

What is *Chance*?

What is *Possibility*?

What is *Volition*?

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# Causal Chains

A happened because of B

If B hadn't happened, A wouldn't have  
(or might not have)

B happened because of C

If C hadn't happened, B wouldn't have  
(or might not have)

C happened because of D

...

# Causal Networks

A happened because of  $B_1, B_2, B_3 \dots B_k$

If  $B_i$  hadn't happened, A might not have,  
unless  $B'$  also had happened

$B_i$  happened because of  $C_1 \dots C_n$ .

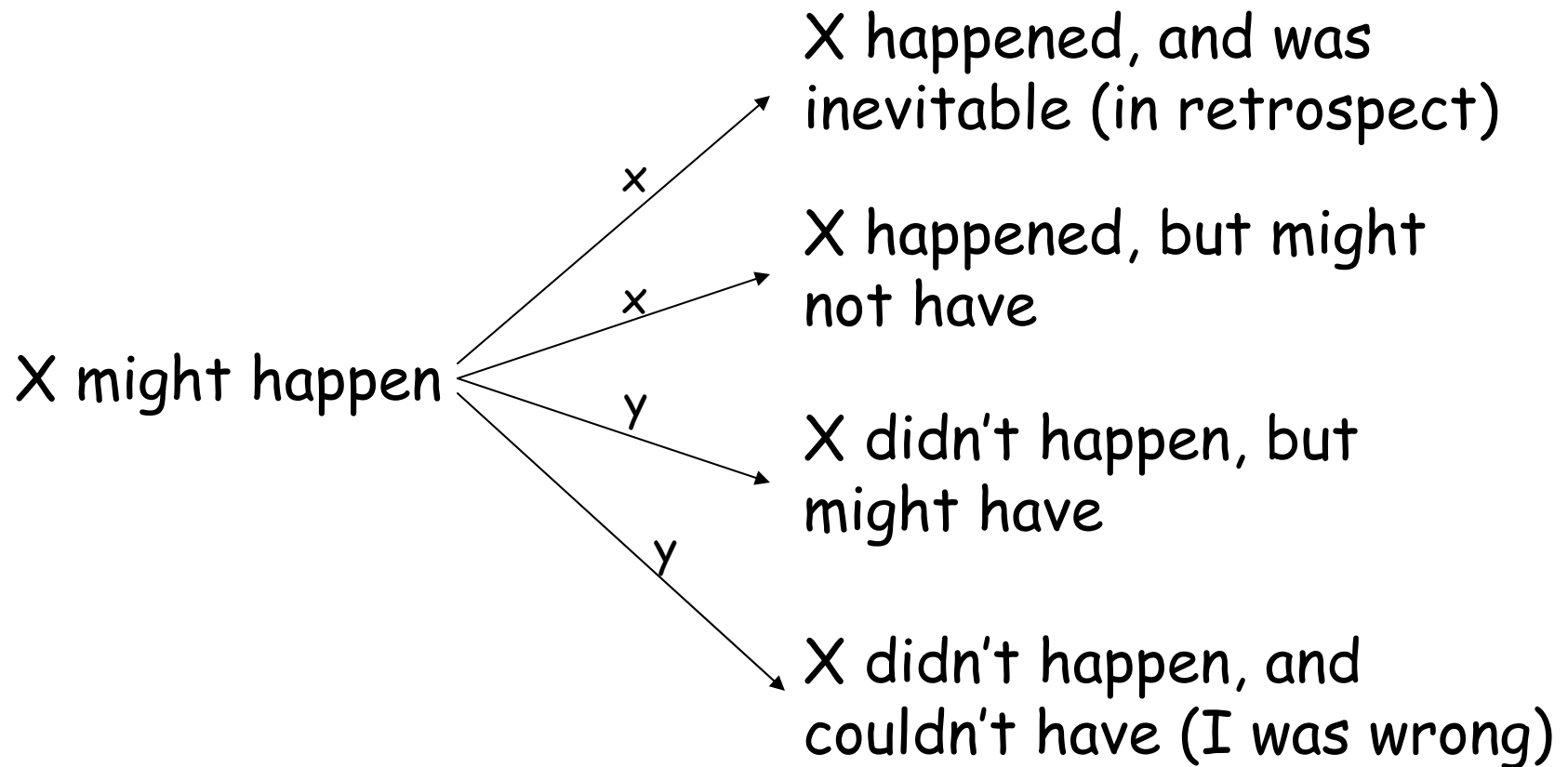
If  $C_j$  hadn't happened ...

...

# Chance as Lack of Knowledge

- Randomness as lack of knowledge about all factors at play
- Randomness as intrinsic inability ever to have such complete knowledge
- Randomness as absence of explanatory factors

# Chance Before and After an Event



Describe something that you thought was possible, but later concluded was not (or had not been) possible.

Was the initial opinion wrong?

If so, where exactly was the initial opinion mistaken?

If not, what changed?

Can you identify something that you first thought possible, then not, where your assessment of the initial opinion is different?

Describe something that you thought was not possible, but later concluded was (or had been) possible.

Did it occur?

Was the initial opinion wrong?

If so, where did it go wrong?

If not, what changed?

Can you identify something that you first thought not possible, then possible, where your assessment of the initial opinion is different?

Describe something that you consider having happened by chance (i.e., it might have gone another way).

Can you identify a proximate cause?

If so, how far back can you trace the causality?

In what domains do you look for the causes - physical, psychological, sociological, spiritual ... ?

If you can identify a proximate cause, in what sense was the event a "chance" event?

If not, do you believe there is no explanation for the event?

Do you believe anyone else might have an explanation for the event?

If you knew someone else could explain it, would you still consider it as having happened by chance?

Chance before the fact



*Ethical Issues?*



Chance after the fact

# *Volition*

Ethical issues concern choices and responsibility.

They therefore turn on the extent to which one has choice.



"I'm going to hit you on the head and once I do that, it will have been inevitable, (since all things are determined) and therefore you cannot accuse me of being responsible or culpable."

Not responsible but culpable?

Responsible but not culpable?

Responsible and culpable?

Same questions - but for God rather than me.

"You're going to hit me on the head and once you do that, it will have been inevitable, (since all things are determined) and therefore I should be forgiving and not angry at you."

Forgiving but angry?

Not forgiving but not angry?

Not forgiving and angry?

Same questions - but for God rather than you.

"I don't expect you to hit me on the head, and if you were to do so, I would be angry at you (because: you have a choice whether to do that or not)."

Later:

"Now that you have hit me on the head, I see it to have been inevitable (since all things are determined), and therefore I should be forgiving and not angry at you."

Forgiving but angry?

Not forgiving but not angry?

Not forgiving and angry?

Same questions - but for God rather than you.

# Choice under Pressure

Is there ever choice that is not  
under pressure or influence?

# Reductionist account of Volition

- Volition (and other mental phenomena) are emergent aspects of brain function.
- Do you believe this?
- Would Spinoza believe it?
- If so, what are the implications for chance, choice, and responsibility?
- If not, how does your account relate to Spinoza's?