On Artistic Luck

Alessandro Bertinetto*
University of Udine

Abstract. In this paper I try to make sense of the idea of artistic luck, which may be conceived by analogy to the idea of 'moral luck'. I begin by considering what I call artistic luck in general (§ 2). Then I discuss artistic luck proper (§ 3) and the cases of 'intentional' artistic luck and improvisation (§ 4). In § 5 I focus on the problems generated by aleatoric art. I will conclude by endorsing Adorno's reasonable opinion on the relation between art and chance (§ 6).

1. Introduction

This paper is exploratory in character. Its aim is to discuss the idea of aesthetic luck, an idea that may be conceived by analogy to the idea of 'moral luck'. Firstly I present a broad and loose way of speaking about artistic luck, conceived as a general feature of artistic creativity. However, this way of speaking turns out not to be very informative (§ 2). In § 3 I focus on the case of artistic luck proper: the achievement of valuable artistic results beyond the artist's own responsibility. In § 4 I discuss the case of 'intentional' artistic luck and improvisation, while § 5 is devoted to investigating some problems generated by the *aesthetic of chance*, of 'aleatoric art', that can be summed up in the question: if something is the result of chance accidents, how can it be considered a work of art? To answer the question raised by what may be called the 'paradox of aleatoric art' I will defend the view that the use of chance as an ingredient of art is not, *per se*, a case of artistic luck, because it is 'directed' by an artistic project, according to which the chance outcomes can be evaluated as *artistically* good or bad. However, in the rather hypothetical case in which there is no possibility of evaluating the chance events, because no artistic project is detectable, not only would the notion of artistic luck make no sense, but speaking about

* Email: alessandro.bertinetto@uniud.it

art would also be absurd. In § 6 I conclude by endorsing Adorno's view about the relation between art and chance.

2. Artistic Luck In General (Chance in Art — Art as Luck)

How can we make sense of the notion of 'artistic luck'? In order to understand the meaning of this notion, we will concentrate on art production, rather than reception, because the chance element in art primarily concerns the process of making it.

Let's first consider artistic creativity in general. It is certainly not easy to define artistic creativity, and I do not want to address this complex issue here.[1] Still we can reasonably claim that artistic production does not consist only in coming up with ideas and plans and applying them by means of following routines of production. Artistic creativity is not only the result of ideational, intentional and instrumental engagement, but also of 'devotion' or openness to the contingent emergences of media (materials and forms) the artist is working with and/or in. This is probably the meaning of Pablo Picasso's claim: "I do not seek, I find".[2] So, if Picasso is right, artistic creativity seems to consist in going along with the contingency of what emerges from the artistic materials, with deviations from common patterns of expectation, and in taking the middle way between the overcoming of the contingency and the failure of the production. In order to succeed, artists have to be inventive in integrating the planned structure of a project with the somewhat accidental process of its eventual realization. Then it seems that artworks are to be understood as unexpected items that are essentially surprising also to their producers[3] who, according to Kant, do not know how they achieve what they do (cf. Kant, 1997, § 46).

The point has been made in radical terms by the German abstract painter Willi Baumeister in the book *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst* (1947).[4] Baumeister observed here that if artists knew how to create art, they would not be able to. For authentic art is something creative and, by applying

[1] See Bertinetto and Martinengo, 2011 and 2012; Boden, 2010; Gaut and Livingston, 2003; Gaut, 2012; Krausz, Dutton, Bardsley, 2009; Maitland, 1976.

[2] Quoted in Sutherland, 1936.

[3] Cf. Huovinen, 2011.

[4] Stuttgart, Schwab, 1947.

well-known methods of working artists could not really be creative, because they would simply repeat the already known. Hence, the value of artistic production partly depends on the emergence of objective forces, which artists cannot dominate, because they simply ignore them.[5] If this sounds too mysterious, we can make the same point in a more sober fashion. Artistic inspiration is not simply imposed on the process of production; on the contrary, inspiration develops as artists react to the unexpected, contingent affordances of the media in which they are working and respond to the unforeseeable situation in which they operate. And the situational contingencies, as well as the ways artists, in a more or less prepared way, react to them, are part of the final value of the artwork.[6]

Hence, the artists' attitude can be described as a kind of self-imposed improvisation: artists must, more or less, 'improvise', in order to cope with unexpected contingent situations that are (evaluated as) lucky or unlucky according to their expectations and aims. Moreover, the success of the artistic undertaking cannot be evaluated only by comparing the artwork with a plan arranged in advance or judging the way it makes use of well known techniques and styles. It is not determined solely by compliance with a canon as a standard of success. For the standard of success is specific each time: it is established by the success itself of the artwork (see Pareyson, 1988), that can trigger an unexpected modification of preexisting criteria of evaluation.

According to an ordinary concept of luck, an event or an experience is lucky, if it is rare, if we cannot control or program its occurrence and its manifestation, and if it is for us something unexpected and remarkably valuable.[7] Hence, a success that is achieved despite the lack of control over the circumstances of the making, and which we value in part because of its rarity, seems to be a case of luck. So 'artistic luck', conceived in these terms, seems to be the general rule of, not the exception to, artistic production.

[5] A similar point is made by Menke, 2008. Menke conceives artistic making as a kind of non-making, because artistic capacity (*künstlerisches Können*) is properly speaking incapacity (*Nicht-Können*). I thank Daniel Martin Feige for this suggestion.

[6] See Bertinetto, 2012a and 2014a.

[7] See Coffman, 2006, for a detailed philosophical discussion of the notion of 'lucky event'.

Obviously this general view of 'artistic luck' must be distinguished from the understanding of 'artistic luck' as the result of particular social, economical, and historical conditions that favour one lucky artist over others. The fact that Paul, a very average painter indeed, becomes a famous artist due to the material, above all economic, resources he has at his disposal, and John, an ingenious innovator, will never be recognized as such, depends on 'luck' in a different sense from the notion of artistic luck I am concerned with here. Paul's luck (and John's bad luck) is a sort of 'existential' luck that one could explain philosophically by quoting the Heideggerian notion of *thrownness* ('Geworfenheit': Heidegger, 1993, § 38), the "having-been-thrown into the world" (Wheeler, 2013). Everyone comes into the world in specific historic and social situations that co-determine the possibilities of his or her life. This 'thrownness' is a factual condition that the human being involved cannot choose or control. However, this 'existential' luck is here applied to art, but is not special to art. It is a contingent aspect of human life and of every human practice and profession and, according to Thomas Nagel, as 'constitutive' and 'circumstantial' luck it is rather an aspect of *moral luck*.[8] So, I will not deal with this aspect of the matter here.

However, even the more specific point made ("artistic luck is the ordinary case of artistic production, because while making their artworks artists must react to unexpected situations") is not a big deal. Without referring to particular and concrete examples, on the one hand it seems too general a statement to be informative. If all artworks ensued from chance contingencies there would be nothing special about artistic luck: 'artistic luck' would only be a different way of expressing the artistic quality of an item. The very usefulness of the expression would fail. Moreover, on the other hand, every human practice must cope with contingencies, which are more or less unforeseeable. If there were nothing more than this to artistic production, then the special character of artistic production would again become unclear. Hence, we have to look for a more specific notion of 'artistic luck'.

[8] 'Constitutive' luck concerns "the kind of person you are, where this is not just a question of what you deliberately do, but of your inclinations, capacities, and temperament". 'Circumstantial' luck is "luck in one's circumstances - the kind of problems and situations one faces". Both quotations are from Nagel, 1993, p. 60.

3. Artistic Luck Proper

But is there room for a more specific notion of 'artistic luck'? There is, I think, especially if we consider this kind of luck not as a case of 'moral luck', but as another specific case of luck that can of course nevertheless be conceived as analogous to the kinds of moral luck that concern the causes and the effects of our actions: "luck in how one is determined by antecedent circumstances, and luck in the way one's actions and projects turn out" (Nagel, 1993, p. 60).

According to Dana Nelkin, "moral luck occurs when an agent can be correctly treated as an object of moral judgment despite the fact that a significant aspect of what she is assessed for depends on factors beyond her control" (Nelkin, 2013). 'Artistic luck', now conceived in a specific and informative sense, can be analogously defined as a serendipitous achievement of valuable artistic results beyond the artist's own responsibility. Hence, we are faced with artistic luck when the artistic merit (or a substantial part of it) of an artwork does not depend upon the artist's intentions and/or artistic work, but on contingent accidents –specifically, where the artwork is artistically valuable not in spite of, but in virtue of, unexpected, and sometimes unwanted, events.[9] In this sense an artwork can be seen as the result of a lucky twist of fate. Specific to artistic luck is the fact that the unexpected events qualitatively enhance a proper aspect of the aesthetic experience of the art product. And the artist must be able to capture the aesthetic significance of the unexpected and lucky event and integrate it as an ingredient of his/her own artistic inspiration.

In this sense, 'artistic luck' is the result of a specific combination of art and chance that can be articulated in two ways.[10]

a) Art completes chance.

b) Chance completes art.

Ad a). Art completes chance when artists are able to exploit chance and natural contingencies, for example seeing in the accidental forms of stones

[9] This is a specific case of a more general relation between good and bad luck, on which Odo Marquard elaborated (Marquard, 1995). According to Marquard good luck arises often not in spite of, but rather *through* misfortune.

[10] I take this distinction from Janecke, 1995, p. 61.

or in the accidental stains of canvas figures that only need to be manifested or highlighted. According to Leonardo, the capacity to see the possibility for representation in natural forms is very useful for artistic creativity. In the *Treatise on Painting* he famously writes (Da Vinci, 1835, Chapter CLXIII):

> "By looking attentively at old and smeared walls, or stones and veined marble of various colours, you may fancy that you see in them several compositions, landscapes, battles, figures in quick motion, strange countenances, and dresses, with an infinity of other objects. By these confused lines the inventive genius is excited to new exertions."

Leonardo means that artists, in a sense, can make concretely what people, who see figures in clouds, do with their imagination, when they articulate images that have arisen by chance. We assign meaning to accidental shapes of natural things, because of "our capacity to recognize in them things or images we find stored in our minds" (Gombrich, 1984, p. 147; see the whole of Chapter VI 'The Images in The Clouds', pp. 146-60, and also pp. 85-7). Activating this capacity, artists see possible figures or forms in accidental natural objects (stones, wood, canvas, colours, sounds) or events and concretize this possibility while working the medium. They thus shape a contingency or give life to an accidental shape. According to an ancient tradition in pictorial culture art is found, as it were, in the accidental production of nature,[11] and the work of chance is displayed in art. Sometimes, for example in Max Ernst's and in Jean Debuffet's surrealistic art as well as in the visual works of their forerunners (for example John Robert Cozens and Victor Hugo), the artist intentionally leaves the task of reading an item produced by chance to the beholder (see Janecke, 1995, pp. 72-87; Saurisse, 2007, pp. 11-16). This is, I think, a potentiated expression of artistic creativity as expression of the general case of artistic luck.

Ad b). A possibly more interesting case is when chance completes art. Chance completes art when an accident contributes in an unexpected and surprising manner to *make* an artwork. The artist achieves – or the artwork receives – by chance, what she cannot achieve – or it cannot receive – intentionally: in other words, "Fortune favours the bold!".

[11] See Alberti, 1970, p. 66: "Nature herself seems to delight in painting, for in the cut faces of marble she often paints centaurs and faces of bearded and curly headed kings".

Sometimes unpredicted and unwanted accidents that might *seem* to damage or destroy the aesthetic/artistic quality of an artwork or of an art performance may turn out to be lucky contingencies after all. In other words, they may enhance or even produce, instead of reducing or even destroying, the aesthetic and/or the artistic value of an item. In this regard, there is a well-known story told by Pliny (Pliny, 1938, p. 102; cf. Janecke, 1995, p. 62). Protogenes was exasperated because he was unable to depict the foam on the mouth of a dog he had painted. He repainted and erased the scene several times. Then, out of frustration he threw his sponge at the picture. The sponge struck the dog's mouth and in this way achieved by accident what the artist could not accomplish by design.[12]

There are also more modern anecdotes, which concern the discovery of new artistic possibilities by means of accidental and unwanted contingencies, that concern not only the visual arts but performing arts as well. Here is one of them. Dizzy Gillespie's trademark B flat trumpet featured a bell which is angled at 45 degrees above the body of the horn, rather than pointing straight ahead as usually. As Gillespie relates in his autobiography, this was originally the result of an accident. Somebody accidentally fell on the trumpet during a concert in Manhattan on January 6, 1953 (Maggin, 2006, p. 253). This bending changed the tone of the instrument, but Gillespie liked the new sound produced by the broken trumpet: thanks to the new form of the horn, the sound went up into the air rather than directly against the customers in the club; moreover, the bent trumpet made reading the sheet music easier for the player (Shipton, 2001, p. 258). So, although Dizzy had the trumpet repaired the next day, he commissioned the construction of a trumpet with an upturned bell and from that time on he played the 'bent' horn. An unwanted accident, which would normally have had bad consequences, turned out to be the opportunity for the unexpected discovery of new artistic and aesthetic possibilities.

[12] The story of Protogene's sponge is echoed in Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting* (Da Vinci, 1835, Chapter CCCXLIX): "By throwing a sponge impregnated with various colours against a wall, it leaves some spots upon it, which may appear like a landscape. It is true also, that a variety of compositions may be seen in such spots, according to the disposition of mind with which they are considered; such as heads of men, various animals, battles, rocky scenes, seas, clouds, woods, and the like. It may be compared to the sound of bells, which may seem to say whatever we choose to imagine".

Interestingly, probably the most striking of these cases depends once again on a kind of bending. (It is suggestive, by the way, that the image of 'deviation' [*clinamen*: swerve], was used from the time of Epicurus and Democritus as a symbol of haphazardness). I am referring of course to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, that owes its fame to an unwanted, unpredicted accidental contingency: the sinking of the sandy ground on which it was built, thereby causing its famous tilt.[13] There are other famous leaning towers and some of them, like the Capital Gate Building in Abu Dhabi, tilt to an even greater degree. However, leaving aside further aesthetic considerations, the Capital Gate tower was deliberately engineered to incline: in other words its tilt is not the result of an unexpected, uncontrolled and surprising accident. Conversely, the special thing about the Leaning Tower of Pisa is that a large part of its aesthetic and artistic value depends not only on human design and invention, but on the particular way in which a product of human design and invention is challenged by a contingent unexpected natural event, that exposes it to the risk of destruction, without actually destroying it (its destruction would obviously make the realization of artistic luck impossible). In this sense a relevant part of the aesthetic and artistic value (as well as of the touristic appeal!) of this human artistic product does not depend upon the artists' merits, but on a contingent emergence, arising by chance. The artists' merit[14] is to see the creative potential of the destructive event, taking it as a lucky chance, i.e. as an affordance for the stimulation of ingenuity.

Hence, one may even say that, when chance completes art, natural and artistic forms of beauty are both aesthetic properties of the item considered. The Leaning Tower of Pisa is a special case of "nature that gives the rule to art" (Kant, 1997, § 46), because its aesthetic qualities are not only the product of artistic genius (understood, in a loosely Kantian sense, as at once intentional and spontaneous), but of the interaction between artistic

[13] Hagberg (1995, p. 78-9) considers the Leaning Tower of Pisa as a case of *aesthetic* luck. The validity and the forcefulness of the notion of "aesthetic luck" is a difficult issue, and I will not discuss it here. However, I prefer to consider the case of the Leaning Tower as a case of artistic, rather than aesthetic luck, because here a chance accident is responsible for the value of an artistic item.

[14] This holds even in cases when it is more appropriate to speak of a collective author, like in the case of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

genius and natural forces. This case shows strikingly that artistic production (as with any other human activity) is not detached from nature and from natural, accidental events and forces, but must cope with them. It can integrate the menace of contingency and the risk of failure into its success. The exposure to risk is part of its value and the tilt of the Tower shows this exemplarily.

Moreover, what is unlucky for the artist can turn out to be lucky for the artwork. It is remarkable that, whereas initially attempts were made to rectify the tilt of the Tower, more recent restoration campaigns have not tried to do so completely. While the ancient builders saw the accident only as a bad contingency, with the passing of time the accident was perceived as an 'artistically lucky' property of the Tower. The aim of modern restorations has been to avert the destruction of the Tower by reducing, but not eliminating, its tilt, which, produced by an accidental cause, was (recognized as) the specific contingency that assigns the Tower its qualitatively special artistic value.[15]

So, to conclude this section, we can speak of 'artistic luck', when the makers and beholders are lucky because (potentially bad) accidents turn out to be the sources of highly valuable artistic achievements and favour, rather than impede, the production of art. The obstacles posed by accidental (particularly unwanted and unfortunate) events can bring out radical artistic innovations, that were previously unforeseeable.

4. 'Intentional' Artistic Luck and Improvisation

There is another interesting case. Since human beings may generally try to be lucky, by putting themselves in the right situation to be so (if you don't buy a lottery ticket, you can't win the lottery, as the title of the English tv programme, 'The National Lottery: In It to Win It' suggests), there are cases of sought for and intentionally produced 'artistic luck'. Artists are aware of the possibilities offered by accidental unexpected events. They

[15] Something similar might perhaps be said of artworks (buildings, statues, paintings, etc.) marked by passing time and historical vicissitudes. However, the interesting thing here is not only the fact that the outcomes of natural events on a human artistic product may be aesthetically appreciated, but also how the producers of the artefact react to the effects of natural events while they are still producing it.

themselves therefore sometimes produce conditions of uncontrollability and deliberately expose themselves to artistically and even existentially risky situations, in order to enhance the possibility of chance and surprise and to respond more inventively to the affordances of the medium. If they decide to do this they customarily prepare themselves to tackle properly the risks they will be exposed to. Paraphrasing saxophonist Lee Konitz we can say that artists prepare themselves to be unprepared.[16] Sometimes they break their habits, deliberately modifying their usual tools and techniques so that they cannot work in an habitual controlled way, doing so precisely in order to achieve what their usual tools and techniques should help them to achieve: the realization of a work of art or of an artistic performance.[17] In other words: artists sometimes create the conditions for artistic luck, putting themselves in a situation in which their improvisational attitude is enhanced.

This intentionally self-imposed 'improvisational' method of art production can be important in every art practice, because, as we saw earlier, it enhances a general condition of artistic production: the capability of reacting in a valuable way to unexpected, contingent affordances of the media. However this artistic self-imposition is particularly important in the performing arts. Performing arts have a constitutively contingent component, due to their temporal articulation. Not only may accidents of several kinds happen during a performance, but every performance of the same work is different from every other, to different degrees and for different reasons, and, each time, performers are in principle exposed to situational (emotional, ambient, meteorological...) factors that they cannot completely control and to which they have to respond properly 'on the spot'.

In this regard, then, the case of improvised music, dance or theatre is particularly telling. In artistic improvisation performers continuously respond to unforeseeable contingent emergences. And this is what the audience experiences: the response to an unforeseeable contingent emergence

[16] Cf. Lee Konitz (quoted in Hamilton, 2007, p. 4): "That's my way of preparation – not to be prepared. And that takes a lot of preparation!".

[17] "For example, the jazz trumpeter Don Cherry reportedly changed his mouthpiece size every once in a while in order to remain alert in the creative improvisatory situation." (Huovinen, 2011, pp. 70-1).

(lucky or not) that becomes another contingent emergence to which another response will be given that, again, will become another emergence, in a process in which the realization of norms, habits, techniques is achieved thanks to contingent emergences in which the application of a general procedure requires the reconsideration of the procedure, and maybe its transformation or substitution, so that even the criteria of the aesthetic judgement of the produced performance are exposed to unexpected and unpredicted contingencies. Moreover, the 'procedure' is not applied against the contingencies, but through them. The fact is that, what the improviser does in moment x can be judged as lucky or not by the other performers only with reference to the past and future events through which the performance unfolds. To be lucky the event must not only solve, in an unexpected way, say, a technical/stylistic/aesthetic problem in the performance, but also have 'good' consequences. In other words, the right moment is the right moment (*kairòs*) only if it is taken as right.[18]

Although even in solitary improvisation the artist 'plays with chance', it is particularly evident in the case of *interactive* improvisation. Here the improvisers continuously challenge their partners' ability to react to more or less uncontrolled, unexpected and perhaps unwanted events. In the great majority of cases, improvisers share aims, cultural references, and aesthetic 'programs'. Yet, they cannot predict exactly what the others will do at a given precise moment and how others will evaluate what they are doing.[19] Hence they have to be prepared for unexpected events and for an unexpected evaluation of those events, that is, they should be able to take, for the sake of the success of the performance, unexpected accidents as lucky chances for the ongoing improvising process (and not as mistakes[20]). In artistic improvisation the intentional exposure to the 'alea' of chance, to unexpected accidents that are out of one's control, is at work, together with the ability to 'control the lack of control'. A dialectic between intentions (aims) and openness to the 'events', between setting in motion procedures and improvising sets of principles of judgments for unexpected outcomes, is at work here. In this sense, we may say, improvisation reflexively presents the status of artworks as lucky achievements (and, by

[18] I have elaborated on this in Bertinetto 2014a and 2014b.

[19] This is precisely analysed with reference to dance improvisation in Lampert, 2003.

[20] Cf. Bertinetto 2014c.

the way, can therefore be well understood as a symbol of practical life: cf. Bertinetto, 2012, p. 134).

5. The Intentional Production of Chance in Avant-Garde Aleatoric Art — Chance vs Art?

As in the case of moral luck, artistic luck also faces us with a kind of sceptical problem that can be formulated in these terms: if artists are not responsible for the artistic value of their artworks, how is art possible? In fact we praise the original artwork more than its replica because the original item is the result of the artist's intentional performance. As argued by Ronald Dworkin, in art the "performance value" does not coincide with the "product value". Both are part of the value of an artwork; but they are separate. Indeed, "there is no product value left when a great painting has been destroyed, but the fact of its creation remains and retains its full performance value." (Dworkin, 2011, p. 197; see p. 198 and 241 ff.) So, products of chance accidents have no performance value, even though they may have product value (which may be an aesthetic value, not an artistic one).[21] That is why we praise the original, not only for its perceptual appearance, but also because the artist made it. For this reason, Monroe Beardsley's claim that the value of artworks is "independent of the manner of production, even of whether the work was produced by an animal or by a computer or by a volcano or by a falling slop-bucket" (Beardsley, 1965, p. 301) seems to be misguided. If what we thought was a splendid example of abstract art turns out to be the accidental result of slop-buckets or whatever, we consider and value the item differently: perhaps as the result of a very improbable coincidence with very surprising aesthetic effects, but not as an artistic achievement. If no artist is in any way responsible for the production of the item as artwork, then it seems that the lucky achievement is no longer an artistic one.

In order to discuss this problem, we may consider the most striking case: aleatoric Avant-garde art from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. Here the contribution of chance to art is not only recognized, but allowed, desired, intentionally sought. In different ways, and

[21] I thank Robin Celikates for drawing my attention to Dworkin's argument.

with different media and forms of artistic expression (visual arts, *happening*, performance art, sound art, etc.) artists like John Cage, Allan Kaprov, Hans Arp, Tristan Tzara, Michel Duchamp, Man Ray, and Jackson Pollock, introduced chance into art, elaborating an out-and-out *aesthetics of chance.* I will not articulate here the details of the different aesthetic projects of those and other similar artistic movements (they are well explained in Janecke, 1995; C. Hilmes and Mathy, 1994; Gendolla and Kamphusmann, 1999; Saurisse, 2007). Instead, I will limit myself to making two philosophically interesting points about 'aleatoric art'[22] and the 'aesthetics of chance'.

1. While affirming the aesthetic potential of chance, 'aleatoric art' performs a *reflection* on art. Aleatoric art, which makes an intentional use of chance, can be understood as a way of making *reflexively* explicit the contribution of chance to art. Its manifest attempt to free artistic achievements from intentionality and control shows that artistic creativity does not consist exclusively in cognitive problem solving and that the generation of surprise and admiration by unexpected contingencies is an important part both of the artist's work and of the beholder's enjoyment.

2. In allowing chance to enter the process of making art, 'aleatoric art' *challenges* (at least in some radical cases) our conception of art. Artists (but why should they be so called after all?) may refuse to respond to chance, and may not wait for artistic luck. They may simply not care for what a random process will produce in a medium. They may think, perhaps, that any kind of manipulation or even any kind of selection would be an imposition that would limit the freedom of the experience and the possibility of proper artistic luck. However, when there is no manipulation or selection made by the artist, but only the results of a random and / or accidental production, it is difficult to understand why we should call it art. Sure enough, as we have seen, an element of chance, of uncontrollability, is at work in art production; but complete uncontrollability seems to preclude art.

[22] I use this label in a loose sense, meaning all Avant-garde artistic movements and projects that understood and programmatically adopted chance as a kind of artistic means.

Certainly, the result of this extreme form of artistic luck –so extreme that the adjective 'artistic' seems to be out of place here– may be beautiful, or aesthetically valuable. But it seems paradoxical to call it art. If no real contribution on the artist's part is at work, then it seems to be an example of natural beauty, rather than of art. If no intentional human agent is responsible for the production of an object, then it may be aesthetically valuable, but it is hardly an artwork. So, how can we solve what may be called the 'paradox of aleatoric art'? Some simple observations may show that this challenge is not so hard as it may seem.

a) Most of the cases of aleatoric art are not completely subject to chance. Rather, they are like the playing of a child with a beverage can (cf. Janecke, 1995, pp. 18-9). He kicks the can without knowing exactly where it will move. But having kicked the metal container he follows it. By kicking the can again and again, he sets a course, bringing the can to the door of his home, i.e. where he wanted to bring it. In this case, small-scale chance events are still controlled by a general overarching plan. In Dworkin's terms we still have "performance value" besides "product value".

In this regard we may consider as paradigmatic the work of Jackson Pollock: the process of *dripping* involves a high degree of chance in the forms and in the combination of the lines of colours (cf. Saurisse, 2007, pp. 31-36; Janecke, 1995, pp. 155-170). However, although the painter, while measuring up against the media he is using, loses the contact with the canvas and cannot control the precise design of his paintings, the overall aesthetic outcome of his actions is guided by the artist's intentional project which, moreover, involves the idea of the action of painting as a performative achievement. So whereas on the one hand a lot of the specific qualities of the pictorial results of each painting performance are unforeseeable, uncontrollable, and accidental, on the other, however, the whole artistic achievement includes the idea of painting as a performance that intentionally involves a kind of 'improvisation':[23] hence, the chance outcomes are intended by the artist as part of his general artistic project. The existence of Pollock's paintings is not as subject to chance as are some

[23] However, I am inclined to underline the differences, rather than the similarities, between Pollock's paintings and improvisations properly so called, i.e. in performing arts. See Bertinetto 2014d.

of their specific qualities (see Janecke, 1995, p. 166). Like in much 'aleatoric art', the details of the realisations of the artworks are accidental, but the development of the general line of the overall project is intentionally established by the artist.

b) Most examples of 'aleatoric art' do not elicit situations of artistic luck like those discussed above in § 3 and § 4. They are not cases of artistic luck whether chance is deliberately used as a means for art (b1) (like in the example of Pollock) or it is used for replacing art (b2) (like in certain forms of Happenings).

b1) The first case includes playing with chance as well as using chaotic chance and coincidence as artistic means (see Janecke, 1995, 97-179), i.e. as means for producing art. Here *chance* is explicitly used as an *ingredient of art.* It is not simply something that influences, for good or for bad, the process of art production and the results thereof, independently of the artist's intentions and control; it is rather used itself as a kind of artistic medium. The artist may have an idea (more or less loose) in mind of what to do, and use accidents and contingencies as a means for realizing this idea. So this is not a case of artistic luck proper, which occurs when the chance event is not controlled by the artist, who is thus taken by surprise. It is rather a sophisticated case of 'intentional artistic luck', if the artistic project somehow succeeds. But, if the project can succeed, or fail, then it must be judged in relation to some, maybe very general, artistic aims and criteria. Therefore, although much of the artistic quality of the artwork may be accidental, not everything in the artwork can be completely up to chance. Even when the chance events seem not to be controlled and directed by a general plan it is difficult to achieve complete arbitrariness: the very idea of undertaking a chance process in a medium and of presenting the results of this process (maybe providing them with a title, perhaps one like "Untitled. Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance" or "4' 33"[24]), limits the haphazardness, introducing the accident into a cultural context that guides our interpretation of the event or of

[24] The first is a well-known artwork by Hans Arp (1916/17); the second is John Cage's 'silent piece', his most famous and philosophically influential work. In Bertinetto, 2012b, pp. 34-43, and 2012c I defend the thesis, previously argued by Stephen Davies (Davies, 1997) that Cage's piece, which was performed for the first time in 1952, is not a musical

the object produced. The single results of the artistic performance can be decided by a "coup de des", or by kicking a can, but somebody (the artist) must throw the dice and present it to an audience. Beginning a chance-filled process and presenting it, or its outcomes, to a public are the effects of choice and selection on the artist's part, and this is after all a kind of control of chance, and not a case of luck. And even if a certain specific outcome of the chance process triggered by the artist is not intended by the artist, the artist still aims at producing, with the help of chance, some effects that can be evaluated, while taking into consideration the particular chance way in which they have been produced. So, those performances and artefacts still possess "performing value".

b2) Yet, as a more complicated, though improbable, case, the idea that chance replaces art could be entertained, at least hypothetically. Let's imagine that what is achieved by opening the door to haphazardness, and whether what is achieved is an *art*work or at least can be perceived as such, were not very clear or did not matter at all. Moreover, let's suppose that nobody declares this chance event to be art and no cultural context lets us entertain the possibility that it is art or may be regarded as such. In this case there would be no means of evaluating or need to evaluate those accidental events, whatever they consist in, as artistic productions. This would throw the very distinction between success and failure and also the distinction between a lucky and an unlucky artistic achievement into crisis. In this case there would no longer be a positive contribution to art production by means of unlucky and unexpected (or intentionally produced) accidents. There would be neither completion of chance by art, nor completion of art by chance. There would not be "performing value". To put it in a nutshell, experimenting with contingencies and chance, and observing the results, without any artistic purpose, can of course be considered a fun pastime or a game and even a respectable scientific enterprise, but not art.

work, because the sounds heard are only environmental sounds for which neither the composer nor the performer is responsible. However, this does not mean that the piece is not an artwork. It certainly is a great artwork that could be considered a piece of performance art or a work of a sound art different from music. The contribution of chance to the sounds listened to by the audience is intended by the artist as part of the meaning of the work, the structure of which is not a matter of chance, but highly conceptually organized.

And although one could speculate about the idea that such non artistic chance events could be aesthetically experienced, artistic luck no longer matters here. Maybe this experience could be significantly conceived as a kind of *aesthetic*, rather than as *artistic* luck. However, this is a different issue which I leave for another occasion.

6. Conclusion

So I can now draw a general conclusion about the notion of artistic luck and the relation between art and chance. In order to do this I will refer to Adorno, who is right in thinking the following (Adorno, 1997, pp. 227 ff.; see Janecke, 1995, p. 49):

On the one hand, if we eradicate chance and luck, then everything seems to obey necessary laws and the artist's freedom, which seems to be a necessary condition of art, would appear to be problematic. The non-identical, unexpected, contingently emergent core of art would disappear. In this sense I defended the view that the process of art production is not completely controlled by the artist: therefore the production of an artwork is (at least potentially) surprising and unexpected for the producer as well. The cases of proper artistic luck discussed in §§ 3 and 4 highlight this specific feature of art.

On the other hand, Adorno also thinks that chance cannot do the whole work in art. Artists determine the possibilities, but also the limits of chance, and by the way this is also why artistic luck proper is possible. Otherwise, Dworkin's "performing value" would be missing and art would be reduced to mere arbitrariness: one could not differentiate it anymore from the play of natural forces. To cut a long story short: complete haphazardness rules out art and with it the possibility of artistic luck.

To sum up, both absolute calculation and absolute chance preclude art and artistic luck too. The possibility of art depends upon the possibility of judging the achievement as successful or as failed as art. If we lack this possibility, if we cannot find criteria for judgment (or criteria for having the experience in the proper way), then artworks and the aesthetic experience of them could originate only by chance. This, however, would not be an experience of art. Though certainly not a case of artistic luck, one may

speculate that this aesthetic experience is a case of *aesthetic* luck. Yet, as I said previously, this is a topic for another paper.[25]

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