

Escapism and luck

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Abstract: I argue that the problem of religious luck posed by Zagzebski poses a problem for the theory of hell proposed by Buckareff and Plug, according to which God adopts an open-door policy toward those in hell. Though escapism is not open to many of the criticisms Zagzebski raises against potential solutions to the problem of luck, escapism fails to solve the problem: it merely pushes luck forward into the afterlife. I suggest a hybrid solution to the problem which combines escapism and the claim that God gives enough grace to those in hell to cancel out any bad moral luck.

Recently, Andrei Buckareff and Allen Plug¹ proposed a theory of hell called escapism, which differs in important ways from most traditional theories of hell. According to escapism, God adopts (and never abandons) an open-door policy toward those in hell. In this paper, I consider what resources escapism provides to deal with problems in Christian moral theory and soteriology that concern the influence of luck.

Linda Zagzebski² has posed a problem of religious luck which parallels the problem of moral luck posed by Joel Feinberg, Thomas Nagel, and Bernard Williams.³ Though Christian theology with its doctrine of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omni-benevolent God has greater resources to deal with the problem of luck than are available to a non-theistic moral theory, there are elements of Christian theology, such as the doctrines of grace and of heaven and hell, which greatly magnify the problem. The traditional doctrine of hell is especially problematic. Zagzebski considers five possible solutions to the problem of religious luck, each of which involves various philosophical difficulties or significant departures from the Christian tradition. In this paper, I sketch the problem of religious luck as it is posed by Zagzebski and briefly consider her treatment of possible solutions. I show that escapism avoids the problems that plague the five solutions Zagzebski considers.

I then raise a different objection to escapism which arises from the problem of religious luck. Escapism, though less so than most traditional theories of hell,

still allows for significant inequalities among people in the afterlife that result from differences in luck. Rather than solve the problem of religious luck, escapism pushes the problem forward into the afterlife. Finally, I suggest a solution to the problem that is a hybrid of escapism and one of the solutions Zagzebski considers, namely, that God gives enough grace to each person to cancel out any bad moral luck she has. This hybrid solution goes some way toward solving the problem of religious luck, but it leaves a number of difficulties which the escapist must solve to show that escapism is both a viable solution and the best solution.

Zagzebski on religious luck

Linda Zagzebski has argued that the general problem of moral luck exists for Christian moral theory as well. Further, the problem is magnified by the doctrines of grace and of an eternal heaven and hell. Moral luck occurs when people are properly held to be praiseworthy or blameworthy or are rewarded or punished because of something that is partly due to luck, i.e. something that is not entirely within their control. The traditional doctrine of grace suggests that whether we receive grace is not entirely within our control. The problem of moral luck is exacerbated when the rewards or punishments involve an eternal heaven or hell. Given infinite reward or punishment, the effects of moral luck are multiplied to infinity. As Zagzebski puts it, 'A person controls her individual choices and acts and the series of choices and acts which make up her life only up to a point, yet her reward or punishment is infinite. ... [T]he effects of even a small degree of luck become infinite.'⁴

Further, the fundamental problem of religious luck⁵ is not that some persons are treated differently from others with respect to the giving out of punishments and rewards. Rather, the inequality that is really troublesome is that inequality between one person and himself in a different set of possible circumstances. Jim would have behaved differently in a certain set of counterfactual circumstances than he does in the actual circumstances in which he finds himself, but which set of circumstances Jim is actually in is beyond his control.⁶

Zagzebski considers five ways to deal with the problem of religious luck, each of which either has serious philosophical difficulties or departs from the Christian tradition in significant ways. I briefly mention each of the five solutions and the difficulties that attend them.⁷ The first solution is that, given that there are true counterfactuals of freedom and that God has middle knowledge, God would be able to judge each person based on the sum total of his virtues, vices, actions, and/or the consequences of his actions in every possible world. The bad luck and good luck of different possible circumstances would cancel out one another. This is a fairly radical solution, however, because it makes the actual world no more meaningful for moral evaluation than any possible but non-actual world.

A second solution is to suppose that a person is morally evaluated only for what is under her control. The objection to this is that it is highly doubtful whether there is any such thing as a determinate degree of control that a person has. For this solution to work, there would have to be a determinate degree of causal control that a person has over (a) her choice; (b) the circumstances in which she finds herself; and (c) the character traits she has.⁸

A third solution is to admit that it is easier for some to be saved than for others because of circumstances outside of their control, but to suppose that this difference is compensated for by a difference in rewards. The harder it is for a person to attain salvation, the greater his reward if he does. Zagzebski has two objections to this. One is much like the objection to the second solution: it is unlikely that there is a determinate degree of how hard or easy it is for a person to attain salvation. The other is that people don't have a choice whether they take a big risk for big rewards or a smaller risk for smaller rewards, so there is still a significant degree of inequality due to luck.

A fourth solution is to say that God gives enough extra grace to each person to cancel out any bad moral luck she has. Zagzebski has two objections to this as well. First, based on our experience, it certainly does not seem to be the case that those with the most bad moral luck receive the most grace. Second, this solution might have bad practical effects by causing us to assess others more harshly; after all, they have failed morally despite the fact that they must have received much grace that we cannot perceive.

A fifth solution is to say that there is moral luck, but it is innocuous with respect to salvation because all are saved. The trouble with this solution is not so much philosophical as traditional. Universalism is contrary to the most dominant views in the Christian tradition⁹ and involves severing salvation entirely from the moral realm. So all five solutions either face philosophical difficulties or involve significant breaks with Christian tradition.

Escapism's advantages with respect to the problem of religious luck

Andrei Buckareff and Allen Plug offer a theory of hell which they call *escapism*. According to this theory, God adopts a policy of extending to all persons in hell the opportunity of reconciliation with Him. This offer of reconciliation is not a one-time offer; God extends the offer for an infinite amount of time. Buckareff and Plug offer the following argument for escapism:¹⁰

- (1) None of God's actions toward persons is unjust or unloving.
- (2) If God does not provide opportunities for salvation to people in hell, then His actions toward those in hell are unjust or unloving.
- (3) Therefore, God provides opportunities for salvation to people in hell.

No doubt there are those who would quibble with the argument, particularly with premise (2). I will leave that task to others, however, and turn to the question of how escapism fares with respect to the problem of religious luck. I argue that escapism avoids the problems which plague the solutions to the problem of religious luck considered in the previous section.

Unlike the first solution, escapism does not base moral or religious evaluation on possible but non-actual worlds, but only on the actual world. So, escapism fits our moral intuitions better than the radical first solution. Unlike the second solution, escapism does not restrict the basis of religious evaluation to what is under a person's control. So, escapism is not committed to the questionable claim that there is a determinate degree of control that a person has. Nor is escapism committed to the questionable claim that there is a determinate degree of how hard or easy it is for a person to attain salvation. Since the escapist also makes no claim that the degree of reward a person receives is tied to the degree of difficulty for them to attain salvation, escapism avoids the objections to the third solution.

Escapism does not, like the fourth solution, commit one to the claim that God gives enough extra grace to each person to cancel out any bad moral luck she has. So it is not subject to the objection that this claim is not supported by our experience. Furthermore, escapism will not lead to the undesirable practical effect of causing us to assess others more harshly because we think any bad luck they have had has been cancelled out. Escapism might have an undesirable side effect of its own, however. Some might think that they do not need to be moral and/or cultivate a relationship with God right now; not only will they have opportunities to be reconciled to God in this life, but they will have an unending opportunity to be reconciled to God in the afterlife. This might lead people to be less moral than they would be if they thought that their moral or religious state at death determined their fate for eternity. I don't take the possibility of this sort of undesirable practical effect to be a serious theoretical objection to escapism. It is, however, a problem to which the proponents of escapism should give some attention.¹¹

Escapism is subject to the criticism of universalism as a solution to the problem of religious luck, but it is not subject to it in the same degree. Universalism is problematic because it is a significant departure from the dominant views in the Christian tradition. Escapism, too, is a departure, but not as radical a departure. Escapism, like the traditional doctrine of hell, is compatible both with the existence of hell and with the possibility that it will be populated for eternity. It differs from the traditional doctrine by allowing the possibility of some people escaping hell. So, while escapism is a departure from the traditional doctrine, it is a less radical departure than universalism. Escapism is not seriously challenged by any of the objections to the five solutions to the problem of religious luck.

An objection to escapism from religious luck

Escapism is not seriously threatened by the objections raised against the proposed solutions to the problem of religious luck discussed in the first section. If escapism proves to be a sixth solution to the problem that is less objectionable than the other solutions, this will support the claim that escapism is a viable and plausible theory of hell. Unfortunately, escapism fails to avoid the problem of religious luck. Even though it avoids the objections to the five solutions, escapism itself hardly counts as a solution to the problem of religious luck. Instead, it simply pushes the problem forward into the afterlife.

Consider the motivation for thinking there is a problem of religious luck. It seems obvious that some people have a harder time attaining salvation than others, assuming salvation is something like the traditional Christian view of salvation. Many factors which a person does not control may influence her chances¹² of attaining salvation: natural temperament, family, religious background, culture and geography, important events or circumstances, etc. A person who has a natural temperament conducive to spiritual development, who is born into a warm and loving Christian family, in a cultural environment friendly to Christianity, whose path to salvation is not sidetracked by various circumstances outside her control, will be much more likely to attain salvation than a person for whom none of these is true. It is a small step to salvation for the first person, but may be a very large step to salvation for the second. It is also worth noting that many of the factors that influence the likelihood of someone's attaining salvation are very central to who that person is.

Now, whatever it takes for salvation before death – faith, a relationship with God, the performance of certain actions – is presumably what it takes for salvation after death, assuming escapism is correct about the possibility of attaining salvation after death. And given how central to herself are many of the factors that influence the likelihood of someone's attaining salvation before death, it seems that many of these same factors will influence the likelihood of someone's attaining salvation after death. In other words, much of the luck that factors into one's decisions about salvation in this life will factor into one's decisions in the next. If luck influences the decisions of those in hell concerning reconciliation with God, then luck influences whether one remains in hell or goes to heaven. If luck influences whether one remains in hell or goes to heaven, then the problem of religious luck looms large for escapism. The problem of religious luck for escapism can be summed up by the following argument:

- (1) The inhabitants of hell are persons.
- (2) Every person has a distinct personality.
- (3) The particular personality one has is to some extent due to luck.

- (4) The personality of an inhabitant of hell influences her decision to accept or reject the offer of reconciliation to God.
- (5) So, whether or not a person accepts the offer of reconciliation to God (and so escapes hell) is to some extent due to luck.¹³

The problem for escapism is not quite as serious as the problem formulated by Zagzebski, but it is nearly so. Zagzebski argues that, given eternal rewards and punishments (or, on an issuant view of hell, given eternal very good and very bad states for persons), small amounts of luck are multiplied to an infinite degree. The escapist, though, is not committed to the claim that small amounts of luck are multiplied to an infinite degree, for there is no point at which a person is doomed to hell for eternity. The problem for the escapist is almost as bad, though, for luck may play a role in some people being in hell rather than heaven for a short time, and this is surely a significant consequence. Furthermore, luck may play a role in some people in hell rejecting the offer of reconciliation to God for a very long time before they finally accept it. This is a very serious consequence. Finally, and worst of all, luck may play a role in some inhabitants of hell never accepting the offer of God. This possibility comes very close to being as serious as the problem Zagzebski formulates, though it is less serious in that there is no point at which the person who never accepts God's offer is doomed never to accept it.

One might argue that, despite the foregoing argument, escapism avoids the problem of religious luck. Suppose we grant that luck may play a role in a person's going to hell and divide instances of this into two kinds. In one case, the person in hell never accepts God's offer. One might argue that in this case the role of luck will steadily decrease toward zero, so that eventually the person is fully responsible for her fate. In such a case, the person chooses to remain in hell and reaffirms her choice for eternity. While a person may be in hell in the first place due in part to character traits outside of her control, her choice to remain is at least partly in her control, and her continual refusal to leave is increasingly due to her refusal to develop character traits conducive to accepting God's offer. So, her choice to refuse God's offer becomes more and more fully her own responsibility until the influence of luck is negligible.

Though this is a possible account, there are alternative accounts which are as plausible, if not more. For example, one might argue that the initial character traits of a person in hell may strongly influence her subsequent decision to refuse God's offer, and that the more often a choice is reaffirmed, the harder it becomes to make an alternative decision. So, the initial character traits of a person may play a significant role in her reaffirming a decision, which becomes increasingly difficult to reverse, to remain in hell.¹⁴ However, the above account of this case is at least possible and so, while I am not convinced that it is correct, let us grant for the moment that this account satisfactorily treats the first case and turn to the second and harder case of a person who is initially in hell partly due to luck. Even

if the suggested account of the first case is correct, escapism cannot avoid the problem of luck in the second case.

The second and harder case is one in which a person experiences hell for a finite time and then accepts God's offer of reconciliation. Let us again suppose that the fact that the person is initially in hell is partially the result of luck. This problem was mitigated in the first case by arguing that the influence of luck continually decreases toward zero. In this second case, however, one might simply deny that the influence of luck is problematic at all. Luck is not a problem because the utility calculation comes out the same for the person who escapes hell as for the person who never experiences hell. This is because the infinite positive utility of being in the presence of God for eternity is weighed against the finite negative utility of experiencing hell for a finite amount of time. Each person, then, receives infinite positive utility on balance, the person who escapes hell no less than the person who never experiences it.

I have strong misgivings about this way of accounting for the second case. Remember that the central problem of luck is the inequality between one person and himself in a different set of possible circumstances. I imagine a case in which I am allowed to choose between two possible futures for myself. On the first, I will enter heaven immediately upon death; on the second, bad luck will play a role in my going to hell, but the situation will be remedied after a finite amount of time by my acceptance of God's offer of reconciliation. Even if I am presented with the above utility calculation which tells me that my expected utility is the same in either case, given that I recognize the good of heaven and the bad of hell, is it practically rational to think it is indifferent which future I choose? Note that there is no supposition that my experience of hell will enhance my experience of heaven in any way: my experience of heaven will be qualitatively the same in either case. I suspect most readers will have a strong intuition that something is not being captured by the utility calculus and that going directly into the presence of God in heaven is much to be preferred.

Consider the case another way. Suppose I am presented with a choice between two possible futures like those above, but this time they are not possible futures for me but for my child. Given that I recognize the good of heaven and the bad of hell, my parental love rules out my choosing the option on which my child will experience hell for a finite time. Given God's motives of parental love toward persons – motives of great importance for motivating escapism – God would not choose for us to experience hell for a finite time when, absent the influence of bad luck, we instead could have experienced communion with Him during that time. If God allows us to remain in hell for any time, His motives of love and justice ensure that it will be due, not to luck, but to a refusal of God's offer for which we are fully responsible. Even if the utility calculation shows that the two possible options are quantitatively equal, it is missing something about the qualitative difference in the cases which is better captured by our intuitions about

which option it is practically rational to choose for oneself or one's child.¹⁵ At least in the case of those who spend a finite amount of time in hell, and probably in the case of those who never escape hell, luck remains a problem for escapism.

A hybrid solution to the problem of religious luck

There is, perhaps, one way to blunt the force of the problem of religious luck by creating a hybrid solution. Suppose we combine escapism with a variant of the fourth solution discussed above, that God gives enough extra grace to each person to cancel out any bad moral luck she has had. Zagzebski has two objections to the fourth solution. First, it is contrary to our experience, for it does not seem like those with the most bad luck receive the most grace. Second, it may lead us to evaluate people too harshly, for since they have received enough grace to cancel out their bad moral luck, our evaluations of them will not be tempered by a recognition of the role luck plays in their moral failings.

Suppose we alter the fourth solution slightly, so that God gives enough extra grace to each person to cancel out any bad luck she has had, but He does so after the person's death and before she experiences hell. If we combine this altered fourth solution with escapism, we now have the position that, after death but before one experiences hell, God gives enough grace to each person to cancel out any bad luck she has had, and each person has an open-ended opportunity to be reconciled to God at any time. Since grace and luck¹⁶ are both outside a person's control, to avoid the charge of inequities we should further assume that the balance of grace and luck (good and bad) for each person is the same. The charge that the fourth solution is contrary to our experience is avoided by this hybrid solution, for the hybrid solution makes no claims about this life and we have no experience of the afterlife. The practical problem may be avoided as well, for one might argue that the problems of moral evaluation that arise in this life will not be at issue in the next.

This hybrid solution is similar in important respects to theories that allow for postmortem evangelism. Gabriel Fackre, among others, takes passages like 1 Peter 4.6 ('For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that ... they might live in the spirit like God,' RSV) to point to the possibility of some persons having opportunity to hear and receive (or reject) the gospel after death.¹⁷ Such a proposal is meant to remove one particular kind of luck in circumstances, namely, whether one has a genuine opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. Jerry Walls has proposed a similar view, but makes a broader claim than Fackre. Not only can God eliminate, after a person's death, the bad luck of her never having heard the gospel, he can also counteract any other bad luck in circumstances by granting to each person an optimal degree of grace. Grace may be granted both in this life and the life to come.¹⁸

My proposal is like these and similar proposals in important ways. First, they allow the possibility of accepting, after death, God's offer of salvation. Second, they attempt to eliminate certain kinds of luck. Fackre attempts to eliminate luck concerning whether one has heard the gospel, while Walls attempts to eliminate all bad luck in circumstances. Third, my proposal, like Walls's, focuses attention on God's motivation to eliminate luck by means of grace. My proposal is importantly different from these, as well, for I focus on God's motivation to eliminate all kinds of luck with respect to salvation, not just luck in circumstances. In particular, I focus attention on luck in constitution. This is not to say that Walls and Fackre hold positions incompatible with my proposal. Indeed, their positions are, in broad outline at least, compatible with my proposed hybrid solution, (although I am not sure whether they would accept the open-ended nature of God's offer, and I do not wish to imply that they are committed to my solution in all other respects). My position is meant to be broader than theirs, however, for it is meant to apply to all forms of religious luck.¹⁹

It might be objected that the hybrid solution is ad hoc. I confess that avoiding the problem of religious luck is a motivation for the hybrid position. If avoiding a particular objection is the only motivation for the hybrid position, then it may justly be called ad hoc. However, I believe there are somewhat independent motivations for this position and I offer one argument here which employs a central motivation for escapism: God's motives of love and justice.

- (1) None of God's actions toward persons is unjust or unloving.
 - (2) If God allows people to be in hell due in part to factors out of their control, then His actions toward those people are unjust or unloving.
- So, (3) God does not allow people to be in hell due in part to factors out of their control.

The hybrid solution offers a plausible explanation for how (3) could be true, and (3) is based on (1), a claim that is central not only to escapism but to the vast majority of the Christian tradition. Furthermore, that God grants grace to persons in some fashion or other is also central to the dominant Christian tradition and should be acceptable to the escapist as well. So, while the hybrid solution is intended to address a particular problem, it is also motivated by consideration of how the just and loving God of traditional Christianity would act toward persons.

It might also be objected that the hybrid solution commits one to the undesirable position that grace comes in degrees. I am not convinced that this objection counts strongly against the hybrid solution. I see no clear problem with the position that grace comes in degrees. I do not share the intuition of some that one cannot coherently say that grace comes in degrees.²⁰ However, I make no claim to fully understand the nature of grace. What my proposal for the hybrid position really requires is that luck be eliminated before one begins to experience

hell. If some readers have reasons for rejecting the claim that grace comes in degrees or have other reasons for supposing that grace cannot play the role I have proposed for it, I suggest that they read my use of the term 'grace' in a broader sense. Rather than understand grace in a technical and precise sense, let them read it as a placeholder for whatever it is that God does to eliminate or counter-balance bad luck. Of course, it will then be asked just how it is that God accomplishes this task. To that I have no detailed answer; after all, even if one thinks that my main argument is sound on a fairly narrow use of 'grace', one still might not think that the answer is very informative about how God grants this grace and why it is efficacious.²¹

There are still difficulties with the hybrid solution. If God waits until the unrepentant are in hell to give enough grace to cancel out bad luck, there is still the problem that they have experienced some of the bad of hell and missed out on some of the good of heaven, due in part to bad luck before death. So, the hybrid position includes both that God grants this grace in full and that the person is given an opportunity to be reconciled to God, after death but before being consigned to hell. Here, however, escapism may run into a milder form of the objection raised against the first solution to the problem of luck discussed in the first section, for important decisions in this life may be easily and immediately reversed in the next. This appears to lessen the importance of this life, making it seem like only a prelude to the main event to come. The escapist should also make some effort to explain whether and how the balance of grace and luck for all persons can be equal or fair.

It also remains to be seen whether those who argue for escapism will be willing to accept the hybrid solution. Buckareff and Plug have not argued for anything like the fourth solution; they argue only for each person in hell having at least a minimal psychological capacity to accept the offer of reconciliation extended by God. The hybrid solution may be viewed as one more step away from the dominant Christian tradition in a theory that is already sensitive to how much it has departed from that tradition. Buckareff and Plug go to some effort to show that escapism, while a departure from the tradition, should still be more acceptable than theories like universalism, because escapism is not as significant a departure. There is little in the tradition to suggest that God gives extra grace or unlimited second chances to those in hell.

Conclusion

I conclude that escapism, particularly in its hybrid form when combined with the fourth solution, should be given a seat at the table as a sixth potential solution to the problem of religious luck posed by Zagzebski. The escapist, however, has some work to show that escapism is not only a viable solution to the problem, but the best of the alternatives. To show that it is viable, the escapist

should give answers to the difficulties I have raised in the last section. To show that it is best, the escapist must show two things: (a) that it solves philosophical problems, including the problem of religious luck, as well as universalism does; and (b) that it involves a much less significant departure from the Christian tradition than universalism. In this paper I have attempted to clarify some of the work involved in showing (a). Escapists have much more work to show (a) than (b), but it is important that they not neglect (b), for escapism is already open to charges of departing from the tradition and should not open itself up to further charges unless they are unavoidable.²²

Notes

1. Andrei A. Buckareff and Allen Plug 'Escaping hell: divine motivation and the problem of hell', *Religious Studies*, 41 (2005), 39–54.
2. Linda Zagzebski 'Religious luck', *Faith and Philosophy*, 11 (1994), 397–413.
3. See, e.g. Joel Feinberg 'Problematic responsibility in law and morals', *Philosophical Review*, 71 (1962), 340–351; B. A. O. Williams 'Moral luck', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary vol. 50 (1976), 115–135; T. Nagel 'Moral luck', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary vol. 50 (1976), 137–151.
4. Zagzebski 'Religious luck', 402–403.
5. By 'the problem of religious luck' I mean to refer to the special problem of luck that arises for Christian moral theory and soteriology. This special problem of luck is the problem at issue throughout this paper.
6. Zagzebski 'Religious luck', particularly 407. In her paper, Zagzebski argues that religious luck seems like a problem to us for the same reason moral luck seems like a problem, namely, that it is unfair. She has recently suggested to me in correspondence that religious luck seems like a problem for another reason as well: It is contrary to our notion of a loving God. If God loves each person individually, we would not expect Him to treat some persons in ways that make it likely that they will spend eternity in hell.
7. What follows can be found in more detail in Zagzebski 'Religious luck', 407–411.
8. See Zagzebski's (*ibid.*, 399–401) discussion of Feinberg's ('Problematic responsibility in law and morals', *passim*) argument that moral responsibility is in principle undecidable.
9. This is not to say that universalism has not had able defenders among Christians. Among contemporary philosophers who defend universalism, Marilyn McCord Adams stands out. See, e.g. her 'The problem of hell: a problem of evil for Christians', in Eleonore Stump (ed.) *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 301–327.
10. This is an abbreviated and paraphrased version of the argument offered in Buckareff and Plug 'Escaping hell', esp. 42–45.
11. For consideration of an objection that is related to the problem I raise here, see *ibid.*, 51–52. The objection Buckareff and Plug consider is that escapism 'cheapens' God's grace, because those who resist His grace during their lives can then receive it in the afterlife, and so avoid the undesirable consequences of rejecting grace. Buckareff and Plug respond by arguing: 'On the contrary, the benefits to be procured in this life from being in loving communion with God should provide the impetus for the unrepentant to turn to God. They should not turn to God simply because they fear that He will subject them to torture for all time. But making the right choices this side of death and the resurrection may prepare us to be the kind of persons prepared to enter into everlasting communion with God. Waiting only postpones the process in question, making it more difficult for us to be fit for communion with God due to persistent recalcitrance and obduracy.'
12. I do not mean to suggest by this discussion that there is a determinate probability that constitutes a person's 'chances' for salvation, but I do mean to suggest that it is harder or perhaps less likely for some than others.

13. Nagel 'Moral luck', *passim*, distinguishes between luck in constitution, circumstances, and consequences. My discussion of escapism has focused on the problems of luck in constitution. It is not clear to me whether on Buckareff's and Plug's account there is also luck in circumstances or consequences, for they have not described the condition of those in hell in much detail. If the condition of the inhabitants of hell does allow for luck in circumstances or consequences, this further compounds the problem.
14. Buckareff and Plug recognize C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (New York NY: Macmillan, 1946) as an inspiration for their theory. It is worth noting that this second account of the influence of the initial character of the denizen of hell is reflected in *The Great Divorce*, 9–10. The denizens of hell continually quarrel with one another and move further away from one another. At the same time, they are moving away from the bus stop which represents the route to the outskirts of heaven. As the protagonist learns from a fellow traveller, '[The people of hell have] been moving on and on. Getting further apart. [The earlier arrivals are] so far off by now that they could never think of coming to the bus stop at all. Astronomical distances. ... – Would they get to the bus stop in time, if they ever set out? – Well, theoretically. But it'd be a distance of light-years. And they wouldn't want to by now: not those old chaps like Tamberlaine and Genghiz Khan, or Julius Caesar, or Henry the Fifth.'
15. Notice that for one who will experience eternity in heaven, the same utility calculus would show that a life of fulfilment and satisfaction in this life yields the same utility on balance as a life of intense and prolonged suffering, because the eternal expected utility is mathematically the same in each case. Yet it seems clear that a life of satisfaction followed by eternal bliss is much to be preferred to a life of suffering followed by eternal bliss. All other things being equal, no one would choose the latter over the former for herself or her child.
16. Of course, if luck is understood simply as any factor outside a person's control which has a good or bad effect on that person, then grace is just a special kind of luck. I use both terms here to distinguish the ordinary sorts of luck from the special (good) luck that God gives to aid a person in attaining salvation.
17. Gabriel Fackre *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, 3rd edn (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 220–221; *idem*. 'Divine perseverance', in John Sanders (ed.) *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 71–95.
18. Jerry Walls *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 83–93; *idem* 'Eternal hell and the Christian concept of God', in Michael L. Peterson and Raymond J. VanArragon (eds) *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 268–277.
19. My thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for calling the work of Fackre and Walls to my attention.
20. Allen Plug has suggested to me that he has such an intuition. Perhaps one way to explain this intuition while maintaining that grace comes in degrees is to think that when God grants someone grace, He always gives him enough grace. It is this last clause which gives rise to the idea that one either gets grace or one does not, for on this account it is true that one either gets enough grace or none at all. Yet this account is still consistent with the claim that it is possible for God to grant grace in different degrees to different people.
21. Bob Johnson has suggested to me one possible account, which makes no reference to grace, of how God could accomplish this task. On this account, God resurrects the dead, some of whom will go to heaven and some to hell. In the process of resurrecting a person, God eliminates any elements of luck in this person's character due to his natural constitution, his circumstances in life, or the consequences of his actions. This proposal may have its own problems, perhaps particularly regarding personal identity. However, it represents another way to accomplish the heart of my proposal without talking about grace.
22. An earlier draft of this paper was presented to participants of the 2006 Society of Christian Philosophers Pacific Region Conference at the University of San Diego. I extend my thanks to all those who participated in the session, as well as to those who discussed the thesis of this paper with me at informal times. I would especially like to thank my commentator, Allen Plug, who took my discussion of his own work seriously. No doubt there remain points of disagreement between us, but I have benefited greatly both from his written comments and from conversations with him. Several of the objections I consider in the final two sections were first raised by him in his written comments or in conversation. My gratitude is also due to Bob Johnson and Linda Zagzebski for helpful discussions and insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Finally, Peter Byrne and an anonymous referee for this journal have provided comments which have improved the quality of the paper.