

THE CORE OF FORTUNE

EDITORIAL

The thought of having barely made it, of having been lucky or, on the contrary, really unlucky often comes to mind. There are circumstances that are lucky and others that are, clearly, unlucky; people who are luckier than others; entire lives that unfold with no major obstacles and rather full of opportunities, and other lives that develop on difficult paths ever since the beginning and where the lack of opportunities is accompanied by serious negative events. Carlo S. died the very day when the end of the war was announced—he was standing on the roof of his house when he was hit by a bullet shot in a celebration for which he himself was dancing with joy. In this case, we may say that it was a fatality; for him, it was definitely bad luck.

Fortune (and misfortune) comes to mind, but it is very difficult to think of it, reach it with one's thinking, and find its full core. This difficulty is attested by the fact that one may not believe at all in fortune or in its lack, one may consider such a belief a superstition, and nevertheless one attributes to it, exactly as in the case of the blind divinity represented by the tradition, an immense and mysterious power that affects history and lives and undermines one's trust in the power of reason, choices, strength of will, knowledge, virtue and, moreover, human and divine justice. Misfortune is considered a form of injustice. Luck too can be unjust because it may or may not be accompanied by virtue and conscience; it may affect those who make a good use of it but also those who do not.

What is luck in itself? What is the core or the essence of the concept "luck" besides its being the disquieting central enigma from which there develop stories and theories that try to build a path and hope of some sense? We may start counting and reasoning from out of the tragic cloud that hangs over entire peoples, historical epochs, families, communities, individuals, and that has no explanations (and must not have any because the temptation to offer some inevitably ends up in ideological aberrations). Yet the hard core of irrationality is there; we cannot do anything else than carrying it with us. Its positive counterpart, the paradisiac condition, is a gift or a dream but certainly not a merit. Even in this case, it is from this that we start measuring and narrating what we have done with it.

Because of this condition of *quasi-unthinkability*, the concept "luck" takes up aspects that differ from one context to the other, depending on the surrounding notions that inflect it one way or the other. Its imprecision as a blind and magnetic point is integral to its nature, it cannot be brought to clarity. Yet, because of its persistence at the center of any theoretical position that takes a stand in favor of freedom, justice, the efficacy of virtue, or merit, luck remains an unescapable philosophical challenge.

The subjectivization of luck, which starts with Aristotle, finds both a confirmation and a denial in the practices of luck that, from astrology to the lottery, are still pervasive

today. All talks about “fortune” or “misfortune” make sense only from the perspective of the subject. Even so, however, the contour of the subject is immediately (as it were) sketched over and a double edge emerges, a double profile of *having* luck and being *lucky*. The analytic razor cuts being lucky away, yet by doing so it eliminates from fortune precisely fortune’s ontological tip, the “magic” aspect without which the phenomenon “fortune” stops being what it is and dissolves into a non-concept or a simple equivocation. In the practices of fortune, though, having luck is never separate from being lucky. In one’s astrological natal chart, Jupiter’s (or Venus’) benign presence reveals the almost genetic predisposition toward fortune. This is exactly what common sense thinks when it defines someone as lucky and someone else as unlucky. Fortune becomes thus *eu-daimonia*, that is, having a good *daimon*, which does not coincide with the subject but rather accompanies it for long or short periods and at times for the entire life. Fortune is an accident, Aristotle reminds us. Yet—the practitioners of fortune think— such an accident is essential more or less in the same way in which the accident of being wise is essential to Socrates, the accident of being in love is essential to Romeo and Juliette, the accident of being bad is essential to Hitler. As *daimon* or as guardian angel, fortune is some sort of an aura, a cloud that insists on the subject without being in the subject’s power and that can abandon the subject at any moment. The cloud, the aura, the *daimon* are subjective yet in a way constitutively different from freedom or will. They are the subject’s fold of being, some sort of conceptual superfetation that the analytical gaze can only consider as meaningless and common sense nevertheless preserves because of its amazing explanatory power.

The ontological aspect of fortune is also the most disquieting. Fortune and misfortune appear as atmospheric weather impending on the subject’s head and constituting some sort of its environment. For such weather, the astrological barometer marks the tendency toward good or bad.

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