



Luck: The Brilliant Randomness Of Everyday Life

By Nicholas Rescher

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Luck: The Brilliant Randomness Of Everyday Life By Nicholas Rescher

Luck touches us all. "Why me?" we complain when things go wrong—though seldom when things go right. But although luck has a firm hold on all our lives, we seldom reflect on it in a cogent, concerted way.

In *Luck*, one of our most eminent philosophers offers a realistic view of the nature and operation of luck to help us come to sensible terms with life in a chaotic world. Differentiating luck from fate (inexorable destiny) and fortune (mere chance), Nicholas Rescher weaves a colorful tapestry of historical examples, from the use of lots in the Old and New Testaments to Thomas Gataker's treatise of 1619 on the great English lottery of 1612, from casino gambling to playing the stock market. Because we are creatures of limited knowledge who do and must make decisions in the light of incomplete information, Rescher argues, we are inevitably at the mercy of luck. It behooves us to learn more about it.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Luck, an unpredictable, uncontrollable force bringing good or ill fortune into our personal lives, has a vast impact on human affairs, declares University of Pittsburgh philosophy professor Rescher. In a wise, sensible inquiry that throws a floodlight on a topic shrouded in misconceptions, he explores the role of luck in accidents, windfalls, lost or gained opportunities, flukish victimizations; in work, love, daily affairs, elections, war, games and science. Citing Spinoza and the Book of Job, he mulls the unmerited misfortunes that befall good people. Using Pascal, Leibniz and game theory, he interprets gambling as a microcosm of life. Rescher believes that astrology and superstitions are a waste of energy. Instead, he argues, people can guard against bad luck through common caution, insurance, keeping the odds on one's side and extending one's knowledge. He further urges alertness, preparedness and thoughtful timing as means to create and seize favorable opportunities.

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From [Booklist](#)

From the roll of the dice in a craps game to the questions that show up on the SAT, our lives are constantly affected by luck. But what is the nature of luck? What role has it played in history? These questions and many more are tackled in this unique book, which looks at luck from multiple perspectives, including how language shapes the way we think about luck; the differences between luck, fortune, and fate; the history of the idea of luck in the Western tradition; and the impossibility of shaping or directing luck. Rescher has no use for such superstitions as rabbit's feet or knocking on wood, but he supports the belief that luck favors the prepared. He encourages the reader to take reasonable, carefully calculated risks, assuming that luck will run favorably more frequently than unfavorably. Finally, he contends that, without luck, life as we know it would be unsustainable, that the randomness of good and bad luck gives life the spice that makes it palatable. This is a fascinating look at an underexplored topic. *George Needham*

Review

"Mr. Rescher is surely on to something: what could be more fascinating—and yet so little understood—than luck? . . . Using the tools of conceptual analysis and explanation, Mr. Rescher clarifies a great deal about the baffling phenomenon, all the while insuring that we do not forget the utter randomness and unpredictability of luck's superb surprise."

--*New York Times Book Review*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Dugas:

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Jennifer Fields:

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