

No luck.

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Those who think a lot about luck probably do so because they don't have any. It is common for those who are considered lucky or who have experienced good fortune due to luck not to mention it and instead attribute it to their own efforts, chance, destiny, their lucky star or, in most cases, divine compensation for their prayers or suffering.

It is important to distinguish luck from other terms that, although related, are often used as if they were equivalent.

1. Chance. Although colloquially linked to randomness, chance is actually mathematical, that is, it can be traced in its variables and understood with precise laws. Proof of this— without ideological contradictions— is to find certain scientists convinced that "God does not play dice with the universe". Metaphor— or not— essential to probabilistic sciences.
2. Destiny. Its meanings agree that it is one, dictated by a superior or celestial being; or rather, by a force characterised by being intelligent. After the origin of the universe, destiny is perhaps the most popular theme in the ancient myths that we love so much. This is evident in humanity's first book, the wonderful epic of Gilgamesh: a hero who seeks the secret to bring his beloved friend Enkidu back from the dead. The story would not captivate us so much if fate (or bad luck, as many of its literary interpreters refer to it) had not sent a snake to thwart his plan at the last moment. The incisive question remains: can the link between snakes and misfortune be traced back to that moment?
3. Fortuna. Goddess who embodies good luck, with a tendency towards roulette and caprice. Lower in rank than Ananke, not only because of her Roman origin as opposed to the latter's Greek lineage, but also because Fortuna is usually personified, while Ananke is a cosmic

ordering principle. In contemporary and non-theistic contexts, fortune is also an indicator of wealth, success and privileged position in life; its ranks include interesting obsessive and hoarding profiles, as well as fanatics who practise ejaculations of prosperity and/or abundance.

4. Good luck. In many cultures— and psychological practices of recent decades—, "being born under a lucky star" or, conversely, "under an unlucky star" is an expression based on astrology. This type of knowledge considers that the position of the planets at the time of a person's birth is crucial to understanding their character and destiny. The consensus is that no matter how hard someone works to change their circumstances, the stars have already determined their fate. On the other hand, "born under the sign of Cain" would be the equivalent in Judeo-Christian symbolism, only the scope is greater... it applies to all of humanity. Card reading is updated, as is the recognition of sins— in a doctor's office or confessional—, but the course of life or its nature is already written.

So far, it could be said that the positivist sciences analyse chance, while literary tradition and the bulk of the humanities and social sciences, as well as other popular knowledge, are more interested in destiny and fortune. However, one senses that there is a different kind of luck that differs from the above terms. A definition is proposed:

5. Luck. It is understood as that which is not included in the previous classification, that is, luck cannot be attributed to a superior intelligent force, a divine being or astral positions; luck is also not subject to human mediation and its variables cannot be traced *ad infinitum*. Therefore, it is speculated that luck is undefined, since in a lifetime there may be several events, only one or none at all. Luck, therefore, is autonomous, irrational, non-probabilistic, timeless, incalculable and unlimited.

Now, if such a distinction has been made, it does not mean that the five terms are not intertwined or do not intersect at some point. It is very tempting to argue that destiny, the stars and fortune are the coordinators of luck and chance. This would involve a delicate transdisciplinary effort,— so often referred to these days, as impracticable—, but at the same time taking a leap into the unknown, which would quickly resolve the issue; however, it would be inconsistent given the proposal that luck is autonomous and beyond all control, even intelligent control. Furthermore, the purpose of this work is not to analyse these intersections— assuming that they exist— or to make casuistry to understand the



events of a life; the study proposed is more essentialist in nature, so we will proceed to isolate luck in order to explore its nature.

If we examine *bad luck* by contrast, we must first disregard providential designs— or punishments, depending on how they are interpreted— because, as many sacred books recount, everyone would claim to have had a hand in such an event. So bad luck can be stripped of its associations with superhuman will and a supreme ordering mind, as is often attributed to the famous Ananke. But this demarcation is not easy, proof of which is that prophecy is an excellent way to start tragic stories. Shakespeare resorts to the Moirai, daughters or executors of the inevitability of fate,— who did not appear to Macbeth of their own accord—, to announce his future, the only one that was written for his life and kingdom, foreseeing the ambition that his soul was plotting.

Seeking more rational grounds— but no less tragic—, bad luck is often used in psychotherapeutic settings to justify bad decisions that, whether due to lack of vision— intelligence and not witchcraft—, a deficit of emotional responsibility or a compulsive plot of the unconscious, people find answers for their vicissitudes. Faced with such excuses, it is common to see that those who claim to have bad luck will receive gestures such as shrugs and straight faces from their interlocutors.

On a more intricate note, it is worth pointing out that even luck is expressed in Latin and in logical contexts, as it is one of the favourites among those who resort to the list of fallacies. The *post hoc* fallacy is used when assuming that, if one event occurs after another, the first must be the cause of the second, even if there is no real causal relationship. To illustrate: "I never start new projects in March; whenever I have done so, I have had terrible luck." Or, "If I hadn't gone to the doctor, I wouldn't be sick today."

At this point in the essay, we are invited to distance ourselves from negative judgements,— powerful material for therapists and moralists—, and thus explore whether the stumbling block of luck lies precisely in value judgements.

What would happen if luck were only referred to as a noun incompatible with qualifying adjectives? If one only said, 'Yesterday I was lucky'. The immediate perception is a positive quality. Here we find a distinguishing feature between chance and fate, which in themselves do not refer to a beneficial quality; luck, on the contrary, is good, while chance and fate are not necessarily so. Fortune and luck, on the other hand, do usually require a qualifier, but this will be discussed later. If we analyse the phrase "yesterday I was lucky", the verb "to have" speaks of possession, and it has been said that

luck cannot be controlled, so could we say "yesterday I was luck"? Verb "to be". A tough ontological problem. 'Being lucky' also implies possession, in fact, substantialisation, fine material for metaphysicians and aporia for this analysis. Would it help to add that luck *must* be secular? This will be reviewed later, but first, this exercise with the word *fortune* may be useful:

"Yesterday I had fortune."	An accepted colloquial usage that implies mimicking the goddess or possessing her. In pragmatic and non-theistic terms, fortune aspires to possession and duration.
"Yesterday I was fortune"	No colloquial or poetic usage is recognised.

In the case of the word 'buena estrella' (lucky star):

"Yesterday I had a lucky star"	In astrological logic, a good or bad star is only valid at birth or to understand prolonged periods of prosperity or misfortune if used with the adjective 'bad'.
"Yesterday I was a lucky star."	Poetic usage with little force and outside astrological practice.

On the other hand, the secular nature of the term seems inevitable, as it removes any religious belief in luck and allows the adjective to be integrated organically into the concept.

At this point, clarification is needed regarding what can be deduced about luck so far.

5.1 Luck: a slippery term, resistant to belonging, attachment and definition. Secular.

Defining luck is not a task for the impatient. Could it be that we have reached a linguistic limit and created a false problem? Wittgenstein's thinking offers a clue.

It is curious to note that in German the word "glück" has two meanings: luck and happiness. It is the only language where this has been the case since the thirteenth century, at the height of the Middle

Ages. Semantic studies show that in the sixteenth century, "glückland" was used to mean a person's state or condition; it was also common to say "gutter glückfal" to refer to luck, success and opportunity; and "glückfeligkeyt" to express prosperity. Later, the Latinism "fatum" became associated with it, and destiny entered the picture.

By the eighteenth century, *happiness* was spoken of as a state that did not depend on human efforts and desires, but was realised in the totality of human life events, which may or may not correspond to the hopes and aspirations of the individual.¹ A century later, the distinction became more complicated with the consideration of subjectivity, and to this day, the word "glück" retains its double meaning, offering an alternative for the purposes of this search: is luck happiness?

In practical usage of the German language, luck is understood as a state or condition of a person. This text suggests that luck is autonomous, irrational, non-probabilistic, timeless, incalculable and unlimited. Conceiving of it as a state or condition allows us to think of it as an independent event that is felt and recognised, unrelated to any traceable or measurable cause (chance) or intelligent and predestined cause (God or the stars). However, its appearance in the temporal course of life can be uncertain; it is common to hear that someone on their deathbed examined how many events they experienced associated with luck and whether they associated it with any pattern, yet they still find it difficult to give reasons or identify the causes. But what would be found if the same person were asked to do this exercise in terms of happiness?

Would they identify that the states of happiness in their life were autonomous, irrational, non-probabilistic, timeless, incalculable, and unlimited? Prediction involves volitional and rational aspects, and scenarios can be envisaged where something like "I built– or did not– my happiness" would be expressed. More questions arise: how did the Germans come to conclude that happiness may or may not correspond to the hopes and aspirations of human beings? It seems like a question for philologists.

For now, a Buddhist collaboration is on the horizon. To be happy is to detach oneself from everything, not only from material things, but also from the self and its desires, beliefs and knowledge. According to this Eastern tradition, practitioners attached to the discipline based on *the four noble truths* would achieve various states of inner happiness. Therefore, happiness-luck is the result of an attitude that is cultivated, and that implies discarding its autonomy due to human mediation...

¹ Ivanov, Andrey Vladimirovich, and Rimma Anvarovna Ivanova. 2021. "Four Centuries of German 'Happiness' in Lexicographers' Interpretations." *SHS Web of Conferences* 122: 01005. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202112201005> (The German Language in the 19th Century), p. 3.

Faced with such a dead end, it is necessary to return to another German clue, this time from Nietzsche. In his philosophy, you will not find the word "glück", but you will find "zufall", which means chance. He preferred this term to luck to refer to the driving force of becoming, '—' in its linguistic rather than metaphysical use— ; this driving force explains the uncontrollable, irrational, contingent, amorphous and unintentional nature of everything that happens, which, incidentally, lacks purpose or ultimate meaning. Hence, being happy would be more an effect of one's subjective position in the face of chance.

Towards the fourth page of this research, the initial oversight of limiting the definition of chance to mathematics is assessed. It is recognised that it was epistemically unfair to give greater authority to the exact sciences than to the humanities... once again. And almost without a doubt, it is estimated that this tribulation could have been avoided.

To provisionally conclude— — , it can be concluded that luck ties fairly well with Nietzschean chance, but three clarifications are required.

1. Although the use of chance is linguistic and not metaphysical, Nietzsche left open what chance itself is. If "motor or force of becoming" is only used as a category to articulate his philosophy, it is not clear what this category or principle represents. It could be the same case as the intelligibility of Schopenhauer's *will*, or Kant's *noumenon*.
2. If we agree that chance is reality itself or that which mobilises the flow of becoming, chance could well be life.
3. If one *possesses* or *is* life, why do biographies tend to highlight events that are significant but have no apparent cause? Some people often say, 'I have been lucky in my life', and in this turn of phrase the reasoning would be, 'I have had life in my life'; or 'I am lucky to have met this person', instead of 'I have life because I have met this person'. A third example: "Having this illness confirms my bad luck," instead of "Having this illness confirms my life." Thus, without qualifying adjectives.

Therefore, language shows another limit,— which is what is so enchanting about it— and allows for the beautiful faculty of historicising. If we were to conclude with a definition of luck following the logic of the arguments developed so far, it would be the following.

5.2 Luck: Life, category of categories, essential force, irrational, non-probabilistic, timeless, incalculable and unlimited. It acts without moral purpose, although it is objectified and historicised by the human need for meaning.

The scope of the speculative method encounters that which cannot be named. It leaves unease, perhaps with a mystical-poetic twist that inclines us to investigate how that which is beyond language can be made evident. In the current situation, all that remains is to call for new collaborations. All those sciences, disciplines, pseudosciences and various fields of knowledge that enjoy experiencing uncertainty, anxiety and dead ends are invited to join in. Perhaps together we will have a little more luck.