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CHANCE

The term chance (Lat. *casus*) is used in a variety of
ways. In some contexts it is considered as that which is
entirely without cause; this was the view of DEMOCRITUS
and LUCRETIUS. Other writers count chance as a cause,
but differ as to the kind of causality it exercises. Thus
some modern scientists, such as Max Born, maintain that
chance is the cause of all things; A. EINSTEIN, on the other
hand, protested against this thesis by saying that God
does not play dice. Others call chance a cause, but insist
that it is indeterminate, either because it is the result of
a basic indeterminism in nature or because the human in-
tellect cannot encompass the various lines of causality
that exist. What these various notions have in common
can be clariÞed by a proper deÞnition of chance, and this
is the burden of the present article.

Aristotle's Analysis. ARISTOTLE attempted such a
clariÞcation in bk. 2 of the *Physics* (195b 30Ð198a 13),
where he made use of several distinctions in his search
for a deÞnition of chance. Of things that come to be, some
come to be always in the same way, whereas others do
not. Of the latter, some come to be often, whereas others
come to be seldom. Chance is found among those things
that happen seldom; however, since not everything that
happens seldom is by chance, other divisions are neces-
sary to manifest the deÞnition. A further division consid-
ers events that happen for a purpose and those that do not.
Of the former, some are the result of an intentionÑ
whether this be the intention of an intelligent agent or
simply what is intended by natureÑwhereas others are
not.

Apart from these distinctions, Aristotle also pro-
poses a division based on causes, since most thinkers
agree that chance is in some way a cause. Thus he holds
that just as beings are either *per se* or *per accidens,* so
also are causes. For example, assuming that a white, mu-
sical builder constructs a house, the builder is the *per se*
cause of the house, whereas white and musical are its *per
accidens* causes. Among *per accidens* causes, some are
such by reason of something accidentally associated with
the cause, as in the example mentioned, and others are
such by reason of something accidentally associated with
the effectÑfor example, an argument that might arise

over the house already built. The difference is shown in
the accompanying diagram. Chance itself is a kind of *per
accidens* cause that results from something accidentally
associated with an effect, as the builder just chances to
be the cause of the argument over the house. (Notice that
in this case one *per se* cause is also a *per accidens* cause;
in the case of a *per accidens* cause that is such by reason
of something accidentally associated with a per se cause,
the latter cause is itself composite, namely, the white
builder.)

Utilizing these divisions, Aristotle deÞnes chance as
a *per accidens* cause in things that are for an end and that
happen seldom. As something happening seldom, the ef-
fect in chance is something neither intended nor expected
by the agent. AristotleÕs example is a man who collects
money by going to market for some purpose other than
collecting money. If such a man always or usually col-
lected money by going to market, this event would not
be by chance.

A further clariÞcation of the notion of chance is
achieved by AristotleÕs contrasting the chance with the
vain. An action is vain when that which was intended
does not happen. Aristotle shows that actions can be (1)
vain and chance, (2) vain and not chance, (3) chance and
not vain, and (4) neither vain nor chance. Suppose that
Socrates goes to market to buy cabbage. It might happen
that the store is out of cabbage but that Socrates does
meet his friend who owed him a debt: vain and chance.
Again, he might neither get the cabbage nor meet his
friend: vain and not chance. Yet again, he might get the
cabbage and meet his friend: chance and not vain. Final-
ly, he might get the cabbage and not meet his friend: nei-
ther vain nor chance.

The failure to distinguish between the chance and the
vain has led some to hold that chance happens only when
the intended end is not achieved. However, as has been
seen, there can be chance whether the intended end is
achieved or not. What is necessary is that some end be
intended. If an agent who acts by intelligence and will at-
tains the unintended end, this is usually called FORTUNE.
Among Aristotelians, the term chance is reserved for
agents who act by nature.

Causal Intersections. From this deÞnition of
chance, it is possible to explain the various positions held
concerning it. In the Þrst place, philosophers who hold
that all things happen of necessity deny that chance ex-
ists. Even among philosophers who admit the existence
of chance, there are those who hold that chance causes
nothing since it is a *per accidens* cause. It is certainly true
that there is an accidental unity in whatever results from
chance. It is also true that two or more *per se* causes will
be found to have been acting in the production of such

an event. St. THOMAS AQUINAS thus says that ÔÔa cause which hinders the action of a cause so ordered to its effect as to produce it in the majority of cases, clashes sometimes with this cause by accident: and the clashing of these two causes, inasmuch as it is accidental, has no cause. Consequently what results from this clashing of causes is not to be reduced to a further pre-existing cause, from which it follows of necessityÕÕ*(umma theologiae* 1a, 115.6). The last statement, that the *per accidens* intersection of two lines of causality is not to be reduced to a further preexisting cause, must be understood of a cause preexisting in nature. Aquinas notes in another place: ÔÔLet us suppose that a man is prompted to dig a grave by the inßuence of a celestial body, working through his emotions, as was said. Now the grave and the location of the treasure are united only accidentally, for they have no intrinsic relation to each other. Thus, the power of the celestial body cannot directly give an inclination to this entire result, namely, that this man should dig this grave and that it should be done at the place where the treasure is. But an agent working by intellect can be the cause of an inclination to this entire result, for it is proper for an intelligent being to order many things toward oneÕÕ*(. gent.* 3.92). Aquinas further observes that manÕs intellect can cause an event that in nature would be by chance. He continues, ÔÔFortuitous events of this kind, when referred to their divine cause, lose their fortuitous aspect; but when referred to a celestial cause, they do notÕÕ*ilfid.).* Thus chance remains even when the combined effect might be caused by the ordering of a higher cause. The reason is that nature, in this case the celestial body as a natural cause, produces effects that are *per se* one. It cannot have, as a proper effect, something that is only accidentally one. Of such it can be only the *per accidens* cause. This also shows that chance is more than mere ignorance of the concatenation of causes and that chance results from the inability of the lower cause to control causal intersections.

Accidental Causality. The notion that chance is the cause of all things results from a different kind of confusion over the *per accidens.* In the *Metaphysics* (1013b 34Ð1014a 20) Aristotle again discusses the causes and their division into *per se* and *per accidens.* St. ThomasÕs commentary on this point is illuminating (*In 5 meta.* 3.789). He states that the *per se* cause can become a *per accidens* cause by reason of something happening to the effect in one of three ways. (1) It may come about in such a way that what is added to the *per se* effect has a necessary order to it, as happens when the primary effect removes an obstacle to the secondary effect. This may happen when a contrary is removed, as when food is spoiled by removing it from a refrigerator, not because heat itself spoils the food, but because the refrigeratorÕs

cold opposed the growth of bacteria that is a cause of the foodÕs spoiling. There can also be a necessary connection of effects when there is no contrariety, as when an arch falls because a pillar is removed. When the secondary effect follows the primary in this way, the *per accidens* cause is not called chance, since such added effects follow always or often. (2) Again, the secondary effect can follow the primary effect, not as something necessary or often, but as happening seldom, as the argument over the house or the Þnding of a treasure by one digging a grave. The *per accidens* cause of such a secondary effect is called chance or fortune. (3) Finally, the connection between two events may be only in the mind, as one might imagine that his opening a door was the cause of an earthquake, because a tremor occurred just as he was opening the door.

Chance and Luck. Thus not every intersection of lines of causality is to be attributed to chance. If a person decides to cross a muddy street, he should not attribute the soiling of his shoes to chance merely because he did not intend this effect. Such would be chance only if it happened seldom to one who crossed a muddy street. In spite of this, many use the term chance in such indiscriminate fashion. They speak of taking a chance on the horses or of luck in a dice game. Chance in a strict sense is not found in such actions. Suppose, for example, a person bets on a horse and loses. This is not chance but vain. Similarly, if he bets on a horse and wins, to call this chance is to overlook the fact that the winning was what was intended, whereas chance is something that is not intended but is accidentally associated with a primary effect. There is justiÞcation for the use of the term chance in such instances, however, because the mind, seeing the general rule, counts what departs from this only slightly as something that has already happened. For example, a person calls the lost wager bad luck because he has carefully considered the factors and come to the Þrm belief that the possibility of this horseÕs losing the race is so small that it can be ignored. In other words, he considers the connection of primary and secondary effects to be that of (1) above. The winning is attributed to chance in a similar way. The person bets on the horse, keenly aware that he seldom wins; considering this, he in effect forgets or ignores the fact that he actually intends to win. When he does win, it is something that happens seldom and is, in a way, unintended.

Randomness and Probability. Chance is used improperly in another way when applied to RANDOMNESS or probability. For example, it might be said that an even distribution of sand and cement comes about by chance since it is the result of a random mixing. Again, the killing of a bird by one or two of the many shot pellets Þred is said to be accounted for by the laws of chance. This

overlooks the fact that the end was intended and, more important in this example, is something probable, whereas chance is what happens seldom. Yet nature is also said to use chance in this way to accomplish her ends. In her production of great numbers of seeds and of many individuals of each species, she intends the preservation of such species. In the circumstances, this seems to be the most economical means of achieving her ends.

That such a use of the term chance is that of Democritus, of Lucretius, and of many modern scientists seems further evidenced by the lattersÕ reference to the laws of chance as laws of probability. Even the term law, when used here, indicates a regularity that is foreign to the proper deÞnition of chance. On the other hand, EinsteinÕs maintaining that God does not play dice is well founded. If God is throwing dice to achieve His effects, He does not do so as a casual player awaiting a fortunate turn of a seven or eleven. Rather, He is more like the scientist investigating probabilities, who throws the dice countless times with the Þrm assurance that these numbers will occur with a deÞnite frequency.

This last consideration seems to be the basis of the denial of chance by such thinkers as B. SPINOZA, and G. W. LEIBNIZ. They hold that chance results only from the fact that manÕs intellect cannot encompass the causes at work in any event. Thus, for a greater intellect, chance would not exist. However, although it is true that for a greater intellect there are fewer effects owed to chance and that for the divine intellect nothing is by chance, chance is nonetheless a reality. In effect, these last thinkers are denying indeterminism in nature. Such a solution ignores the fact that something ordained with certainty by a higher cause can still be contingent when considered in its relation to lower causes.

See Also: FATE AND FATALISM; CONTINGENCY; NECESSITY.

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CHANCELLOR, DIOCESAN (EPARCHIAL)

The chancellor of a diocese is a person whose principal work is to care for the archives of the diocese. The word ÔÔchancellorÕÕ comes from the Latin *cancellarius.* In ancient Rome the *cancellarius* was the doorkeeper who stood at the latticework or chancel, which separated the magistrate in the law courts from the people, and admitted petitioners. He gradually assumed the work of a kind of secretary or notary with judicial powers. The term chancellor was later given to the civil notaries whom the bishops were empowered to appoint by the legislation of Charlemagne.

As the curias of the bishops began to develop, the need grew for repeated use of authentic documents and written testimony drawn up by a public person of ecclesiastical authority. The Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215) ordered bishops to have a public person or two other competent men for the work of drawing up both judicial and extrajudicial acts [*Corpus iuris canonici,* ed. E. Friedberg (Leipzig 1879Ð81; repr. Graz 1955) X 2.19.11; cf. J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Concilorum nova et amplissima collectio,* 31 v. (FlorenceÐVenice 1757Ð98); repr. and cont. by L. Petit and J. B. Martin 53 v. in 60 (Paris 1889Ð1927; repr. Graz 1960Ð), 23.154]. These ofÞcials came to be termed variously: chancellors, notaries, actuaries, and *tabelliones.*

The Third Provincial Council of Milan (1573), besides designating the chancellor as notary, also made him custodian of the archives. One of its decrees ordered the curial documents to be preserved in the episcopal archives under the care of the chancellor, who was to keep the key to them. This and other local legislation and custom gradually produced the general law setting up the ofÞce of chancellor with his double function of public notary in the curia and custodian of the diocesan archives.

Under present law [*Codex iuris canonici* (Rome 1918; rep. Graz 1955) *c.* 482 ¤1; *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarium Orientalium, c.* 252 ¤1], the chancellor is the authorized ofÞcial whose chief functions are to preserve in the archives the acts of the curia, to arrange them in order, and to compile an index of them. By reason of ofÞce the chancellor is also a notary (*Codex iuris canonici c.* 482 ¤3; *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarium Orientalium, c.* 252 ¤3).

As to qualiÞcations, the chancellor must be of good reputation and above all suspicion. In the Eastern Churches, the chancellor must be a deacon or a priest (see *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarium Orientalium, c.* 252 1); this is not the case in the Latin Church.

The diocesan bishop can freely remove the chancellor from ofÞce. A diocesan administrator may not remove a diocesan chancellor without the consent of the college of consultors (*Codex iuris canoninci c.* 485; CCEO *c.* 255). If necessary, the chancellor may be given an assis-