

Must There Be a Standard of Moral Goodness Apart from God?

WES MORRISTON
*Department of Philosophy
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado*

If the Moral Law were independent of God's will, then he, no less than we, would be under an obligation to obey it. Believing that such a result would be incompatible with divine sovereignty, some theists look with favor on the view that God creates whatever moral laws there are by issuing commands. But as soon as we ask *why* God commands this rather than that, divine command theorists face a familiar dilemma. Either God has morally good reasons for his commands – reasons not created by divine fiat, or he does not have such reasons. If he does, then there are independent truths about what it would be good for God to command, and his sovereignty is still compromised. But if he does not have such reasons, then his commands are, from the moral point of view at least, completely arbitrary, and we have no obligation to obey them.

In response to this familiar line of attack, advocates of the divine command theory need to do one of two things. Either bite the bullet, admitting that God's commands are not backed by any further moral reasons, while insisting that we nevertheless have an obligation to obey them, or else try to show that the moral values that rationalize God's commands are not independent of God and do not compromise his sovereignty. It is this latter approach that I want to take a close look at here.

Here is a fairly typical statement of the view I want to consider, taken from an article by William Lane Craig.

... God's moral nature is expressed in relation to us in the form of divine commands which constitute our moral duties or obligations. Far from being arbitrary, these commands flow necessarily from His moral nature.¹

¹ From a paper delivered at the 1996 meeting of the Christian Theological Research Fellowship in New Orleans. This paper can be found at http://home.apu.edu/~CTRF/papers/1996_papers/craig.html and at <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/docs/meta-eth.html>

As I understand it, the proposal goes something like this. God is not under the moral law – he is the supreme source of all moral requirements, and moral obligation is constituted entirely by God's commands. These commands are not arbitrary, however, because they are rooted – not in some reality independent of God – but in his own perfect moral nature.

It might seem that this merely puts off the problem of divine sovereignty. Must there not be some independent standard of moral goodness by which God's nature is correctly judged to be good? Craig's answer is that God's moral nature is itself the ultimate standard of moral goodness.

God's moral nature is what Plato called the "Good." He is the locus and source of moral value. He is by nature loving, generous, just, faithful, kind, and so forth.²

If we ask what makes it so that love, generosity, justice, faithfulness, and kindness are good, Craig's answer would appear to be that these qualities are good because they are united in God's nature. There is no standard of goodness apart from God. God's moral nature – his character, as we might say – plays the role of the "Good" in Plato's *Republic*. It, and nothing else, is the true Ultimate.

In his paper, "Some Suggestions for Divine Command Theorists," William P. Alston develops a somewhat similar suggestion about the relation between God's commands and God's goodness – recommending it to divine command theorists as a possible solution to the arbitrariness problem.³

So far from being arbitrary, God's commands are an expression of his perfect goodness. Since He is perfectly good by nature, it is impossible that God should command us to act in ways that are not for the best.⁴

And in response to the objection that this presupposes a standard of goodness independent of God, Alston writes:

... we can think of God Himself, the individual being, as the supreme standard of goodness. . . Goodness supervenes on every feature of God, not because some general principles are true but just because they are features of God.⁵

² Ibid.

³ William P. Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989), 253-73. Page references are to this volume. Reprinted from Michael D. Beatty, ed., *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 303-26. It should be noted that Alston does not himself endorse a divine command theory of morality. Rather, he defends this view as the best approach for someone who is so committed.

⁴ Ibid., 266.

⁵ Ibid., 268-9.

There is one significant difference between Alston's formulation of this solution and Craig's. In Craig's formulation, "God's moral nature" is said to be the ultimate standard of moral goodness. In Alston's, it is God himself who is so identified.

The importance of the distinction becomes apparent when we consider what it is for God (or anyone) to have a nature. One fairly standard account is this. A person's nature is that set of properties which she possesses in every possible world in which she exists. To say that God is "by nature loving, generous, just, faithful, kind" is to say that he possesses these properties in every world in which he exists. In the special case of God, that is generally thought to be every possible world.

If, then, we identify the ultimate standard of moral goodness (not moral obligation) with God's moral nature, it seems that we are identifying it with a set of *properties* – and it is these properties, not God or God's existence, that are doing the real work in our theory of value. It is of course wonderful that there is a supreme being who possesses all these wonderful properties. But it is hard to see why they would have been any less wonderful or any less suited to the task of grounding moral value if there had never been a being who possessed all of them.

We could put the problem in the form of a *Euthyphro*-like dilemma. Is God good because he has these properties? Or are they good because God has them? If we take the former view, then *God* is not the ultimate standard of goodness. His properties are. Even if, *per impossible*, God did not exist, there would still be the (same) standard of goodness – viz., that complex of properties which together constitute God's moral nature. Anything having that set of properties would be morally good – whether or not God existed.⁶

This is too close for comfort to the result that the divine command theory was supposed to help us avoid. God may command us not to kill, steal, covet, and so on, because God is good. But God is good only because he satisfies requirements of goodness that do not depend on the existence, much less on the will, of God. He is good only because he has the properties on which goodness supervenes.

I mention one solution to this problem only to put it to one side. Those who accept the doctrine of divine simplicity can pass unscathed between the horns of this dilemma. If God is God's nature, the problem disappears. Since God's nature is not something over and above God, there can be no

⁶ I here assume a Platonist view of properties, according to which the properties that make up God's nature would *exist* even if they were not *instantiated*. Many theists would, of course, insist that the complex of properties making up God's nature is *necessarily* instantiated. They may be right, but I do not think this affects the view that I am defending – viz., that it is the properties themselves – rather than their instances, if any – that constitute the ultimate standard of moral goodness.

question of its providing a standard of moral goodness apart from God.⁷ But for the rest of us – those of us who cannot see how God could be his nature or how his nature could be simple – things are not so easy. We must choose between the horns of our Euthyphro-like dilemma and make the best of it.

This brings us back to Alston's suggestion. It tries to make the best of the second horn of our dilemma, insisting that God's good-making characteristics are good only because they are characteristics of God. "Goodness," Alston says, "supervenes on every feature of God, not because some general principles are true but just because they are features of God."

Alston defends this idea by suggesting that there are two kinds of predicates – "Platonic" predicates and "particularistic" ones. The former are properly analyzed in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for possessing a certain property, the latter in terms of similarity to an individual paradigm. As an example of a Platonic predicate, consider the property of being a triangle. Classifying something as a triangle isn't a matter of comparing it with any other triangle. It is simply a matter of determining whether it has all the characteristics something must have in order to be a triangle. If it is a closed, three-sided, three-angled, plane figure, then it is a triangle. If not, not. As a helpful example of a particularistic predicate, Alston suggests that we consider the property of being a meter in length. Judging that some object is a meter long is (we are to suppose) a matter of saying that it has the same length as the standard meter bar kept in Paris.⁸ In an analogous way, we can say that a person is morally good to the degree that she is like God. That would make God supremely good (what could be more like God than God himself?), but his goodness would not depend on his satisfying any standard other than God himself. In this way, Alston thinks, the sovereignty intuition that divine command theorists want to preserve can be satisfied.

Alston does not, of course, mean to suggest that being good is simply a matter of being, to some degree and in some respect or other, "like God." A wicked ruler is like God in that he is a ruler, but he is not morally good because he is unlike God with respect to his desires and choices. Just as a stick must be equal to the standard meter bar *in length* in order to be a meter long, so a person must be like God *in moral character* in order to be morally good.

Alston's theory thus tries to walk a very narrow line between saying that the ultimate standard of moral goodness is God's moral nature (understood

⁷ Eleanore Stump and Norman Kretzmann make this point in their essay, "Absolute Simplicity," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (October 1985), 392-420.

⁸ Actually, things quite are a bit more complicated than that. A "meter" was originally said to be 1/10,000,000 of the quadrant of the Earth's circumference running from the North Pole through Paris to the equator. Later on, it was identified with the distance between two lines on a standard bar of 90 percent platinum and 10 percent iridium. On the most recent definition, a meter is the distance traveled by light in a vacuum in 1/299,792,458 of a second.

as a set of Platonic properties), and saying that the ultimate standard of goodness is God *qua* bare particular. It is God *qua* loving and generous and just and faithful, who is said to be the ultimate standard of moral goodness.

But why does it have to be *God* who plays this role? Why should moral goodness supervene on *God's* character? What can it mean to say that love is good "just because" *God* is maximally loving? Why should it make any difference if someone else were maximally loving instead?

Alston thinks such objections beg the question against the "particularist" view he is defending.

... this objection amounts to no more than an expression of Platonist predilections. One may as well ask: "How can it be an answer to the question 'Why is this table a meter long?' to cite its coincidence with the standard meter stick?" There just are some properties that work that way.⁹

The standard meter bar is an unfortunate example. It is completely arbitrary which stick of a certain length we use as our standard for "being a meter long." And whichever stick we choose, that stick is replaceable. But Alston does not want to say that God is replaceable, or that it is similarly arbitrary whether God is deemed to be the ultimate standard of moral goodness. In this respect, he says, the case of God is different from that of the standard meter bar.

To be sure, it is arbitrary what particular stick was chosen to serve as the standard, while I am not thinking that it is arbitrary whether God or someone else is "chosen" as the supreme standard of goodness. That is a way in which the analogy is not perfect. The example was used because of the respect in which there is an analogy, viz., the role of the individual standard in truth conditions for applications of the term.¹⁰

There are two claims here: (i) that God and the standard meter bar play similar roles in the truth conditions for the application of the predicates in question; and (ii) that the case of God is different from that of the standard meter in that it is not arbitrary whether God is our standard of moral goodness. Let's take the second claim first.

Why isn't it arbitrary whether God (or someone else) is the standard of moral goodness? Why is the case of God different in this respect? The obvious answer would be to say that whereas there are lots of sticks of the same length to choose from, there are no other persons with the same perfect moral character to choose from. In this respect, God is absolutely unique. There is one and only one person who is *maximally* loving, kind, just, and so on, and God is that person.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 270-71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 269 n15.

But if we give this as our reason for thinking that God is the ultimate standard of moral goodness, we might as well revert to Platonism, and simply say that maximal love and justice are themselves the ultimate standard. In which case, we are back to saying that some of the properties that make up God's nature – not God himself – constitute the true standard of moral goodness, and the worry about God's sovereignty returns with full force.

Alston thinks that such worries merely express Platonic predilections. If we can ask, "Why is God the ultimate standard?" we can just as well ask "Why are love and justice the ultimate standard? Why should goodness supervene on those properties?"

I would invite one who finds it arbitrary to invoke God as the supreme standard of goodness to explain why this is more arbitrary than the invocation of a supreme general principle.¹¹

Alston's point here is that explanation must come to an end somewhere. Whatever our ultimate standard is – whether it is an individual paradigm or a general principle of the sort favored by Platonists – that is as far as we can go. If Alston cannot say what makes goodness supervene on *God's* characteristics, neither can the Platonist say what makes it supervene on a bunch of properties. In either case, it just does supervene, and that is all there is to say.

But even if this is right, we can still ask which stopping point is preferable. If we have to stop somewhere, why not stop with the special combination of love and justice that make up God's moral character? Why go further and insist that goodness supervenes on these characteristics only because they are characteristics of the particular individual who is God? From the point of view of moral theory, it is hard to see any real advantage in doing this; it complicates things considerably, and the theological window-dressing seems quite superfluous.

It has been suggested to me that the properties that make up God's moral character might need to be instantiated in order to have "moral force."¹² But I do not see why the instantiation of the property of (say) being compassionate, is required (or even helps) to give compassion the force of a moral ideal. I concede that if the moral force of an ideal is thought to entail that anyone who considers and understands it has at least some inclination to pursue it, then there is a puzzle about the moral force of the property of being compassionate. But on this understanding of moral force, the God-centered account has no real advantage over a purely Platonist account of moral goodness. It is true that a person might say, without fear of self-con-

¹¹ Ibid., 271.

¹² By a referee for *Philosophia Christi*.

tradition, "I understand the property of being compassionate, but I have not the slightest desire to be compassionate." But it is equally true that a person might say, without fear of self-contradiction, "The creator of the universe is compassionate, but I have not the slightest desire to be compassionate." If the fact that some people don't care about morality were sufficient to refute the Platonist account of moral goodness, then it would be sufficient to refute any theory of moral goodness that does not simply *analyze* it in terms of the desires and inclinations of persons.

From the point of view of theology, of course, Alston's particularist account of moral goodness may seem to protect the sovereignty of God. However, I am inclined to think that this advantage is largely illusory, and that Alston's theory has little to offer those who wish to preserve a strong sense of divine sovereignty. I will return to this point in a moment.

What of Alston's other claim about the meter bar analogy? Does it help us understand "the role of the individual standard in truth conditions" for ascriptions of moral goodness to persons? Let's begin by asking what role the standard meter bar plays in the truth conditions for ascriptions of the property, "being a meter long."

If we take Kripke's view of the case, as I am inclined to do, then the particular stick we use as our "standard meter bar" is used only to "fix the reference" of the word, "meter," to a particular length. Other meter long sticks are so – not merely because they are as long as this stick – but because they have this particular length – the length that this stick contingently possesses. Even if the standard meter bar should change its length, or should disappear entirely – something that could certainly happen – it would have served its purpose in fixing the reference of the word "meter." Other sticks that are a meter in length would still be a meter in length.

The particular meter bar we have chosen to fix the reference of the term "meter" does not, then, figure in the analysis of what it is to *be* a meter long. Consequently, it does not figure in the *truth conditions* for statements about what is and isn't a meter long. It does, of course, provide a *criterion* that we can use to determine whether the truth conditions are satisfied. But that is not the same thing.

If the relation between God and the property of being morally good were like the case of the standard meter bar and the property of being a meter long in this respect, the proper conclusion would hardly be the one suggested by Alston. God might (for those who believe in him and who fix the reference of the term "good" that way) provide a criterion for ascriptions of moral goodness. But he would not figure in the *truth conditions* of such ascriptions. Some of his properties – lovingkindness, justice, and so on – might well belong to the proper account of moral goodness. But moral goodness would supervene on those properties directly, and not merely because they are properties of God.

If this were the right way to look at things, then the true standard of moral goodness would not be God or any other particular morally good person. It would instead be the moral character of a particular person, where this is understood as a set of properties whose validity as the standard of moral goodness would survive the disappearance of the person who has them. And this would land us, once again, with the very conclusion divine command theorists hoped to avoid. The truth conditions for ascriptions of moral goodness would not depend on the existence, much less on the will, of God. God would be subject to them, just as we are.¹³

It may be thought that this only shows that being a meter long is not a good example of a particularistic property of the sort of Alston needs to make his case. And perhaps it is not too difficult to think of an example in which the individual paradigm does enter into the truth conditions for ascriptions of a property. After all, for any individual you like, there are any number relational properties that consist in "being like that individual" in some respect or other. For example, someone who acts and thinks like Reagan or like Clinton might be said to be "Reaganesque" or "Clintonesque." It might be thought that Reagan and Clinton would figure prominently in the truth conditions for the ascription of these predicates.

I am not at all sure about this. Fictional characters may function as paradigms of a personal style just as well as non-fictional ones. For example, a pattern of behavior is quixotic if it relevantly resembles that of Don Quixote, but Don Quixote doesn't figure in the truth conditions for the statement that someone is engaged in a quixotic pattern of behavior. Similarly, I wonder whether the actual existence of Reagan or Clinton contributes anything to the *truth conditions* for ascriptions of the predicates, "Reaganesque" and "Clintonesque." I am not at all sure that they illustrate the way predications of moral goodness are supposed to work on Alston's theory.

In any case, the real question is whether the property picked out by the predicate, "*morally good*," involves God in an essential way. It is certainly true that if someone were morally good enough, then a believer might want to describe him as, in that respect and to some degree, "God-like." But why should we think that God enters into the truth conditions of the proposition that someone is morally good?

How we answer this question depends to a large degree on our intuitions about counterfactuals like the following ones:

1. If God did not exist, no one could be morally good or bad.
2. If God were not loving and just, then no one could be morally good or bad.

¹³ I do not mean to imply that God could fail to "live up to" the standard of moral goodness. The properties on which moral goodness supervenes may well be ones that God necessarily possess. What I am suggesting is only that God is good because he has these properties, and not the other way around. In that sense, he "depends" on these properties for his goodness.

Both conditionals seem false to me, but Alston's proposal entails that they are true.

It may be objected that these counterfactuals are true because their antecedents are necessarily false. Since God has necessary existence, his non-existence is metaphysically impossible. And since God is essentially loving and just, there is no possible world in which he lacks these properties.

I am not impressed by this objection. It is true that on the standard possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals, all counterfactuals with impossible antecedents are necessarily true. But on that analysis, they are only trivially true, since the truth value of the consequent makes no difference to truth value of the conditional as a whole. Thus, the following propositions come out true for exactly the same reason that 1 and 2 do.

3. If God did not exist, a person could still be morally good or bad.
4. If God were not loving and just, then a person could still be morally good or bad.

But surely, 3 and 4 are incompatible with Alston's proposal. Anyone who thinks that God and God's moral nature enter into the truth conditions of ascriptions of moral goodness must hold that 3 and 4 are false and that 1 and 2 are *non-trivially* true, something that is not provided for by the usual possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals.

I am not sure how to do a semantics for counterfactuals that will satisfy all of our intuitions, but it does seem to me to be extremely implausible to say that 1 – 4 are all true. Moreover, it is quite easy to think of conditionals with impossible antecedents that are non-trivially true or false. Consider, for example, the following pair of propositions.

5. If God had not existed, the world would not have been created by God.
6. If God had not existed, the world would have been created by God. Surely 6 is necessarily false, whereas 5 is both significant and true, despite the fact that both 5 and 6 have (we are supposing) a metaphysically impossible antecedent.

For these reasons, I see no merit in the objection that 1 and 2 are true because their antecedents are impossible. Since the proposed analysis of moral goodness puts God and God's moral nature into the *truth conditions* of ascriptions of moral goodness, it requires that 1 and 2 be non-trivially true. And since I find 1 and 2 to be quite counter-intuitive, I must disagree with the proposed analysis. But intuitions vary, and I would not expect everyone to agree with me about this.¹⁴

¹⁴ I have been influenced in my thinking here by Linda Zagzebski's essay, "What if the Impossible Had Been Actual?" The essay can be found in Michael D. Beatty, ed., *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 165-83.

What if I am right, though? What if we take a broadly Platonist view of moral value, asserting that goodness supervenes directly on properties like lovingkindness and justice, and that these properties themselves constitute an eternal standard of goodness apart from God? Does that leave us with a terrible unsolved problem about divine sovereignty?

The first thing to see is that taking such a view in no way challenges God's moral authority. Who could be better placed to tell us what we ought morally to do than an omniscient being who knows both the standards of moral goodness and all the relevant facts? Whose moral instruction could be more trustworthy than that of perfectly good person who knows the secrets of all hearts? Whether or not there is a standard of moral goodness apart from God, he is still the supreme moral authority.

In the second place, a Platonist view is perfectly consistent with God's sovereignty over creation. Not only can God do what he likes with us, but God is the ultimate cause of the fact that there are individual persons with natures like ours. Since our natures determine what is harmful or beneficial to us, they also help determine what it is morally right or wrong for us to do. In this way, God can be the source, not only of moral knowledge, but also of moral truths about what is good for us.¹⁵

In the third place, a Platonist view is perfectly consistent with the claim that God can create moral obligations by issuing commands. A Platonist might consistently think that it is eternally and necessarily true that creatures ought to obey the commands of a loving Creator, even when the content of those commands do not themselves reflect eternal moral truths.¹⁶ If, for example, a loving and good Creator instructs us to keep the Sabbath, then perhaps we have an obligation to keep the Sabbath precisely because our Creator says so. This possibility is left wide open.

It must be conceded, however, that a Platonist account does put the supreme standards of moral goodness outside the scope of God's control. These standards are not created by God and are not causally dependent on him. They are not identical to God, and he is "subject" to them in the following sense. If God is good, then he "lives up to them." He is good because he (however necessarily) satisfies their requirements for goodness.¹⁷

Is this such a bad and unacceptable result? I do not think that it is. No more so, at any rate, than the well-nigh inevitable concession that God is "subject" to the laws of logic.

Two related issues must be distinguished. (i) Are there objective standards of moral evaluation that are causally and ontologically independent of

¹⁵ This possibility is beautifully worked out in Carlton D. Fisher, "Because God Says So." *Ibid.*, 355-77.

¹⁶ Richard Swinburne ably defends just such a claim in his book, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 205-7.

¹⁷ See note 6 above.

God – standards by which even he can be judged? (ii) Does God have complete *control* over all the standards of moral evaluation? An affirmative answer to the first question entails a negative answer to the second. If there are standards independent of God, then they are not subject to his will and he has no control over them. On the other hand, a negative answer to the first question does not entail an affirmative answer to the second. Even if God, or God's Moral Nature, is the ultimate standard, it does not follow that God has any control over it or that it is subject to his will.

If we think that God is *completely* sovereign with respect to moral value and moral obligation then it will not be sufficient to give a negative answer to the first of these questions – we must also give an affirmative answer to the second one. To the degree that God is sovereign over something, it is subject to his *control*. He has the power to do with it what he wills, the power to *decide* what will be the case with respect to that thing. God may not always exercise his power over his creatures, but he can overpower and control them whenever he chooses. This is at least part of what it means to say that God is sovereign over them. So if God is completely sovereign with respect to the ultimate moral standards, then they too must be subject to his will. He must "decide" what they are to be.¹⁸

Very few philosophers (Descartes being a noteworthy exception) would say that God has sovereignty in this sense over the most fundamental laws of logic and mathematics – that God literally *decides* whether Modus Ponens is valid or whether 2 and 2 make 4. Some philosophers (theological "activists" like Thomas Morris¹⁹) think that eternal truths like these depend on God in some other sense – but they do not think that God chooses among alternative versions of logic and mathematics, or that it is in that sense "up to God" to decide what is to be the case with regard to such matters. I don't see why it should be any different with respect to such propositions as "Morally good people are not cruel."

In the present context, however, it is important to see that Alston and Craig cannot consistently disagree with me about this. According to them, God is *essentially* loving and just. Since God does not decide what his own

¹⁸ One of the *Philosophia Christi* referees suggests that the view expressed in this paragraph is incompatible with a Molinist view of divine sovereignty. It is true that on a Molinist view, God does not "control" the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. But as far as I can see, this merely entails that God is not sovereign over the counterfactuals of freedom. He is "stuck" with the ones that happen, as a matter of contingent fact, to be true. This is compatible, of course, with God's being sovereign in other important respects. I have not meant to deny this. There are different kinds and degrees of sovereignty, some of which God has and some of which he lacks. My claim is only that complete sovereignty over a thing entails the power to control it, whether or not the one who has that power chooses to exercise it.

¹⁹ See, for example, Morris's essay, "Absolute Creation," in Thomas Morris, *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 161-78.

moral nature is or what it entails, and since, on their view, God's nature is supposed to fix the nature of moral goodness, it is hard to see how he has any more control over what counts as morally good on their view than on a Platonist view of the relation between God and the Good.

What Alston and Craig have done is simply to substitute necessary truths about God for necessary truths about moral goodness. But even if this has the effect of making all moral truths depend on God, it is not sufficient to put them under his control. In this crucial respect, the God-centered analysis of moral goodness does no more than a Platonist account to protect divine sovereignty.

The Problem of Moral Luck and the Parable of the Land Owner

GREGG TEN ELSHOF
*Department of Philosophy
Biola University
La Mirada, California*

I

(P) An agent, S, can be justifiably praised or blamed for something, X, only if — and to the degree that — X is (or was) under S's control.

If P is true, then there is no such thing as moral luck — no moral risk.¹ No one stands at risk of accruing moral blame for something that they did not choose. P is false, however, if there are cases in which we are clearly justified in attributing praise/blame to some agent, S, for something over which S had no control. Many have argued that there are such cases and have drawn various conclusions from the fact that there are.² The conclusions drawn range from a rejection of the modern conception of morality (Williams) to the admission of the genuinely paradoxical character of that conception (Nagel) to a suggestion that Aristotelian ethics better fits our intuitions about value (Nussbaum). The arguments, however, rest with the cases. Should P turn out to be consistent with our intuitive judgments concerning the cases then these conclusions are unwarranted (at least insofar as their warrant depends on a rejection of P). My purpose is to show that P is, in fact, consistent with our intuitive judgments concerning the cases used to

¹ In general, then, S is "lucky" with respect to something X if — and to the degree that — X is (was) not under S's control and S is morally lucky if — and to the degree that — the proper moral appraisal of S depends on factors not under S's control.

² See for example Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 3; Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chapter 2; and M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1-8, 322-40.