

Moral luck: how we are and what we do is always a matter of luck essay

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Moral Luck: How we are and what we do is always a matter of luck Thomas Nagel explains in his article 'Moral Luck' his stance upon this interesting point of debate in ethics and philosophy. It has long been considered that what we are and what we become is all a matter of fortune or luck.

It has been taken by many thinkers, as a rather pacifying stance who need to cover up their incompetencies; people who lack in some way have to cover it up. Because, when ever we get good fortune, or achieve something that we have strived for, we cease to use the term 'luck' in that. This is simply due to the fact that it is an innate human tendency to be satisfied with an accomplishment, and take pride as a personal endeavor being accomplished. However, whenever we encounter failure, it is very difficult for us to out rightly admit that it is due to our own short comings. Therefore, we need to blame it on someone, generally termed as projection. There are many words for the same in various theologies and cultures, including Will of God, fate, destiny and luck.

Thus, the concepts of Nagel, though convincing, are not without retort. Under mentioned are certain viewpoints that shall elucidate a different stance that that presented by Nagel on moral luck. Morality as a Social Responsibility There shall inevitably be more individuals around him from the same species for him to live in a manner conforming to the definition of a social group, if not a society. Here the concept of mutual regards, norms and values is very important. Here, the case unfolds in contrast with Nagel's assumption that every thing essentially is a matter of luck, and that we are

all dependent on its dynamics. Morality may sometimes be misperceived as intelligence and sobriety.

This may not entirely be true. Morality is a concept that involves actualizing with the prevalent norms. A very intelligent person is less likely to conform to the demands and ways of a group as compared to a person with optimal intelligence. Similarly, being mature does not necessarily confirm the presence of rationalistic and pragmatic frame of reference. Therefore, morality, when considered in terms of luck has to be taken in its purest form. In response, it may well be argued that the entire social structure, and the placement of the person within that structure is also a resultant of luck itself. The fact of the matter is, that nothing is in the control of a person, therefore, if something unfortunate has come up on the person, then it is almost essential that there has to be some element of luck that would be responsible. Nagel's concept of casual luck is relevant here, wherein the antecedent circumstances of a person govern the destiny.

And nobody has ever had any means of control over the background that we have. Luck in response to rationality Morality, where may be defined as a rather subjective or relative term with reference to human understanding, but it shall have to given some limits when we are discussing social structure. Morality can be very simply taken as appreciating and realizing the social norms in their very basic context. This morality, in even more simpler terms can possibly be linked to common sense.

But then again, this shall vary greatly from culture to culture, and within that, from community to community. This is where we define the essence of morality - it pertains to the pragmatic and realistic blending of primary luck into an intellectually and emotionally defiant secondary emotion, which allows for the person to withstand greater stresses of the environment. Small children can at occasions provide the most rationalistic of luck in their behavior. When a team loses a football match, not every boy starts crying. Not every boy screams, or starts fighting with the opponent.

At the same time, there might be exceptions and this is the exact place where the true study of luck can take place. Those children, who lack the practice of moral constraints, might be excessively expressive in their reactions towards losing the match. However, those who do actualize with the situation, have their respective egos and prides at work, and therefore deem it appropriate to suppress their primal emotive reactions, and resort to a more complex response of morality. Therefore, in essence they have defied the entire concept of luck, and have withstood it in the face of adversity.

Morality, in all, has the basic role of presenting the concerned individual as an acceptable individual in a social circle. Similarly, people who lack the frequent display of this trait are less acceptable in a wider context; they are expected to be more volatile in their reactions, and therefore less dependable. It is hence only understandable why such people are end up having difficulty in maintaining multiple and healthy social connections to their own good. In consequence, a greater display of morality warrants greater social acceptance.

A person who is able to manage and nurture luck of morality can therefore be termed as socially successful. Mind is independent of luck. Mind is such a potent organ and its process is so magnanimous that its real meaning can possibly never be truly appreciated. The existence of the mind is nothing to be questioned, and in many ways, it is actually the defining part that distinguished one human from the other. Therefore, its function must also come under no debate. No matter what we do, the roots embedded in the crux of the mind of a person always stay in tact. Giving so much importance to the mind also signifies the linkage being established with the concept of existence of man. When so much conscious control is available to man himself, then projecting one's life upon luck seems unpragmatic.

When the mind can make sensible decisions that are both valid and reliable, that means that a certain function of the mind is standardized. This comes in direct conflict with Nagel's concept of Constitutive luck, whereby people's inclinations, capacities and temperament tame their way. Despite their background, all pilots trained on a specific aircraft are likely to make the same type of landings. Here is where the conscious role of the mind can be seen. On the same lines, Emerson believes that the integrity of the mind is imperishable. In the perspective, the meaning can be inferred as the same. The mind alone can have no integrity – it has to be associated with man himself.

Therefore, again extrapolating the fact that the mind is sure to dominate the proceedings of life, despite what course of actions are undertaken. The Mind as an entity can never destroy, as it is the true emblem of existence for man

– his distinguishing factor. Change as a retort to luck No one wishes to preserve his being for the sake of anything else. Consistency is not something that is embedded in man.

Man responds to change, and is an ever evolving being, even if in his thoughts. The concept of uniformity of behavior and thought has always triggered the minds of thinkers. It is not naturally desirable for anybody to maintain an existing thread of ideas and/or actions. Preservation of one's being, therefore, in lieu of something else is not an instinctual yearning that man can go ahead with. Further, it is rationalistically not practical as well that the same should be accomplished.

Hence, when humanity tends to be as volatile in its existence and behavior as a whole, then there cannot be a definitive trend for luck. Ironically, luck depends on luck itself! Here, the case for circumstantial luck, as presented by Nagel comes into consideration. He also states the same that our pathways and actions keep changing as a consequence of the events that keep us busy in our lives. These events are never planned and always come at random. Hence one cannot have any conscious control over one's life pattern as things are always quite uncertain.

What to talk of small things, the most crucial reality of life, is uncertain in all its entities – the veracity of death. In response, it must be understood that consistency can not be correlated with a being. The factor of change is not only necessary, but it is imperative.

With the dynamics that the human beings portray, consistency is not only incompatible, but impossible. When conditions change, then a man subsequently changes himself, and that is where conscious control comes into play. True, death is unpredictable, but dying is not! One can understand and appreciate the process of dying, and make conscious, mindful adjustments to make the journey of life easily.

The mastery of Nature is impossible, that man would be able to separate nature from his existence. Now whether this be taken in religious terms, or be considered in the context of any theological construct, what needs to be understood is the fact that the creation and subsequent nurturing of man is not merely a matter of luck. This entire world, these mountains, the seas, the sky, the animal, plants and man himself, somehow have to be the part of a great design.

When this is considered, then one cannot give luck its due share in the creation of man. And when it is not there in its beginning, then how can it be there in the middle and the end? Only by not being able to understand a few factors, one cannot and should not explain the essentials of life. There is much more to it than meets the eye.

It can be argued that this placement of nature may well be a product of the theory as explained by physicist, and not by theologians. This would mean that it was a big bang, and that it happened as a matter of chance, and not really a matter of consequence. Is this be the case, then nature has absolutely no control of authority or claim over man, and everything is

essentially a product of luck. Man was hence destined to be a product of chance, and therefore everything happening in his life is by chance, and not by conscious effort. This stance is basically on the footing that luck is only a term that is used to describe the circumstances which are otherwise not known to man. So is every design and action of nature. But everything cannot simply be termed as luck.

Nature is as close to man as man himself, because he seems to be a product of the former. Man is an outcome of nature, and hence cannot and does not remain an adversary to the same. Violation of the nature would in turn mean being in disagreement with oneself, which is theoretically and pragmatically not possible. One can only do and perform as much as the limits of Nature have meant.