



Time and Chance

David Z. ALBERT

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This book is an attempt to get to the bottom of an acute and perennial tension between our best scientific pictures of the fundamental physical structure of the world and our everyday empirical experience of it. The trouble is about the direction of time. The situation (very briefly) is that it is a consequence of almost every one of those fundamental scientific pictures--and that it is at the same time radically at odds with our common sense--that whatever can happen can just as naturally happen backwards.

Albert provides an unprecedentedly clear, lively, and systematic new account--in the context of a Newtonian-Mechanical picture of the world--of the ultimate origins of the statistical regularities we see around us, of the temporal irreversibility of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, of the asymmetries in our epistemic access to the past and the future, and of our conviction that by acting now we can affect the future but not the past. Then, in the final section of the book, he generalizes the Newtonian picture to the quantum-mechanical case and (most interestingly) suggests a very deep potential connection between the problem of the direction of time and the quantum-mechanical measurement problem.

The book aims to be both an original contribution to the present scientific and philosophical understanding of these matters at the most advanced level, and something in the nature of an elementary textbook on the subject accessible to interested high-school students.

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Preface

1. Time-Reversal Invariance
 2. Thermodynamics
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Reviews of this book:

The foundations of statistical mechanisms are often presented in physics textbooks in a rather obscure and confused way. By challenging common ways of thinking about this subject, *Time and Chance* can do quite a lot to improve this situation.

--Jean Bricmont, Science

Albert is perfecting a style of foundational analysis that is uniquely his own...It has a surgical precision...and it is ruthless with pretensions. The foundations of thermodynamics is a topic that has accumulated a good deal of dead wood; this is a fire that will burn and burn.

--Simon W. Saunders, Oxford University

As usual with Albert's work, the exposition is brisk and to the point, and exceptionally clear...The book will be an extremely valuable contribution to the literature on the subject of philosophical issues in thermodynamics and statistical mechanics, a literature which has been thin on the ground but is now growing as it deserves to.

--Lawrence Sklar, University of Michigan

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