



A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities

Pierre-Simon Laplace

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When the revised theory of quantum mechanics, postulating a probabilistic rather than a deterministic universe, was first introduced in the 1920s, Albert Einstein famously refused to believe that “God plays dice with the universe,” and he spent the rest of his life trying to prove it. Quantum theory, however, survived his efforts, and it seems that the universe is very much based on random probabilities. The universe has not descended into chaos because random events are strictly governed by the universal laws of mathematics, a fact that casinos depend upon. So the odds of a broken teacup spontaneously reassembling itself, are not impossible, just extremely unlikely. In 1812, long before quantum theory was ever proposed, the French scholar, Pierre-Simon Laplace, issued his *Théorie analytique des probabilités* in which he laid down many of the fundamental mathematical principles governing probability. Two years later, he wrote this book concerning the philosophy behind his theory. Although its application to gambling is obvious, his theory applies to many scientific fields. Enjoyment of this work, which is a 1906 translation from French into English by two American university professors, does not require a deep understanding of mathematics to enjoy and appreciate.

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