

Luck is the Most Important Skill

Most things in our lives are out of our control. And when I say most I really mean almost everything. So it puzzles me when people push the idea that hard work, intelligence, creativity, and other Middle-American traits are the keys to success and happiness. While it's true that these things are important qualities and skills for a person to have, at the same time they are paradoxically nearly meaningless because the key events in our lives happen by chance: where and when we are born, what school we go to, who we meet and become friends with, relationships we form. Although such things appear to occur due to our decisions, there is also a duality existing with what is essentially a roll of the dice.

Does that mean nothing we do matters? No, not really. The hardest thing to understand is that while our entire lives are determined by external forces, our own actions and decisions still influence the outcome. That is what is meant by the saying "hard work brings good luck", though that is putting things too simply in my opinion. It is true that we work hard in order to create success and happiness, but it is also true that for most people, no matter how hard they work, they will never escape their miserable situation. Hard work only brings good luck to those who are already lucky. That doesn't make hard work worthless; after all, it doesn't matter how lucky someone is if they never attempt to utilize it. Therefore I would classify luck as the force which determines three things: the ground-work on which a person's life is based, the efficiency of a person's labor (in terms of how much or how little it takes to move up in the world), and a person's fortune—the combination of random uncontrollable events which improves a person's life or makes it worse.

Some questions are raised, though. For instance, what can explain how a person's luck can change, such as a homeless person winning the lottery, or, in the opposite situation, a person losing everything? I would make the argument that their luck hasn't actually changed at all. In order for their luck to have changed we would need to treat each instance of a person's life as an independent event—the case in a dice roll or coin toss—but in actuality events in our lives are interconnected not only with each other but also with those of other people. Thus, between every person in the world, there is a sort of network of luck that influences events and outcomes. It isn't the person's luck that changes, but how their life responds to their luck. I will illustrate with this example: if someone is homeless and wins the lottery it isn't because their luck changed, the reason is because it was their homelessness that prompted them to make the attempt to win at that point in time. Remember that events in life are not independent like dice rolls, each thing that happens has a cascading effect. Things happen because other things also happened.

What determines someone's luck, and how can we know how lucky we are? Unfortunately I think those things are impossible to know. Some people believe that astrological signs and events are the causes. I think it's a futile attempt to try to "read" someone's luck. Although someone may appear to be unlucky, for all we know, the unfortunate events that they must endure could be the very things which enables their good luck to make itself known. It's only at the end of life that we can really know how lucky or unlucky a person was.

The title of this article is "Luck is the Most Im-

portant Skill”, but so far I have only touched on luck as a trait or attribute. So how can luck be a skill? The skill of luck is how well a person makes use of their luck. Since luck is useless without work, but not determined by work, the luckiest people in the world can still be very lazy and get nowhere in life¹. At the same time work is also useless without luck. Thus, the combination of luck and work is the skill of luck. Without that skill it is impossible to succeed and, more importantly, impossible to be happy.

Coincidence versus Fortune

I must clarify at this point that there are two kinds of luck. One form of luck is attributed to events—for example, nearly missing a deer while driving could be considered lucky². We can call that coincidence. The other form of luck, which is my main focus here, is an attribute of people and things. Lucky people can still experience unlucky events, it’s just that all events in their life, whether they are lucky or unlucky, lead them to an overall improvement in their quality of life. We can call that fortune. It is important to distinguish these two forms of luck because they not only mean different things, but they are visible in different ways.

We can think of fortune as a network of coincidences. In that sense, fortune is a superset of millions of coincidences occurring every instance, throughout the entire universe, and between everyone. The smallest particles and the largest heavenly bodies all have their own fortunes. Where coincidences conglomerate there is fortune.

¹I will not attempt to define what constitutes success in this article.

²It’s hard to classify events as lucky or unlucky. Is nearly missing a deer any more lucky than never seeing the deer to begin with?

Properties of Fortune

Fortune, being a network of coincidences, is difficult to classify as a “thing” which is divisible. But if we imagine the formation of fortune as a collection of coincidences much in the way that raindrops will pool together into a puddle we can reach clarity. Water naturally collects together to form puddles, lakes, and oceans, and to separate water from itself requires effort (energy). Fortune will naturally grow in places where it already is, similarly to how water will naturally collect where it already is. And when it grows large enough, the effort (energy) required for it to be separated from itself becomes tremendous—so much so that it is inconceivable. It is for this reason that, for example, wealthy nations arise but their wealth does not spread entirely out. Because fortune naturally collects together, other things also naturally collect together and centralize.

How does fortune get distributed in the first place? Unlike water, fortune does not simply evaporate and rain down. To understand how fortune is distributed we have to examine a different property of water: osmosis. When an area with more water and an area with less water are separated by a membrane, the area with more water tends to flow through the membrane into the area with less water. In that way, fortune tends to flow from the highly fortunate to the unfortunate. But this is contradictory to the first property of fortune: its tendency to collect where it already exists.

Thus there is a tension which exists due to the contradictory nature of the first and second properties of fortune. Although fortune tends to flow from high to low, its tendency to gather where it already exists, for the most part, over-

powers that osmosis of fortune. When the two reach equilibrium, a group of people will thrive. Then the equilibrium is broken, and with that break comes disaster.

Chaos

When fortune grows, at the same time it becomes more concentrated. In the context of people, it means that fewer and fewer people become more and more fortunate. That is due to the first property of fortune, its tendency to gather to those who already have it. And the more it collects together, the faster it collects together. And the faster it collects together, the stronger this “fortune gravity” becomes in comparison to fortune osmosis³. At some point fortune becomes so concentrated that it can no longer be contained, causing it to explode. That is the cause of chaos.

When a pool of fortune explodes it becomes once again distributed evenly. But distributed evenly does not mean it is distributed to peo-

ple. Recall that not only does fortune affect people, but it affects other entities as well. Thus, although it is no longer in concentration, people do not benefit from this explosion until it begins to collect once again. Chaos ensues until fortune has gathered again sufficiently.

In conclusion, I believe that luck is a very important factor in life that people tend to overlook or discredit. I also believe that being lucky is not an insult, nor is it itself discrediting towards those who work hard. What “lucky” is is entirely relative. The important thing is to recognize when luck is a major component in our lives and to not take what we have for granted. And, lastly, it is also important to recognize where there is too much fortune. I believe it is possible to reverse natural tendencies if there is a collective effort. But, in order for that to happen people need to be dissatisfied and, even more importantly, not complacent. Recognize what you have and always strive for something better.

³Fortune osmosis can be thought of as a counteracting force against fortune gravity.