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Luck

The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life

By Nicholas Rescher

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Our Review

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Offers a realistic view of the nature and operation of luck to help one come to terms with life in a chaotic

world. Differentiating luck from fate (inexorable destiny) and fortune (mere chance), philosopher Nicholas Rescher uses historical examples from antiquity to the present. Rescher argues that luck cannot be manipulated or controlled, but it can be managed to some extent.

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From the Book Cover

Luck touches us all, from the lowliest to the high and mighty. But although luck has a firm hold on all our lives, we seldom reflect on it in a cogent, concerted way. "Why me?" we complain when things go wrong--though seldom when things go right. Why is life so unfair? But to lack a clear perspective on what luck is and how it works is to ask for trouble.

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 antiquity to the present. It was a matter of bad luck for King Philip II of Spain, for instance, that a storm scattered the Invincible Armada in the English Channel. It was a matter of good luck for those who couldn't buy passage aboard the sold-out Titanic. And while it would be unlucky for us to suffer a mishap on an airplane, we would not really be lucky merely to survive our journey: it has been estimated that a traveler would have to take a scheduled flight daily for four thousand years before an accident would occur to him.

Luck cannot be manipulated or controlled, Rescher argues, but it can be managed to some extent. 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, Nicholas Rescher's luck shows how the tiger of luck can be tamed to improve our chances for good luck, reduce those for bad, and in general improve the fortune of mankind.

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About the Author

Nicolas Rescher is University Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh. The former editor of *American Philosophical Quarterly*, and a past president of the American Philosophical Association, he is the author of more than thirty works of philosophy.

-- From the Publisher

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