

Fictionalism About Chance

Rachael Briggs

Three individually plausible claims about chance create a tension when taken together. First, talk of chance seems scientifically indispensable: its applications range from quantum mechanics to evolutionary biology to insurance sales. Second, there are compelling metaphysical grounds for skepticism about chance: Humeanism, the difficulty of reconciling chance with determinism, and the normative aspects of chance. Third, existing Humean reductions of chance to non-chancy concepts suffer from problems which make them unappealing.

If we are compelled to talk as if there are chances, but these chances are neither irreducible nor reducible, then what could they possibly be? I develop a fictionalist proposal, on which there are no chances, but on which we are nonetheless justified in adopting the fiction that chances exist. This proposal allows us to hang onto all three initially plausible claims: the indispensability of chance; the plausibility of skepticism about chance, and the implausibility of a Humean reduction of chance.