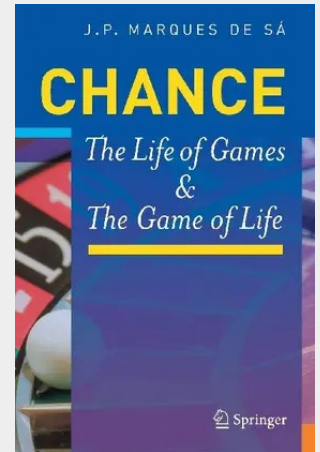


Chance

The Life of Games & the Game of Life

This is a unique book on how probability affects our everyday lives. It guides the reader in an almost chronological trip through the fascinating and amazing laws of chance, omnipresent in the natural world and in our daily lives. Along the way many fascinating topics are discussed. These include challenging probability paradoxes, "paranormal" coincidences, game odds, and causes and effects. Also discussed are the interpretation of opinion polls, winning chances as a game proceeds, the nature of randomness, entropy and randomness, randomness in life, algorithmic complexity and the undecidability of randomness. Finally the author discusses possibilities and limitations of learning the laws of a Universe immersed in chance events. This charming book, with its many easy-to-follow mathematical examples, will inform and entertain the scientist and non-scientist alike.

Our lives are immersed in a sea of chance. Everyone's existence is a meeting point of a multitude of accidents. The origin of the word *chance* is usually traced back to the vulgar Latin word *cadentiä*, meaning a befalling by fortuitous circumstances, with no knowable or determinable causes. The Roman philosopher Cicero clearly expressed the idea of *chance* in his work *De Divinatione*: For we do not apply the words *chance*, *luck*, *accident* or *casualty* except to an event which has occurred or happened that it either might not have occurred at all, or might have occurred in any other way. 2.VI.15. For if a thing that is going to happen, may happen in one way or another, indifferently, chance is predominant; but things that happen by chance cannot be certain. 2.IX.24. In a certain sense chance is the spice of life. If there were no phenomena with unforeseeable outcomes, phenomena with an element of chance, all temporal cause-effect sequences would be completely deterministic.



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