exploit the developing world through protectionist trade laws
- Gambling in Europe will remain a shambles for the foreseeable future in which only the lawyers and Eurocrats will prosper and gambling companies must simply seize opportunities as they haphazardly arise