PREFACE

This special issue and its following companion issue (*Social Analysis* 56, no. 2) are concerned with the ways in which fortune, luck, and chance are conceived in a range of different societies and how these concepts are employed to negotiate the contingencies and uncertainties of everyday life. More specifically, the articles included in these special issues show how, by juxtaposing different cultural images and positions, any engagement with these concepts in local cosmologies and systems of thought lead different societies to imaginatively formulate novel worldviews and to creatively rearrange preconceived notions and categories of relatedness and vitality. Taken together, the contributions to these special issues describe societies peopled by agents who seek to (re)connect with the ultimate sources of vitality and potentiality and to appropriate them in order to reconfigure their notions of prosperity and efficacy.

The first-rate ethnographies included in these two issues highlight some of our field's most vibrant concerns through a learned engagement with anthropological ancestors and an awareness of the intellectual developments beyond the boundaries of the discipline. They demonstrate how these allegedly 'empty' concepts are ethnographically pregnant and provide heuristics capable of disrupting our conceptual apparatus by returning to some of our discipline's crucial themes: ontology, causation, relatedness, materiality, morality, and temporality. Bringing together eminent scholars and emerging young anthropologists, the ethnographies contained in these issues, which cover areas from Melanesia to Greater Amazonia, Madagascar to Greece, Mongolia and China to Tibet, form a landmark collection and demonstrate how the study of both the eventful and the everyday life of fortune and luck is a frontier area of theoretical development in anthropology.

This first special issue, entitled *Cosmologies of Fortune: Luck, Vitality, and Uncontrolled Relatedness*, attempts to trace the semantic field encompassed by terms glossed as 'fortune', 'luck', and 'chance' and their role in constituting distinct economic cosmologies, along with conceptions of vitality, kinship, and relatedness, by answering the following questions. How can we account for different ontologies of luck, fortune, and chance? To what extent are they commensurable? How are fortune and luck related to the presence or absence of indigenous idioms of randomness or chance? Are there societies without luck and societies that display great anxieties about the control of the flows of

fortune? How do fortune and luck relate to indigenous conceptions of risk and danger? How is the power of fortune inherited and transmitted, harnessed and contained, lost or deployed? How is fortune employed as a kinship idiom for negotiating identities or conceptions of prosperity and reproductive vitality? How are fortune and luck made visible in distinctive materialities and generated through the circulation of things?

The ethnographies in the second special issue will deal with notions of contingency and moral agency and the ways in which societies anticipate and construct a ‘fortunate future’. These articles will reveal the creative potential of practical matrixes for calculating luck and mobilizing devices and technologies of anticipation that are capable of mastering uncertainty and generating new subjectivities.

We believe that these companion issues will be field-defining, bringing the study of luck and fortune to the forefront of our discipline’s concern and theorizing. Hopefully, these contributions will help to reinstate ethnography as a prime method for understanding how human beings think about luck and harness fortune in order to tame contingency or to catalyze the serendipities of their quotidian lives.

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— Giovanni da Col and Caroline Humphrey