

**Juan Ramón Carbó (ed.)**

**CUERPO Y ESPÍRITU:  
DEPORTE Y CRISTIANISMO  
EN LA HISTORIA**

*BODY AND SPIRIT:  
SPORT AND CHRISTIANITY  
THROUGHOUT HISTORY*



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# RELIGIOUS ORDERS, THE LUDIC SYSTEM AND SOCIETY IN ITALY FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE MODERN AGE

*Órdenes religiosas, sistema de  
entretenimiento y sociedad en Italia  
entre la Edad Media y la Edad Moderna*

Alessandra Rizzi  
*Università Ca' Foscari Venezia*

**ABSTRACT:** This paper intends to take a fresh look at the influence of preachers and churchmen upon the activities and events of the ludic system – games, pastimes, as well as physical training and public festivals and rituals in general – during the crucial transition between the Middle Ages and the early modern age. These ecclesiastics embarked upon a disciplinary action intended to establish more clear-cut and precise boundaries between lawful and unlawful practices and to steer their contemporaries towards ludic activities with elevated, shared values more suited to members of the *societas christiana*. Their actions were part of a wider offensive that sought to moralise and civilise contemporary habits and social customs and were also supported and promoted by the secular world. Despite their shared aims, the actions of preachers and churchmen were influenced and determined by their religious affiliations, and necessarily took into account the realities and circumstances in which they intervened as well as the people they were addressing. They were therefore far more nuanced and complex than might seem at first sight. In fact, their interventions and outcomes were far from univocal and there was no lack of divergences between re-

ligious and lay worlds in terms of perception and management of the contemporary ludic system. This essay intends to clarify the general picture and shed some light on critical areas with reference to specific urban contexts.

**KEYWORDS:** religious orders, Italy, Medieval, Modern age, ludic system, regulation, Christian society, ludic ethics.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo pretende realizar un estudio actualizado en torno a las influencias de predicadores y eclesiásticos sobre las actividades y eventos del sistema de entretenimiento – juegos, pasatiempos, así como entrenamiento físico y festivales públicos y rituales en general– durante la transición crucial entre la Edad Media y la Edad Moderna. Estos eclesiásticos se embarcaron en una acción disciplinaria concebida para establecer límites más claros y precisos entre las prácticas legales e ilegales y dirigir a sus contemporáneos hacia actividades lúdicas con valores elevados compartidos más propios de miembros de la *societas christiana*. Sus acciones eran parte de una ofensiva más amplia que buscaba moralizar y civilizar hábitos contemporáneos y costumbres sociales, y eran también apoyadas y promovidas por el mundo secular. A pesar de sus objetivos compartidos, las acciones de predicadores y eclesiásticos estuvieron influenciadas y determinadas por sus afiliaciones religiosas, y necesariamente tuvieron en cuenta las realidades y circunstancias en las que intervinieron, así como el pueblo al que se estaban dirigiendo. Por lo tanto, sus acciones fueron mucho más matizadas y complejas de lo que podría parecer a primera vista. De hecho, sus intervenciones y resultados estuvieron lejos de ser unívocas y no hubo ausencia de divergencias entre los mundos religioso y laico en términos de percepción y gestión del sistema de entretenimiento contemporáneo. Este trabajo pretende clarificar el panorama general y arrojar algo de luz sobre áreas críticas con referencia a contextos urbanos específicos.



**PALABRAS CLAVE:** órdenes religiosas, Italia, medieval, Edad Moderna, Sistema de entretenimiento, regulación, sociedad cristiana, ética del entretenimiento.

These considerations regard the actions and influence of religious orders on the ludic system in Italian society from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age. If it is agreed that the development of the ludic system is a general indication of the more general evolution of society<sup>1</sup>, the study of how preachers and clergymen intervened, in this age, is also useful in showing their contribution to the development of society itself. What is more, the period of time is of interest because of the particular situation: its political-institutional framework gave way to broader and centralized bodies; civility (the so-called 'civilization process') advanced, urging the new political subjects to a greater control of violence thereby exerting a general influence on individual and group behaviour, which, broadly speaking, included play (from games to parties to rituals...); public and private spheres progressively advanced, each in its own way (as far as play is concerned) with new protagonists and new forms of expression; religious orders (the mendicant ones and later those emerging from the Counter-Reformation) started to have an increasingly greater influence (even if in different ways) on the society of the time. Attention is placed therefore on the regulating function of preachers and priests in contemporary ludic activities, leaving out their equally important dimension as players and practitioners in the field or as has effec-

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1 Ortalli, G. (2012). *Barattieri. Il gioco d'azzardo fra economia ed etica. Secoli XIII-XV*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 247, with particular reference to gambling organized in the so called *baratteria*, the name of the public gambling house attested in Italy in the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

tively been noted, the “perméabilité des ordres religieux aux pratiques ludiques”<sup>2</sup>.

Preachers and clergymen gave themselves two fundamental objectives: to evangelize and moralize individual and group behaviour, intervening in the most urgent issues of contemporary urban society. There were, therefore, heretical drifts, conflict among factions, social divisions, economical and sexual practices (usury, sodomy...), female customs and, no less important, ludic and festive customs and rituals. This oscillation between the sacred and the profane confirms that clergymen, within the local communities, did not distinguish between the ‘religious’ and ‘civil’ spheres<sup>3</sup>. A confirmation of this by Savonarola at the end of the fifteenth century when he suggested to Florence: “se tu vuoi che il tuo governo sia stabile e forte [...] bisogna che tu ti ‘converta’ a Dio e a vivere bene [...]. Inoltre è necessario [...] che tu rimuova [...] giochi, taverne, vesti femminili non acconce e qualsiasi cosa possa nuocere all’anima”<sup>4</sup>. Preaching and

2 Mehl, J.-M. (2013). “Les jeux de dés et de tables ordres religieux”. In Sonntag, J. (a cura di), *Religiosus ludens. Das Spiel als kulturelles Phänomen in mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Orden* (Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of the Research Centre for Comparative History of religious Orders FOVOG ‘Spiele im mittelalterlichen Kloster’, Stift Heiligenkreuz, 9-11 settembre 2010). Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 122), 171 (with particular reference to games with dice, chess and tables). For this aspect of the ludic phenomenon refer, lastly, to the volume by Sonntag, J. (a cura di). *Religiosus ludens. Das Spiel als kulturelles Phänomen in mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Orden* (Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of the Research Centre for Comparative History of religious Orders FOVOG ‘Spiele im mittelalterlichen Kloster’, Stift Heiligenkreuz, 9-11 settembre 2010). Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 122), 2013.

3 Montesano, M. (1995). “Aspetti e conseguenze della predicazione civica di Bernardino da Siena”. In *La religion civique à l’époque médiévale et moderne (chrétienté et islam). Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche «Histoire sociale et culturelle de l’Occident. XII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle» de l’Université de Paris X-Nanterre et l’Institut universitaire de France (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993), sous la direction d’André Vauchez*. Rome: École Française de Rome (Collection de l’École Française de Rome, 213), 273-275, above all with reference to preaching by Bernardino da Siena against several Perugian practices and manifestations: for example games, songs and dances tied to the Feast of Saint Herculaneum in which there was a mixture of the sacred and the profane as well as residual pagan elements as well as stone battles and gambling which did not have anything to do with religion.

4 For Savonarola’s preaching in Florence on December 14, 1494: Savonarola, G. (1965). Firpo, L. (a cura di), *Prediche sopra Aggeo con il trattato circa il reggimento e governo della città di Firenze*. Firenze: Belardetti, 219-220.

particularly mendicant preaching was seen as a programme of religious instruction as well as the development and passing on of a system of values and behaviour.

It was undoubtedly during the course of the fifteenth century that preachers paid more attention to the ludic dimension and particularly to the condemnation of games of chance<sup>5</sup>: recurrent but less systematic and circumstantial fourteenth-century statements<sup>6</sup> were replaced by sermons at times based on some traditional practices (from carnival<sup>7</sup> to dance<sup>8</sup> to masquerade parties to stone battles...), but almost regularly on gambling. It was not so much the games themselves that they condemned but their use, which, according to Bernardino da Siena (one of the great protagonists and moralizers of contemporary

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5 Mention of this well-known campaign, lastly, also in Fenech Kroke, A. (2017). "Ludic Intermingling/Ludic Discrimination: Women's Card Playing and Visual Proscriptions in Early Modern Europe". In Levy, A. (a cura di), *Playthings in Early Modernity. Party Games, Word Games, Mind Games*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, College of Arts and Sciences, Western Michigan University, particularly p. 50.

6 For fourteenth-century references, cf. Rizzi, A. (1995). *Ludus/ludere. Giocare in Italia alla fine del medio evo*. Treviso-Roma: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche-Viella, *passim*. For Giordano da Pisa, particularly, also Iannella, C. (1999). *Giordano da Pisa. Etica urbana e forme della società*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 167-180. The author, particularly dealing with the professional categories contemplated by the Dominican, does not neglect the 'unlawful professions', therefore the jobs of prostitutes, minstrels and, above all, professional gamblers or *barattieri* (all having in common "dal vivere nel rovesciamento del sistema dei valori etici ufficiali [a life contrary to the official ethic value system]": p. 168) and then ponders the statements of the preacher regarding gambling and *baratteria* (italian gambling house).

7 Mention also in Zampieri, M. (2008). *Il palio, il porco e il gallo. La corsa e il rito del 'drappo verde' tra Duecento e Settecento*, Sommacampagna (Verona): Cierre, 9-12; Ciappelli, G. (1997). *Carnevale e Quaresima: comportamenti sociali e cultura a Firenze nel Rinascimento*. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura.

8 For the reference texts (homilistic treatises, *reportationes, summae confessorum*) and the positions expressed particularly on dance, by theologians, canonists, preachers and confessors from the thirteenth century to the beginning of the Modern Age (as it seems, indicating growing attention, with constant references to and resumptions of preceding items) cf. Arcangeli, A. (2000). *Davide o Salomè? Il dibattito europeo sulla danza nella prima età moderna*. Treviso-Roma: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche-Viella, 69-105. Moreover the author emphasizes that in the second half of the fifteenth century in Italy there was "un'attenzione più insistente [more insistent attention]" to dance. Evidence of this is the fact that the production of the most highly prestigious authors was also in printed editions (p. 99).

customs and initiator of the anti-ludic campaign), obliged the player to a series of *iniquitates*, all leading to the questioning of fundamental values: respect for others, the salvation of the individual and *last but not least*, the love of God. For the Sienese, play was *idolatria stulta* in which a dice “facit hominem apostatare”<sup>9</sup>. Over time, to underline the incompatibility with being a good Christian, Giacomo della Marca increased the number of religious sins linked to the practice, giving secondary importance to winnings and relative restitutions<sup>10</sup>. Over the course of the century preachers progressively demonized gambling, resorting to an old tradition which authorized the pedagogic use of horror. To illustrate its dangers they resorted to unprecedented dramatic expedients but they didn’t reveal anything new by speaking of infernal intervention<sup>11</sup> in play, as demonstrated by exemplary literature (from the thirteenth century onwards) or drawing on the patrology of origins by Giovanni Crisostomo (who died at the beginning of the fifth century) for whom it was the devil

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9 S. Bernardinus Senensis (1635). Seraphin quadragesimale. In De La Haye, J. (a cura di), *Opera omnia, synopsis ornata, postillis illustrata [...]*. Parisiis: sumptibus Dionysii Moreau, vol. III, 326.

10 Ceccarelli, G. (2003). *Il gioco e il peccato. Economia e rischio nel Tardo Medioevo*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 58 and 336.

11 Tibo, T. (2007). “Il gioco nelle parole dei predicatori, dei maestri, dei legislatori italiani del Quattro e Cinquecento”. In Procaccioli, P. (a cura di), *Studi per le “Sorti”. Gioco, immagini, poesia oracolare a Venezia nel Cinquecento*. Treviso-Roma: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche-Viella (Ludica: collana di storia del gioco, 8), 192.

who inspired play<sup>12</sup> (even Saint Thomas<sup>13</sup> is said to have arrived at the same conclusion).

In order to have more impact and be more attractive to the public, fifteenth-century preachers resorted to oratorical strategies (a 'macaronic mix' of Latin and vernacular forms for example) and often terrifying, theatrical techniques<sup>14</sup> in their condemnation of gambling and any form of play considered to be demoniacal and unlawful: imaginary characters to give war-

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12 Cf. Depaulis, T. (2013). "«Breviari del diavolo so' le carte e naibi». How Bernardine of Siena and his Franciscan Followers Saw Playing Cards and Card Games". In Sonntag, J. (a cura di), *Religiosus ludens. Das Spiel als kulturelles Phänomen in mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Orden (Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of the Research Centre for Comparative History of religious Orders FOVOG 'Spiele im mittelalterlichen Kloster', Stifi Heiligenkreuz, 9-11 settembre 2010)*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 122), 120, according to whom Giovanni Crisostomo was probably inspired by the De aleatoribus of the pseudo Cipriano (III-IV century), whose rhetoric would be very similar to that used many centuries later by Bernardino da Siena against games of chance, even if the Franciscan did not know the late ancient work. A long tradition of demonizing gambling which is worth further clarifying. According to the author, after Giovanni Crisostomo, the fathers of the Church "are silent" about gambling. Of opposing opinion is Mehl, J.-M. (2013). "Les jeux de dés et de tableses ordres religieux... (op.cit.), 172, for whom, instead, "les positions patristiques en matière de jeux, essentiellement pour ce qui concerne les jeux de hasard [...] forment un dossier fourni". It is to be said that in the early Middle Ages the condemnation of risky games (and other ludic practices or shows) was particularly transmitted by synodic and council arrangements, particularly addressing those with ecclesiastical status.

13 Saint Thomas Aquinas (1985), vol. 21, II-II, quaestio 168, articulus 2.2: "Praeterea, virtus est 'quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur', ut supra [...] habitum est. Sed Chrysostomus dicit [...] 'Non dat Deus ludere, sed diabolus'".

14 Communication strategies that preachers generally used not only in their campaign against gambling. In the 'show' where preaching was to attract and enchant the public cf. Muzzarelli, M.G. (2005). *Pescatori di uomini: predicatori e piazze alla fine del medioevo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

nings to or clarify doubts and doctrinal uncertainties<sup>15</sup>; public bonfires (the so-called ‘devil’s castles’) where censored instruments of play were burned (“maschere, carte et altri istromenti del demonio”)<sup>16</sup>; teams of children (as happened in Savonarolian Florence) to punish the infamous disciples; effective gestures like demonstrating a speaking skull to show the frailty of things (including play), frighten the onlookers and force them to repent: “*accepit in manibus unum caput cadaveris et, populo ostendens, cepit dicere: ‘Ubi tue divitie, ubi pallatia, ubi ludi, ubi tripudia [...] O iuvenes, o veteres, o domina [...] ego sicut vos fui, ego [...] possessiones et domos ammissi, et post me reliqui, et, sicut ego sum, in bre-*

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15 Particularly regarding the language used in fifteenth-century sermons and the expedients used by preachers sufficient are the mentions in Visani, O. (1980). “Pubblico e temi del quaresimale padovano del 1455 di Roberto Caracciolo da Lecce”. *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, CVII (1980), 541-546. Bernardino da Siena and, amongst his pupils, Roberto da Lecce, made great use of the imaginary speaker, (a ‘shrewdness’ that the author refers to in early medieval preaching with the example of the philosophical-moral scholastic declamation): in the quick-paced dialogue between preacher and the public there were colourful comments to condemn, for example, balls during Lent as well as objections or requests for ulterior clarifications on the part of the hypothetical counterpart. Witty remarks between the audience and preacher (the topic always being games) even in the preceding century, for example with Giordano da Pisa: Iannella, C. (1999). *Giordano da Pisa. Etica urbana e forme della società*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 170, note 67).

16 So, for example, Bernardino da Feltre in Modena in 1486: Guslino, B. (1958-1961). Ghinato, A. (a cura di). *Vita del B. Bernardino da Feltre. Le Venezie francescane*, XXV (1958); XXVI (1959), pp. 1-47; XXVII (1960), pp. 1-24; XXVIII (1961), 19-20. It was the preacher himself, after having spoken out against gambling and its deviations, who promoted public fires, in which were burned clothes, trains, chains, wigs and other cose vane or female legierezze, prohibited books along with gambling instruments... as in the bonfires he organized in Perugia in May 1486 or in Spoleto during Pentecost in 1487: cf. respectively Guslino, B. (1960), p. 24; Guslino, B. (1961), pp. 13-14. Accurate description of the instruments of play which nurtured the “gran castello del diavolo” desired by Bernardino da Feltre in Parma for Advent 1487: “Fece arder poi [...] anco molte carte da giuoco, tra le quali ve n’eran de lavorate dal dritto d’oro, et nel coperto d’argento di gran pretio, che fatto havea far il Duca Gian Galeazzo per l’amante sua. Costavan queste l. sessanta il paro [He had burned [...] also many cards, some of which were decorated in gold and covered in precious silver, that the Duke Gian Galeazzo had made for his lover. They cost sixty l. per pair]”: cf. Guslino, B. (1961), p. 21. It could have been a matter of tarot cards during the period of Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza.

*vi spatio eritis*”<sup>17</sup>. In the majority of cases clergymen used a vast repertory of exemplary tales to keep people far from *dyabolica occecatio*<sup>18</sup>. In the *exempla*, what stood out (for its originality and good luck over time) was the diabolic liturgy about gambling (invented by Bernardino da Siena), which, in the place of the Eucharistic mystery, celebrated play, whose ‘church’, instituted by the devil, as an inversion of the one wanted by Christ, was a sort of antagonistic, rival ‘church’ devoted to the malicious rituals of gambling<sup>19</sup>.

The campaign of mendicant preachers against hazardous play did not only regard dice (gambling par excellence) but gradually also cards, starting from Bernardino da Siena (the first priest in Italy to condemn the new game<sup>20</sup>): an indication of the growing knowledge of contemporary ludic customs, bringing

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17 Visani, O. (1980). “Pubblico e temi del quaresimale padovano... (op.cit.), 546-547: the quotation is taken from Sermo de morte by Roberto da Lecce, probably held in Padova in 1451: for the identification of the sermon cf. also, Roberto da Lecce (1983). Visani, O. (a cura di). *Quaresimale padovano 1455. Il Santo*, XXIII, II, fasc. 1-2, 1983, 28.

18 S. Iacobus de Marchia (1978). Lioi, R. (a cura di), *Sermones Dominicales*. Falconara Marittima: Biblioteca francescana, 3 voll. vol. 1, 198 (sermo, 10).

19 Bernardinian dramatization refers to inversion mechanisms of long before, in which gambling had found its way – associated to scriptural revision, regarding the mass (es. Officium lusorum of Carmina Burana) –, parodistic, playful and satirical, a further sign of the ‘gap’ between fifteenth-century condemnation (true imprecations and insults) and the less intense ones of the preceding centuries: cf. Ortalli, G. (2012). *Barattieri. Il gioco d’azzardo fra economia ed etica. Secoli XIII-XV*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 223-224. Finally, the adaptations in English and French produced in the twenties of the sixteenth century are an example of the success of the Bernardinian liturgy a “gioiello di oratoria religiosa medievale come è stata anche definita” (“Medieval religious oratory jewel” as it was defined): Arcangeli, A. (2004). *Passatempi rinascimentali. Storia culturale del divertimento in Europa (secoli XV-XVII). Con un saggio introduttivo di Peter Burke*. Rome: Carocci editore (ed. orig. *Recreation in the Renaissance*, 2003), 91.

20 Cf. also Depaulis, T. (2013). “«Breviari del diavolo so’ le carte e naibi... (op.cit.), 119. The author carefully reconsiders the first evidence of cards in Europe, gradually arriving in the last quarter of the fourteenth century and particularly in Italy at the end of the seventies. The first ecclesiastical announcement is said to have been made during the synod of Langres in 1404 (by the local bishop, cardinal Luoio de Bar). Then silence until Bernardinian preaching.

about new worries<sup>21</sup>. This is another indication of the relevance of the social and cultural function of homilies in the communities of the time.

The campaign against gambling did not regard Italy alone. The Franciscans were also active in this way in France<sup>22</sup>.

In the course of the fifteenth century preachers and priests in general had a double orientation with regards to play: on the one hand (as already mentioned) they radicalized gambling censorship while on the other hand they emphasized the lawfulness/utility of physical exercise and in so doing they became ambivalent supporters, sanctioning and at the same time promoting, aiming to protect society and moralize the contemporary ludic world *tout court*.

In the last centuries of the Middle Ages canonists and theologians were involved in a vast and articulated reflection of the proper ways of acquiring wealth on the part of Christian socie-

21 Some examples. The sermon *Del peccato del giuochio*, recited by Saint Bernardino in Florence during Lent in 1424, is said to report “the earliest written account of the so-called Latin suit signs, spade, bastoni, denari, coppe”. The Siense’s anti-ludic campaign was carried on (as is known) by Giovanni da Capistrano and Giacomo della Marca, whose sermon *De ludo* was repeated by successive preachers. It was a model for the so-called Steele Sermon (named after its editor, Robert Steele, who published it in 1900), inserted in a collection of homilies gathered by an anonymous Franciscan author at the end of the fifteenth century. The text doesn’t seem to show only an adaptation of the sermon by Giacomo della Marca, but his adjustments to the, by then, changed contemporary ludic habits, “with more dice and card games added, and a final section devoted to card games and tarot, which was not, of course, in James’s text”. Here an extremely brief account of what was reported in the interesting contribution by Depaulis, T. (2013). “«Breviari del diavolo so’ le carte e naibi... (op.cit.). Some news which is still waiting to be carefully examined, seems to attribute the first mention (a prohibition) of a game similar to snakes and ladders in a Sunday homily during Advent in 1480, to the Dominican Gabriele da Barletta. If the information were true, it would predate the origins of the game by about one century: the indication in Giamminuti, P. (being printed), “*Il Gioco dell’Oca: una proposta iconográfica*”. *Ludica, annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*, drawn from Seville, A. (2015). “The Royal Game of the Goose Road to Ruin or Pathway to Paradise?”. *Ephemera Journal*, 17, 5-8. And the examples could continue.

22 Again Depaulis, T. (2013). “«Breviari del diavolo so’ le carte e naibi... (op.cit.), 126, who adds that Bernardino da Siena’s legacy and that of the Franciscan Observance against games of chance is said to have been gathered by Protestant Reformers “while the Roman Catholic Church seems to have been more tolerant”. A matter which certainly deserves to be studied further.



ty and this resulted to be very useful to the people in charge of *cura animarum* (spiritual wellbeing) in order to define the *ludus licitus*. At the end of the thirteenth century a more advanced school of thought had acknowledged the *contractus ludi* of the matter in question, that is, the legitimacy of bets (the very heart of the problem) even if it didn't deny its immorality. Instead, another 'utilitarian' one proposed the *ludus exercitiorum*, the game of exercise (represented by tournaments, games of intelligence, for example chess) as opposed to the *ludus taxillorum* (emblem of the much berated gambling). It was attributed positive social and cultural virtues (the game of exercise placates the ardours of the flesh and keeps one far from the dissolute behaviour to which the body is naturally inclined) as well as pedagogical qualities: *torneantes* learn to control violent impulses, learning the *ars militare*, useful in the defence of *res publica* and principally, the Church, protector of *fides* and *pax*<sup>23</sup>.

Therefore, the reflection on gambling – particularly on the legitimacy of bets and obligations of the parties involved (extinction of gambling debts, restitution of illicit acquisitions or spiritual indemnities) –, regardless of the positions expressed, highlighted the potential of physical activity. The austere preachers of the fifteenth century (aware of the innovative theological solutions mentioned) were more concerned with evaluating the utility of obligations and possible repercussions on the common

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23 Again, on these matters, Rizzi, A. (2009). "Regulated play at the end of the Middle Ages: the work of mendicant preachers in communal Italy". In McClelland, J., Merrilees, B. (a cura di), *Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe. Le Sport dans la Civilisation de l'Europe Pré-Moderne (Atti del convegno "Athletes and Athletics in the Early Modern Period, 1000-1650 A.D.", Toronto 17-19 giugno 2004)*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies (Victoria University in the University of Toronto; Essays and Studies, 20), 41-69; and Rizzi, A. (2013). "Predicatori, confessori mendicanti e gioco alla fine del medioevo". In Sonntag, J. (a cura di), *Religiosus ludens. Das Spiel als kulturelles Phänomen in mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Orden (Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of the Research Centre for Comparative History of religious Orders FOVOG 'Spiele im mittelalterlichen Kloster', Stift Heiligenkreuz, 9-11 settembre 2010)*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 122), 97-113, and relative bibliographical references.

good than speculating about the legal correctness or incorrectness of an obligation (*contractus ludi*). Their refusal of gambling, seen as a mere and casual redistribution of wealth (unproductive 'economic' activity, useless in terms of the model of the desired society) and their choice to promote (starting above all from the disciples of Bernardino da Siena) ludic activities compatible with the commitments of practicing Catholics, are therefore justified. The objective was not to discuss the legitimacy of gambling profits from the technical and legal point of view but to obtain concrete results: redirect the ludic impulses of those who sought their help, from gambling to other areas.

For this purpose fifteenth-century preachers and religious figures made use of an ancient stream of Christian tradition – partly known – which had not denied the possibility of devoting time to honest recreation and particularly physical activity. Before them there was for example, Isidore of Seville (sixth-seventh centuries) who, contrary to any form of play, made an exception for gymnastic activities<sup>24</sup>. Some preferred a more 'scientific' approach to the issue. With reference to Aristotle (movement produces heat which dries the humidity present in the body since birth, thereby strengthening it), in the middle of the twelfth century, Ugo di San Vittore stated that play was a legitimate activity since the natural heat of the human body is nourished by well-balanced movements. To expand on the thoughts of the ancient philosopher, he added that the delight that the

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24 The Spanish archbishop particularly made exceptions for jumping, running, weight throwing, javelin, archery, strength exercises with equipment, wrestling: Isidorus Hispalensis Episcopus (1911). Lindsay, W.M. (a cura di). *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*. Oxonii: Typographeo Clarendoniano (*Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis*), XVIII, 17-24. Well-known extract, amongst others, to Ortalli, G. (1995). "Tempo libero e medio evo: tra pulsioni ludiche e schemi culturali". In Cavaciocchi, S. (a cura di), *Il tempo libero. Economia e società (Loisirs, Leisure, Tempo Libre, Freizeit) sec. XIII-XVIII*. Firenze: Le Monnier (Istituto internazionale di Storia economica 'F. Datini' Prato. Serie II, Atti delle 'Settimane di Studi' e altri convegni, 26), 41-42.

‘temperate movement’ produces, regenerates the soul (“et laetitia animus reparatur”). By connecting movement and heat, the first recognized the medical effectiveness of movement, the second, a supplementary recreational value, while establishing an important link between *ludus licitus*, physical activity and restoration of the soul which recomposed the ancient distinction between body and soul, a consequence (and sign) of original sin<sup>25</sup>.

The recovery of Thomist thought also contributed to the redemption of ludic activities, promoted within the late medieval church. For Saint Thomas (in Aristotle’s debt), in addition to a corporal *quies, ad corporis refocillationem*, man needs an *ex parte animae*. The soul’s rest coincides with delight (*delectatio*) which is obtained with words and actions “*ludicra vel iocosa*”, observing three essential conditions: that words and actions, above all, not be improper or damaging; that the soul not completely abandon its *gravitas*; that *delectatio* be in conformance to the individuals, the time, the places and all the other ‘due circumstances’ (“*secundum alias circumstantias debite ordinetur*”). Since the aim of pleasure (*delectatio*) which play provides, is to restore the soul, play itself (according to the Aquinate) can be object of virtue, the Aristotelian *eutrapelia* (the art of having fun and entertaining maintaining the right balance between excessive laughter and excessive seriousness) which avoids any exaggeration and is modest. In conclusion therefore, “*si moderate fiat, licet uti ludo* [playing in moderation is lawful]”. For Saint Thomas it was not a question of promoting a particular practice but a moderate *loisir*: “*parum de delectatione sufficit, quasi pro condimento; sicut parum*

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25 Hugo de S. Victore (1880). *Didascalion*. In Hugo de S. Victore, *Opera Omnia tribus tomis digesta, studio et cura canonicorum regularium regalis abbatae S. Victoris parisiensis*. Parisiis: apud Garnier fratres editores et Jacques Paul Migne successores (Patrologiae cursus completus [...] Series Latina, vol. CLXXVI), II, 28. The extract is seen again, amongst others, in Ortalli, G. (1995). “Tempo libero e medio evo... (op.cit.), 47 and Arcangeli, A. (2004). *Passatempo rinascimentali. Storia culturale del divertimento in Europa (secoli XV-XVII). Con un saggio introduttivo di Peter Burke*. Roma: Carocci editore (ed. orig. Recreation in the Renaissance, 2003), 99.

*de sale sufficit in cibo* [a contained dose of fun and play would be enough to 'season' life as salt does with food]"<sup>26</sup>. The Dominican's reflections made it possible for subsequent preachers to definitively reinstate ludic activity: they could underline its inexorable nature for the human experience; acknowledge that it is suitable to Christian practices; impose upon it rules; propose a noble objective for it (*delectatio* that it emanates which makes it possible to rest, recreates the soul and improves one's actions). Among these preachers there were Bartolomeo da San Concordio, Giacomo della Marca, Cherubino da Spoleto, Roberto da Lecce, Bernardino Busti, while Bernardino da Siena, apparently contrary to any ludic activities, never followed (as it seems) to the Thomist doctrine in question.

The reflection on the part of theologians and clergymen provided late Medieval preachers with theoretical bases to promote play compatible with *societas christiana*: physical exercise not without limits but taking into consideration the circumstances, carried out with moderation (fundamental virtue) and above all, with the aim of restoring the soul which, in this way recovered its dominion over the body.

For fourteenth-century preachers the *ludus licitus* was undoubtedly an indispensable need but it did not yet succeed in achieving the great relevance and systematic presentation found in the sermons of the following century (the general context of wars and social, religious and political crises probably required attention). It was however present in a wealthy repertory of ludic pictures and metaphors, references to real life, which clergymen used to symbolize the incessant struggle between good and evil. Therefore, there were many 'champions' or 'fencers' of the faith; the 'athletes' of Christ which fought Christ's battle

26 Saint Thomas Aquinas (1985), vol. 21, II-II, quaestio 168, articulus 2 and 4. Now regarding the Aristotelian eutrapelia and its medieval 'fortune' cf. Vecchio, S., Casagrande, C. (being printed). "Vizi e virtù del gioco: l'eutrapelia fra XIII e XV secolo" (contributo al convegno *Giocare tra medioevo ed età moderna: modelli etici ed estetici per l'Europa*, Treviso, Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, University College Dublin.

with Christ's weapons to emulate Christ as a 'champion'<sup>27</sup>. Or, the brave, injured and besieged 'knights' of Christ, who were encouraged to resist in order not to lose the crown of victory<sup>28</sup>. Among those there is The Lord, who throws His arrows to the corrupt<sup>29</sup> or battles against the devil and sin<sup>30</sup>; or God who to test the holy man "metterallo alla giostra"<sup>31</sup>. The most well-known prior event – often used in medieval homilies – is the Pauline race in the stadium in which many participate but only one gets the prize<sup>32</sup>, provided that, clarifies the Apostle, "legitime certaverit" (he is an example also in this): racing in respect of the rules of the game is an indispensable requirement to compete for victory<sup>33</sup>.

Instead, in the course of the fifteenth century, preachers and moralists did not hesitate to acknowledge *ludus licitus*. With reference to Saint Thomas, following the 'utilitarian' concept of theologians from the late thirteenth century and condemning hazardous play not suitable for a Christian lifestyle, they promoted competitive and training-related play, able to transmit moral, social and pedagogical virtues. They identified suitable practices but also appropriate circumstances and game procedures to follow, thanks, above all, to the 'heirs' of Bernardino da Siena and particularly Giacomo della Marca who clarified the idea of the nature of 'virtuous' games to his contemporaries. He proposed a *so-*

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27 For the 'fencer' of the faith, for example, Giordano da Pisa (1839), vol. 1, p. 230; for the 'athlete' of Christ instead, Saint Antonius Patavinus (1979). Costa, B., Frasson, L. e Luisetto, G. (a cura di), *Sermones dominicales et festivi. Ad fidem codicum recogniti*. Padova: Messaggero, 3 voll, vol. 1, 40.

28 Cavalca, D. (1838). Bottari, G. (a cura di), *Medicina del cuore ovvero trattato della pazienza [...]*. Milano: Giovanni Silvestri, 222.

29 Giordano da Pisa (1839), vol. 3, pp. 100-101.

30 Particularly for Saint Caterina da Siena (1940), Duprè Theseider, E. (a cura di), *Epistolario. Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo (Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 82)*, vol. 1, 27: Christ played "in sulla croce alle braccia colla morte del peccato".

31 Giordano da Pisa (1867), p. 364.

32 1 Corinthians, 9, 24.

33 2 Timothy 2, 5. Even for Saint Ambrose (Hexameron, 6, 50) the crown is given only for "regolare" combat.

*latium corporale* as a remedy for the weakening of the spirit, in observance, however, of a fundamental principle: in order for play to be 'virtuous', excess was to be avoided. The preacher therefore ended up formulating a code of ludic ethics. This is why certain generally allowed practices became forbidden (chess, ball, dance) if one reached the point of *excedere metas*, that is, place them above God, have them interfere with religious practices or carry them out with greed. It was considered to be the same mortal sin as those devoting themselves to games which were harmful to others, scandalous or nearly lustful. For preachers some games were irremediably unlawful (gambling, carnival-like dressing-up, tournaments, duels...) while others, on the other hand, depended on the circumstances. Therefore, in avoidance of all excess, it was not *peccatum* to dance, for example, in celebrating honest wedding ceremonies or *recreatione corporali* or moderately making use of games (*temperate ludere*) with arms (crossbow, fencing, throwing poles or spears)<sup>34</sup>. Fifteenth-century moralists and religious figures developed preaching on play and by reporting its 'vices', they also exposed its 'virtues'. On the basis of Aristotelian ethics, brought forth by the Aquinate, in agreement on games which avoided any excess and adapted *personae et temporis et loco*, identified suitable practices according to age, social status and any other factors desired.

In brief: clearly showing the need to rest the soul in addition to the body, by means of honest physical recreation (with a list of suitable practices and exercises) able to uplift the spirit, clergymen established a useful relationship between physical health and the good of the soul, which allowed them to completely readmit play in the sphere of positive values and activities permitted, actually necessary to man<sup>35</sup>. In addition to favouring the res-

34 S. Iacobus de Marchia (1978). Lioi, R. (a cura di), *Sermones Dominicales*. Falconara Marittima: Biblioteca francescana, 3 voll, vol. 1, pp. 192-194 (sermo 10).

35 On the re-evaluation of the body on the part of late Medieval preachers Rizzi, A. (2000). "Medicine of the soul, medicine of the body at the end of the Middle ages". *Ludica, annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*, 5-6, 72-87; instead on the 'change' in the consideration of the ludic sphere on the part of preachers in the fifteenth century again Rizzi, A.

toration of the cultural aspect of an indispensable dimension for everyone, it promoted play ethics adaptable to Christian conduct: as a result, at the end of the Middle Ages, mendicant friars in particular, supporters and instruments of social disciplining, attempted to re-educate their contemporaries towards upright ludic activities.

The preachers of the time, were not always coherent and did not always agree on which ludic practices and behaviour to indicate for good Christians<sup>36</sup>. Preaching done by observant monks for example, revealed to be stricter than that of conventual monks. These seemed to permit laymen practices which the former prohibited to everyone, regardless of their status and also seemed to pay less attention to the matter, implying, in this way, greater margins of tolerance<sup>37</sup>. The disciplinary work of mendicant priests, as is known, was divided into oratory practices, study and the administering of penance. They adapted the manner of carrying out their job and the content to the various

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(1995). *Ludus/ludere. Giocare in Italia alla fine del medio evo*. Treviso-Roma: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche-Viella, 152-163; and Rizzi, A. (2001). "Gioco, disciplinamento, predicazione". *Ludica, annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*, 7, 82-89.

36 Topic addressed above all in Rizzi, A. (2013). "Predicatori, confessori mendicanti e gioco alla fine del medioevo". In Sonntag, J. (a cura di), *Religiosus ludens. Das Spiel als kulturelles Phänomen in mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Orden (Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of the Research Centre for Comparative History of religious Orders FOVOG 'Spiele im mittelalterlichen Kloster', Stift Heiligenkreuz, 9-11 settembre 2010)*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter (*Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte*, 122), 97-113.

37 Paton, B. (1992). *Preaching Friars and the Civic Ethos*, Siena 1380-1480. London: Centre of Medieval studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 310-312. The author is particularly referring to Siena between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The *Trattato dei sacramenti* of 1464, by an anonymous Dominican author, for the use of preachers, indicates lawful amusement, that is, (as is specified) "not only harmless" games but also "positively salubrious". They are nonetheless, forbidden to the clergy: dance, "if performed innocently and not for motives of lust" and singing. The possibility of playing musical instruments and above all do physical exercise to promote health (tennis, running and javelin are recommended) is contemplated. On the contrary, several texts examined by the author of preachers belonging to the Franciscan Observance (Girolamo and Filippo di Lecetto, Tommaso Caffarini, and Bernardino da Siena, and the anonymous author of *Ammaestramenti*, who lived between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), would not tolerate any ludic practices, not even those contemplated in the *Trattato*, for laymen. On practicing intransigence with particular regard to gambling see Ceccarelli, G. (2003). *Il gioco e il peccato...* (op.cit.), 329-354.

circumstances of their Christian mission. In this case, there was the obligatory, annual confession, imposed by the *Omnis utriusque sexus* canon during the fourth Lateran Council in 1215 which made it necessary to have a well thought out ‘mapping’ of sin which was reflected in manuals used by confessors and penitents, thereby conferring “normazione morale dell’atto ludico”<sup>38</sup>, particularly for play.

Texts often generically speak of play (with a clear reference to gambling) but in detail about dice and cards, *baratteria*, chess and physical practices (from battles with rocks, snow or fists – the so called *battagliole* category –, to games with balls) games with arms and knightly games (jousts, tournaments, throws with crossbows and poles) and also parties and banquets. Bernardino da Feltre paid particular attention to the ludic dimension of his contemporaries in his *confessionale* (treatise or manual for confessions), as well as his sermons. He contemplated its various manifestations<sup>39</sup>; a long list (a treatise with a decalogue, deadly sins, acts of mercy...), which keeps in mind those probably involved: men or women (men portrayed as versatile players and women as teachers of the game of love), husbands or wives, lords or governors, doctors or judges, clerics or secular priests...<sup>40</sup>. There were also differences between one *confessionale* and the other: for example with regard to the admission of

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38 Ceccarelli, G. (2003). Il gioco e il peccato... (op.cit.), 376. Less systematic and therefore against the prevailing trend, is the treatise on sins connected to the ludic sphere in the work of Antonio da Budrio (1476). *Speculum de confessione*. In fine: Et hoc opus impressum est Vincentie per Hermannum Levilapidem coloniensem, in anno Domini MCCCCLXXVI, indictione VIII, die vero mercurii, ultima mensis Ianuarii, passim (canonist who lived between 1338 and 1408).

39 More or less simple, more or less organized: from gambling to games and pastimes; from dance to singing to music; from dressing up to spells to magic; from small talk to desoneste laughter, to love-courting and allurements; from hunting to ceremonies and parties to deportamenti; from torniamenti to duels to bataglie (in all probability the so called *battagliole*) to other unspecified zoghi pericolosi o vero desonesti and then luxuries and vanities (represented by sumptuous clothing, horses, dogs, servants, birds, food, homes, concubines, ioculatori et male persone...).

40 Cf. Cfr. Bernardino da Feltre (2012), pp. 231-243 (Appendix I). Cf. Also, with some variations, Bernardino da Feltre (1520 ca.).



a certain practice (in the case of jousts for example, not everyone wants to condemn them<sup>41</sup>), or the extent of a ban<sup>42</sup>. There is also a certain ‘flexibility’ towards a penitent when a confessor for example, distances himself from current prohibitions, adds a personal note or insists on details, giving the impression of widely resorting to a derogation; he would be advised “con la sua stessa conscientia si consigli”<sup>43</sup>. It is good therefore to evaluate each case separately, having to keep in line, however, with ecclesiastical regulations. It is the comparison between different texts (summaries of homilies or *reportationes* on the one hand, and outlines for sermons, moral treatises or manuals for confession on the other), even by the same author, which helps clarify how clergymen saw things from different perspectives. In sum, it is evident that the evaluation of play on the part of preachers could vary according to the situation or the public they addressed<sup>44</sup>. They could then seem more accommodat-

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41 Differently from Sovico, in fact, jousts were not considered sins by Savonarola nor by Martin de Azpilcueta, the well-known Spanish theologian born at the end of the fifteenth century, whose confessionale was widespread in the Catholic world; cf. in order, Teodoro da Sovico (1496). *Confessionario utilissimo a ogni persona*. In fine: Impresso in Milano con grande cura e diligentia dal optimo artifice magistro Ulderico Scincenzeler. Facto a spese de Alexandro Rotio nel MCCCCLXXXVI, adì X de martio, c. 45r; Savonarola, G. (1596). *Confessionale [...] Ad communem clericorum usum [...]*. Brescia: Pietro Maria Marchetti, c. 65v; e Azpilcueta Navarro, M. (1574). *Manuale de' confessori nel quale si contiene la universale et particular decisione di tutti i dubii, che nelle confessioni de' peccati sogliono occorrere [...]* tradotto di spagnuolo in italiano dal r.p. fra Cola di Guglinisi dell'ordine di san Francesco di Pavia. Venezia: Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari, p. 437. As for dangerous games, it was always Martín de Azpilcueta to recognize that dice and cards, at times were allowed even to clergymen: “senza commetter peccato veniale il chierico può et anco il frate alcuna volta giuocare et iandio a dadi et a carte per cagioni ragionevoli, come è per risvegliarsi o per rallegrare il compagno infermo, che ha di questa ricreazione bisogno [without committing a venial sin, clerics as well as monks can at times play with dice and cards for reasonable situations like for example to become invigorated or to cheer an ill friend who needs recreation]” (ibidem).

42 Rizzi, A. (2013). “Predicatori, confessori mendicanti e gioco... (op.cit.), p. 106 (for the casuistry).

43 Ibid., p. 107 (for several examples); the quotation is by Azpilcueta Navarro, M. (1574), p. 440.

44 Paton, B. (1992). *Preaching Friars and the Civic Ethos...* (op.cit.), 308, agrees that in these topics “opinions of mendicant writers could and did vary considerably according to the convictions of the individual, the order or movement within an order to which he belonged, and the didactic purpose for which he was writing”.

ing when they reported in writing (may it have been a text for those 'of the trade', a treatise or *confessionale*) all the official positions of the Church on play, including those theoretically in favour. It would be different if it were destined to be heard by an audience reluctant to convert. The intransigence shown in public would not hinder them from appearing (at least in certain cases) more indulgent, in the secrecy of the confessional. Several examples. Bernardino da Siena had already declared, without a shadow of a doubt, that preachers had to have margins of tolerance which varied according to the circumstances they were in. Hoc tamen non est praedicandum" is reported in his treaty *Quadragesimale de Christiana religione*, regarding the consent expressed by the Digest for games of chance in a convivial context: even though he recognized the validity of *recreationis causa* in terms of risky play, he advised omitting it during preaching because it could have favoured the spread of gambling amongst the *fideles*<sup>45</sup>. On the other hand, Giacomo della Marca, in the *Sermones dominicales* claimed that wrestling, fencing, playing with a spear or crossbow or ball playing *non est peccatum* since they were games of ingenuity an ability (*industria*), as long as they were carried out in a *temperate* manner and far from consecrated places<sup>46</sup>. Roberto Caracciolo, on the contrary, during the Paduan cycle in 1455, as in the *reportatio* (the transcription of an anonymous listener<sup>47</sup>), could not avoid harshly condemning wrestling, comparing it to tournaments and considering it just as *vituperabilis* in that it provided an inevitable occasion for sin<sup>48</sup>. Even if they were generally condemned in sermons, it was the opposite during a confession (or in the pa-

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45 S. Bernardinus Senensis (1950), vol. I, p. 402.

46 S. Iacobus de Marchia (1978), vol. I, p. 193 (sermo 10).

47 On the complex procedure of the reportatio of Medieval sermons see at least Rusconi, R. (1989). "Reportatio". *Medioevo e Rinascimento. Annuario del Dipartimento di Studi sul Medioevo e il Rinascimento dell'Università di Firenze*, III, 7-36; Rusconi, R. (2016), *Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo*. Spoleto: CISAM, 33-62.

48 Roberto da Lecce (1983), p. 99.

ges of a *Summa*), where dancing, masquerading, theatrical exhibitions and “usare le sorti senza incanto e senza patto col demonio et per spasso” could be evaluated differently<sup>49</sup>. Another example to conclude. Savonarola’s preaching about play in general was characterized by (as is known) continuing intolerance<sup>50</sup>. His *confessionale* is very clear. The Dominican friar did not have any doubts about the illicit nature of tournaments and that participating “*ad ostentationem virium et audacie*” was mortal sin (according to the doctrine of the Church) “*quia in eis mors aliquorum fr[e]quenter contigit*”. His opinion on jousts instead, was an entirely different story (“*Et nota quod hastiludium, quod vulgariter dicitur la giostra, non est torneamentum*”), for its training qualities (“*unde non credo milites peccare praesertim mortaliter, quando bono fine se exercent in hastiludio*”), useful in learning to combat (“*ut addiscant bellari*”). Actually, the Dominican did not compare two games of different nature: in both cases it was armed combat (the participants were always *milites*), tournaments were practiced collectively while the other (jousts) in pairs. According to Savonarola, it was the context in which the armed conflict took place that was to determine the judgment of the confessor<sup>51</sup>. The useful training it provided (military art) could then, in the secrecy of the confession, justify an otherwise condemned practice, as long as it was carried out, in avoidance of all danger, with light, blunt poles: to remind one that it was an exception, the Dominican then indicated the proper way to play.

During a confession or in a *summa* (or treatise) clergymen could express themselves differently than in public. Preachers themselves accounted for these differences. It was always the strict Savonarola who advised the confessor to be amiable and above all merciful to those who went to him<sup>52</sup>. Instead, one

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49 Girolamo Panormitano (1588), p. 35.

50 Rizzi, A. (1995). *Ludus/ludere...* (op.cit.), with several examples.

51 Savonarola, G. (1596), cc. 65v-66r.

52 *Ibidem*, c. 6v.

should not show as much indulgence if he were preaching in public.

The situation seemed to be the same for dance. In the *reportatio* of the Paduan Lent sermons of 1455 Roberto da Lecce, saw dance “come espressione diabolica”, without neglecting to recall “le condizioni generali entro cui la tradizione teologica ritiene possibili festeggiamenti e balli”<sup>53</sup>. Bernardino da Feltre (his repeated attacks on the art of dancing being well known) was even clearer in his Lent sermons in Pavia in 1493 (another *reportatio*). In addition to severely judging the dangers of dance, the Franciscan illustrated “le condizioni entro le quali il danzare non è peccato”, being a practice (as ascertained by scholastic tradition) at the same level as play and therefore not in itself wicked. The final comment did not allow room for objections: intervening directly in the theological debate (as preachers did at times) he declared, without any hesitation, that such conditions “quasi est impossibile his temporibus a trovarle”<sup>54</sup>. Strict clergyman, in this case, agreed with theologians (he said it openly), acknowledging, in certain conditions, how dance could be lawful. He however hastened to warn his public that it was an anachronistic possibility, out of time, from which they would be excluded.

Clergymen found themselves in this gap between theoretical development and reality in their work of evangelization and moralization of contemporary customs. Their important and delicate role was played keeping in mind two aspects: superior needs (principles to adhere to) and real objectives (orienting towards honest practices), mediating between cultural development and its reception/fruition in contemporary society. More simply put, between the lawful and the unlawful<sup>55</sup>.

53 Legimi, C. (2000). “La danza nel pensiero medievale tra esegesi e predicazione”. *Ludica, annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*, 5-6, p. 44.

54 Ibidem.

55 Arcangeli, A. (2000).  *Davide o Salomè?...*  (op.cit.), 87-88, with regard to dance, a similar “divario di linguaggio e di atteggiamenti” (“difference in language and attitude”) is evident, particularly between preachers and theologians. In brief, the former clearly

As for games, for clergymen the boundary between intolerance and tolerance (or between intolerance and more or less tolerance) could coincide with that between public and private, between public square and confessional. The *ludus licitus* (*tolerabilis honestus...*) during confession (as in homiletic treatises) could therefore have a better chance. Whatever the strategy used, the objective remained very clear. Whether from the pulpit or in the confessional the principles did not change: play had to be carried out as a form of *spasso, ricraeatione* but also for dileto and “per dare spasso a uno infermo e scacciar l’otio”<sup>56</sup> or for “pura et dricta intentione [...] conorrendo la honestà et debita causa” (quickly adding “per iusta victoria, conviti, per le noze, liberatione de la patria o di amici et parenti et loro da longique parte advento et simile”<sup>57</sup>). And, without swindling, recalling, as always the Thomist ludic ethics (‘lawfulness’ prin-

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condemned practices of “sociabilità orchestica” (“sociable dancing”), while the others tended to exclude determined positions, looking for the conditions which make an act more or less reprehensible. For the author, the contrast – clear for some – between intellectual-professional groups, preachers on the one hand and university magistri on the other – the former oriented towards (because of pastoral preoccupation) censoring deviant behaviour while the latter (because of profession, considering the sic and non of each issue) wanted to “convincere facendo appello alle regole della ragione” (“convince by resorting to the rules of reason”) proposing more tolerant or updated solutions which legitimate “una parte non indifferente della nuova sociabilità urbana” (“no small part of the new urban sociability”) – is not to be exaggerated. He is convinced, in fact, that the contrast also depends on the “diversità di genere letterario e di funzione dei testi” (“differences in literary genre and the function of the texts”). The magister had to express himself in dialectic manner but he was not necessarily required to adhere to (beyond the proposed solutio) different options. The preacher, on the other hand, in a homily (or in a text supplying material for preaching) could not “permettersi il beneficio del dubbio” (“allow himself the benefit of the doubt”). His objective was to guide the behaviour of the faithful. In conclusion, “due ordini del discorso [...] differenti per logica e funzioni, ma sostanzialmente compatibili negli obiettivi di fondo” (“two aspects [...] different in logic and functions, but substantially compatible in their fundamental objectives”). As for the confessionals or the Summae de casibus poenitentia, the author detects, above all between the Middle Ages and the early Modern Age, “un allentamento del rigore” (“less strictness”) with regard to the moral evaluation of dance (p. 96; useful also pp. 88-97).

56 Azpilcueta Navarro, M. (1574), p. 434.

57 da Novara, Pacifico (1518). *Summa de confessione cognominata pacificata*. Venezia: Cesare Arrivabene, c. 40r, particularly for dance.

ciple) to “dare o prendere piacere, col quale l’animo si ricrea” and, in any case, *temperatamente* (moderately)<sup>58</sup>.

Ludic disciplining on the part of late Medieval preachers occurred simultaneously as that of city authorities, the two being at times in touch, as will be only briefly mentioned<sup>59</sup>. It was especially to the local administrators that preachers aimed their imprecations from the pulpit. They asked that stricter norms be established in order to strike ‘sinful’ play (gambling but also bloody *battaglie*, jousts...), to have them respected and not to connive with those who did not observe the prohibitions. Requests which, in many cases, actually lead to stricter norms against play. Clergymen had at their disposal a legislative channel which could strengthen their message<sup>60</sup>. Public authorities, to tell the truth, supported only the requests that they deemed plausible: for example, the abolition of a game, a dangerous show, for the sake of internal social equilibrium (as occurred for example with the Perugian stone-throwing battle which was abolished by the Bernardinian statutes in 1425) or if not in keeping with civic identity and memory (this is why Bernardino da Feltre asked for the abolition of the bullfight for the celebration of Mary Magdalene in Siena in 1488 but the request was disregarded in that it was a reminder of the rise of

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58 Azpilcueta Navarro, M. (1574), p. 436 and 434.

59 Mentions of the concomitance of these efforts and above all the setting right, in the following age, of strategies “of ludic governmentality” to contrast play, in this good contribution by Fischer, A.H. (2017). “The problem of Excessive Play: Renaissance Strategies of Ludic Governmentality”. In *Ludic Intermingling/Ludic Discrimination: Women’s Card Playing and Visual Proscriptions in Early Modern Europe*. In Levy, A. (a cura di), *Playthings in Early Modernity. Party Games, Word Games, Mind Games*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, College of Arts and Sciences, Western Michigan University, 205-217.

60 Also Montesano, M. (1995). “Aspetti e conseguenze della predicazione civica di Bernardino da Siena”. In *La religion civique à l’époque médiévale et moderne (chrétienté et islam). Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche «Histoire sociale et culturelle de l’Occident. XIIe-XVIIIe siècle» de l’Université de Paris X-Nanterre et l’Institut universitaire de France (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993), sous la direction d’André Vauchez*. Rome: École Française de Rome (Collection de l’École Française de Rome, 213), p. 267.

power of the faction). The agreement reached for the ‘rewriting’ of city norms seemed to permit the preachers to promote, more generally, the moralization of customs and social practices in the host communities and permit the local authorities to be more authoritative with regard to social discipline and public order during particular emergencies, as well as find channels to obtain consent during times of civil strife even if this meant (at least temporarily) giving up traditions. In this way civil authorities and preachers established common intentions, albeit temporary in that many new laws were repealed right after the departure of the religious figures from the communities which had received them<sup>61</sup>.

Just a mention about the results of the moralizing campaign with regard to contemporary ludic customs carried out by preachers and fifteenth-century moralists<sup>62</sup>. Contemporary representatives of humanistic culture agreed with them in the education of youth, introducing ludic activities in their formation programmes. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, the future Pio II (addressing young Ladislao, king of Austria, Bohemia and Hungary in the treatise dedicated to him *De liberorum educatione*) spoke about *corporis certamina* or *corporalia exercitia* – the same listed by fifteenth-century preachers –, as activities to carry out with moderation to relax and be lively, gain strength and harmony. Games which were morally characterized as (“non sunt obsceni” and “nihil turpitudinis habent”), whose lawful nature (if practiced uprightly) left no doubts: “Nihil est turpe discere,

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61 Generally on the phenomenon, refer to Rizzi, A. (1993). “Il gioco fra norma laica e proibizione religiosa... (op.cit.); Rizzi, A. (1995). *Ludus/ludere...* (op.cit.), 109-120; Rizzi, A. (2001). “Gioco, disciplinamento, predicazione”. *Ludica, annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*, 7, 79-96; Rizzi, A. (2009). “Regulated play at the end of the Middle Age... (op.cit.); cf. also Ceccarelli, G. (2003). *Il gioco e il peccato...* (op.cit.), 329-354; particularly for the Perugian statutes of 1425 and Bernardino da Siena’s preaching cf. Cardinali, C. (1993). “Il santo e la norma... (op.cit.); lastly, again, Depaulis, T. (2013). “«Breviari del diavolo so’ le carte e naibi»... (op.cit.), 126.

62 For this last part, useful ideas and considerations, for example, in Arcangeli, A. (2004). *Passatempi rinascimentali...* (op.cit.), and McLelland J. (2007). *Body and Mind...* (op.cit.).

quod licet honeste facere”<sup>63</sup>. Pier Paolo Vergerio<sup>64</sup> and Maffeo Vegio<sup>65</sup> were of the same opinion: moderation, uprightness and modesty were the rules for the future governor to adhere to regarding physical activity.

In the sixteenth century the experience of the *collegia nobilium* and pedagogical-religious thought that was linked to moralists and fifteenth-century preachers contributed to the definitive ‘Christianization’ of play. New religious orders (arising from the Tridentine experience), committed themselves to educating young aristocrats to proper physical recreation, through the college, with the introduction of games in school programmes. This was supported by pedagogical-religious treatises as well as religiously and morally inspired specialized treatises on play. The reference model for both was Thomist-Aristotelian<sup>66</sup>.

As for pedagogical-religious literature, Andrea Ghetti da Volterra (Agostinian theologian and preacher) for example, promoted an “ordinato esercizio del corpo [...] fatto a tempo e luo-

63 Piccolominaeus, A.S. (2002). *De liberorum educatione*. In Kallendorf, C.W. (a cura di), *Humanist educational treatises*. Cambridge (MA)-London: Harvard University Press, 140-142.

64 Vergerius, P.P. (2002). *Ad Ubertinum de Carraria de ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adulescentiae studiis liber*. In Kallendorf, C.W. (a cura di), *Humanist educational treatises*. Cambridge (MA)-London: Harvard University Press, 68, 76, 78, and 82-88.

65 Vegius, M. (1613). *Opera [...] in duas partes distincta, quarum prior De educatione liberorum lib. VI [...] complectitur [...]*. Lodi: Paolo Bertoletti, 85 and 87.

66 On the educational value of play in the same period, but in the French aristocratic context cf. Vaucelle, S. (2009). “L’éducation corporelle des aristocrates français à l’âge classique: la place des traits didactiques”. In McClelland, J., Merrilees, B. (a cura di), *Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe. Le Sport dans la Civilisation de l’Europe Pré-Moderne (Atti del convegno “Athletes and Athletics in the Early Modern Period, 1000-1650 A.D.”, Toronto 17-19 giugno 2004)*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies (Victoria University in the University of Toronto; *Essays and Studies*, 20), 249-267; in an Italian university context, instead, Grendler, P.F. (2009). “Fencing, Playing Ball, and Dancing in Italian Renaissance Universities”. In McClelland, J., Merrilees, B. (a cura di), *Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe. Le Sport dans la Civilisation de l’Europe Pré-Moderne (Atti del convegno “Athletes and Athletics in the Early Modern Period, 1000-1650 A.D.”, Toronto 17-19 giugno 2004)*, Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies (Victoria University in the University of Toronto; *Essays and Studies*, 20), 295-318.



go, e secondo la prudenza e cura dei buoni maestri”<sup>67</sup>. Giovan Battista Giraldis Cinzio (scholar and supporter of the Counter-Reformation) suggested a *giuoco onesto* in order to face important matters invigorated, especially with regard to “maneggi dell’arme”. He indicated the game with the small ball – “usandolo”, he clarified, “nondimeno temperatamente” – and dance “in quella guisa di misurati movimenti”<sup>68</sup>. Bartolomeo Meduna (conventual Franciscan theologian) advised his pupil to engage in a “moderato ed allegro piacere o diporto”<sup>69</sup>. Alessandro Piccolomini (scholar and then archbishop of Patrasso) recommended to his pupil (Alessandro Colombini) running, jumping and wrestling to keep his body agile and healthy, but also for war, during which “la [...] *fortezza si fa palese*”: one of the moral virtues the young man was to aim for<sup>70</sup>. And above all, Silvio Antoniano (priest, friend of Saint Filippo Neri and author of *Dell’educazione cristiana de’ figliuoli*, commissioned by cardinal Carlo Borromeo, whose active pedagogy played a large role in his reformation work in Milan) claimed that due to original sin youngsters were naturally inclined to corruption and that therefore one had to undertake corrective religious and moral action against it *tout court*, including play. In his “*medicina della ricreazione*” the author suggested a series of practices to youngsters warning them to carry them out “*limitatamente, secondo la discrezione del superiore, a’ suoi debiti tempi*”<sup>71</sup>.

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67 Ghetti da Volterra, A. (1960). *Dell’educazione dei figliuoli*. In Volpicelli, L. (a cura di), *Il pensiero pedagogico della Controriforma*. Firenze: Giuntine-Sansoni, 181-183.

68 Giraldis Cinthio, G.B. (1960). *Discorso [...] intorno a quello che conviene a giovane nobile et ben creato nel servire un gran Principe*. In Volpicelli, L. (a cura di), *Il pensiero pedagogico della Controriforma*. Firenze: Giuntine-Sansoni, 293-296.

69 Meduna, B. (1960), *Lo scolare*. In Volpicelli, L. (a cura di), *Il pensiero pedagogico della Controriforma*. Firenze: Giuntine-Sansoni, 378-381, and 352-353.

70 Piccolomini, A. (1522). *Della institutione di tutta la vita dell’huomo nato nobile, et in città libera. Libri diece in lingua toscana [...]a beneficio del nobilissimo fanciullino Alessandro Colombini [...] figliuolo della immortale Mad. Laudomia Forteguerrif[...]*. Venezia: 1522, c. 64r.

71 Antoniano, S. (1926). Pogliani L. (a cura di), *Dell’educazione cristiana e politica dei figlioli. Libri tre. Scritto ad istanza di san Carlo Borromeo*. Torino: Paravia, 398-404 and 457-458.

Treatises on games (of similar religious origin) went in the same direction. Tommaso Buoninsegni (Dominican theologian) promoted an “*honesto et moderato giuoco*” for the delight and refreshment of the soul, as those to “*addestrare i corpi*” (“*leciti et honesti*”), moderated by reason<sup>72</sup>. For Antonio Scaino (theologian and philosopher) there were many reasons to recommend the game with a ball (tennis): to get youngsters away from idleness, “*della virtù mortalissimo nemico*”. Moreover, it is preferable to chess in that it is necessary to use, not only “*ingegno squisito e giudizio grande*”, “*forzati e [...] attilati movimenti del corpo*”. It is the game which, above all other things, teaches men to be “*forte, animoso, destro, aitante della persona e insieme quanto pronto in pigliar partiti nell’istesso fatto del combattere*”. As for the “*eccellenza del giuocator di palla*”, it involves “*in una certa misura e ordinata ragione di tempo che convien serve nel giuoco*”; excellence which “*commune ancora con altre infinite operazioni che si fanno con arte*” (he mentions singing, music, jumping, tournaments, fencing, wrestling...). Tennis became an ethical paradigm of the sixteenth-century ludic system summed as follows: “*qui conviene che ’l proprio nostro valore sia quello che ci dia la vittoria*”<sup>73</sup>. Play could become therefore the road to virtue. Cesare Franciotti from the Mother of God congregation spoke about *honesto giuoco* (only if practiced within measure and at the right time) above all as a ‘virtuous’ stimulus for youth: “*allettandosi anche la gioventù con lo stimolo dell’honore ad impiegarsi in cose virtuose*”<sup>74</sup>.

Going back to their predecessors, sixteenth-century preachers and clergymen made ludic practices a permanent part of good Christian practices. They developed the discipline of the

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72 Buoninsegni, T. (1585), *Del giuoco. Discorso [...] Nel quale si dimostra in che modo, et quando il giocare sia peccato [...]*. Firenze: G. Marescotti, 3-5.

73 Scaino, A. (2000). Nonni, G. (a cura di). *Trattato del giuoco della palla*. Urbino: QuattroVenti, 19, 193.

74 Franciotti, C. (1622). *Il giovane christiano ovvero institutione de’ giovani alla devotione. Fatta in gratia e per uso de’ Giovani della Congregatione della Madonna della Neve di Lucca [...]*. Venezia: Gio. Battista Combi, c. 61rv.

practices allowed, keeping in mind the individuals involved and the circumstances of the games. They recalled the objective of such exercises – to refresh the soul but also the health of the body and last but not least, to acquire virtue (above all strength) in *maneggi della guerra*. They updated the repertory of possible activities by starting to differentiate between ludic activities and military exercises (it was significant that *schioffi* and the *archibugi* were in the list of arms excluded by the *maneggi*, – by then used by armies all over Europe – regarded as “armi diaboliche e non degne punto di essere tratte da nobil mano”)<sup>75</sup>. They did not always agree on every single practice but they did when it came to making *ludus licitus* coincide with moderate, morally irreprehensible exercises, appropriate to the strength of each person. In this way they would promote a game, a physical activity which went well with the development of *societas christiana*, exercises regulated by moderation and discretion.

In the sixteenth century therefore, a long process was developing (which began in the central centuries of the Middle Ages) which lead preachers and priests to outline ludic practices in a Christian/Catholic sense, making them (as well as the player) suitable links to Christian virtues: an action which was part of the general ‘Christianization’ of daily habits, dating back to the

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75 “Se avvanzerà adunque tempo al Giovane [...] cercherà [...] di maneggiare leggiadramente un corsiero, correre la lancia [...] maneggiar l’arme da piedi, lasciando in tutti gli schioffi e gli archibugi, arme diaboliche e non degne punto di essere tratte da nobil mano. Si eserciterà alla lotta, al lanciare del palo, al saltare oltre gran fossi, a farsi veloce e agile nel corso [...] nel nuotare, e brevemente in tutte le cose che convengono alla milizia, acciocché se forse avverrà che abbia bisogno di lui il Signore nei maneggi dell’armi, non manchi egli dell’ufficio suo [If a young person has extra time [...] he will try to [...] gracefully handle a steed, rush with a lance [...] handle an arm standing, leaving the rifles and the arquebuses, diabolic arms not worthy of being handled by noble hands. He will engage in wrestling, throwing poles, jumping over large ditches, becoming a fast, agile runner [...], swimmer and in all things useful in the militia, so if the Lord should need him to handle arms, he will be able to act]”: cf. Giraldi Cinthio, G.B. (1960), p. 293.

time of the Reforms<sup>76</sup> but that are anticipated in the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

As for the influence of preachers and priests on the ludic system between the Middle Ages and the early Modern Age and their contribution to the development of contemporary society, one could add that while the state, in that period of time, progressively controlled and managed bets and public rituals, priests took it upon themselves to prepare and educate players/men that were members of the social elite. The games of exercise (fitting to the person) is said to have become a metaphor of the new Trident and post-Trident society (moralized and disciplined), instruments used as vehicles for Christian values in which one acknowledged, amongst others, the 'nobility' in charge, ready for battle (in the name of God). Of all the values, moderation was to be especially promoted. It does not matter if fire weapons were excluded from the ludic exercises allowed, while the increasingly anachronistic hand to hand fighting was permitted. A way to illustrate, on the contrary, the enduring leadership of the aristocracy in power, with reference to ancient values<sup>77</sup>.

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