On Robert Kane's Account of Self-Forming Actions

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[**Abstract:** Robert Kane thinks that an agent becomes the ultimate originator of her actions—and hence, morally responsible for her actions as well—by being the 'setter' of her actions, *i.e.* by performing 'will-setting' actions. By performing such 'will-setting' actions the agent forms her 'self', and that is why such actions are termed as Self-Forming Actions (SFAs). Kane's account of SFAs plays a very central role in his theory of free will and moral responsibility. In the present paper I have tried to show that Kane's account dose not succeed to avoid luck objection. One's so-called self-forming action is done 'by chance'. Since one is not ultimately responsible for an action that is done by chance, one is not responsible for one's self-forming actions (SFAs). Again, since one is not responsible for one's SFAs, the theory SFAs cannot account for ultimate responsibility. So, I have concluded that Kane's account of Self-Forming Actions (SFAs) involves responsibility-subverting luck problem which severely undermines the tenability of the whole theory. Had it resolved the luck problem, it would have been one of the most plausible theories in the relevant field.]

Robert Kane's account of Self-Forming Actions (SFAs) is one of the most interesting topics in the study of 'free will and responsibility.' His account of SFAs is an inseparable part of his event causal libertarianism. As an inseparable part of his libertarianism, Kane's account of SFAs is closely connected with his ideas of free will, alternative possibilities (AP) and ultimate responsibility (UR). The present research paper is concerned with Kane's account of SFAs. But since it is closely connected with Kane's ideas of free will, AP and UR, we will begin our discussion from a preliminary introduction to these ideas.

Introduction (Free will, AP and UR):
According to Kane free will is "the power of agents to be the ultimate creators (or originators) and sustainers of their own ends and purposes."[1] So, to will

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freely an agent needs to be the ultimate source or creator of her own purposes. And to be ultimately responsible for an action, the agent needs to be the ultimate originator of the action. So, we see that the requirement for free will is that the sources or origins of our actions must be 'in us' and not in something else. This requirement of free will, in Kane's theory, is a 'condition of ultimate responsibility' or UR. Kane describes the basic idea of UR in this way:

> ... to be *ultimately responsible* for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is sufficient reason, cause or motive for action's occurring. If, for example, a choice issues from, and can be sufficiently explained by, an agent's character and motives (together with background conditions), then to be *ultimately* responsible for the choice, the agent must be in part responsible by virtue of choices and actions performed in the past for having the character and motives he or she now has.[2]

Thus it seems that the requirement of free will, *i.e.* the condition of UR, gives emphasis not on AP—*i.e.* for an action to be free, there needs to be alternative possibilities lie before us, and it is 'up to us' which of these alternatives we choose—but on the origin of the action that is actually performed. But it does not mean that Kane undermines the importance of AP for an action to be freely willed. What he emphasizes is that no account of free will and responsibility can resolve relevant issues without bringing UR along with AP. UR and AP are closely connected, in Kane's words, regarding free will UR is the root and AP is its leafs.[3]

It seems that both AP and UR are incompatible with determinism. They require some sort of indeterminism, at least in some point of the causal chain preceding an action. But unlike many libertarians, Kane does not hold that all free actions must be undetermined and must have AP then and there. He, rather, shows that there are possible actions in which the agents have AP and the actions are undetermined; but, still, the agents lack free will. Kane mentions some of the Austin-Style examples (named after J.L. Austin who suggested these though for a different purpose). In the first example, Austin imagines that he has to hole a three-foot putt to win a golf match, but because of a nervous twitch in his arm he misses the putt. In the second example, an assassin is trying to kill the prime minister with a high-powered rifle, but because of a nervous twitch he misses the target and kills the minister's aide instead.[4] In each case a genuine chance or indeterminism is involved. At the same time, in each case, the agent has AP, *i.e.* the agent could have done otherwise. Austin could have done otherwise than missing the putt. He had holed many such putts in the past, and his failing to hole the putt is undetermined. It could happen that

given the same past and laws, Austin might have succeeded in holing the putt. The same thing can be said about the assassin of the second Austin-Style example. Now, Kane points that in both of the examples the agents have not freely performed what they have done. Missing the putt is not something that we regard as freely done—Austin has not 'desired' or 'intended' or 'tried' to miss the putt. The same is true of the assassin's missing the target. These actions are not free because they are not done under the agents' voluntary control, although the actions are undetermined and the agents have the AP.

To strengthen his view that AP and indeterminism are not the whole story about free will, Kane adds the following scenario.[5] Suppose, God creates a world where there is a considerable amount of indeterminism. Kane sometimes calls it K-world.[6] People, in this K-world, set out to do things and often succeed but sometimes fail in Austinean manner. They try to kill their prime minister, or hole the putts and usually they succeed, but sometimes they fail by accident or by mistake in a manner that is undetermined. Now, imagine that whether they succeed their purposes or not, all the actions of the agents in this K-world are such that "their reasons, motives, or purposes for trying to act as they do are always predetermined or pre-set by God."[7] Austin's desire to hole the putt, whether he succeeds or not, is set by God; the assassin's intent to kill the prime minister, whether he misses his target or not, is set by God. Consider that, in this K-world, the agents could have done otherwise, but they could only have done so by mistake, unwillingly or by chance in Austinean manner. Kane claims that the inhabitants of this K-world do not have free will because they cannot will otherwise, since all their motives, reasons and purposes have been pre-set by God.[8] That is, the main problem, regarding free will, in this world is that God sets the wills for the agents, but the agents do not set their own wills. Kane describes this feature in this way: "... all 'the will-setting' in this world is done by God, none by the agents themselves, and as a consequence the agents are not ultimately responsible for setting their wills in one way rather than another..."[9] So, the issue of "will-setting" is important here. It seems from the above description and from the above stated quotation as well that it is the lack of "will-setting" actions that makes the agents of K-world 'not free' and hence 'not ultimately responsible' for their actions. It also seems that the "will-setting" action is a necessary condition or at least a part of the necessary conditions of UR. Thus the issue of "will-setting" actions deserves a detail discussion and it is, in fact, the main concern of the present paper.

Self-Formation Actions (SFAs) or Will-Setting Actions:
For Kane, the opportunity to perform a 'Self-Forming Actions' (SFAs) or a "will-setting" action for which the agent is ultimately responsible occurs at

a difficult time in the agent's life history when the agent is torn between competing decisions. The agent in question struggles to make a difficult choice between competing desires; she wants to satisfy both of her desires, but she can satisfy only one. But both of the competing desires come to her with equal strength in the sense that both are equally reasonable; both are equally rational. And the agent can do either rationally, intentionally and voluntarily. In that case, whatever the agent does, she does it indeterministically, because the past and laws do not determine what option she will choose. In other words, given the same past and the laws, the agent could have chosen otherwise than what she has actually chosen. Kane calls these actions as "will-setting" actions because before choosing one of the options, the agent's will is not set by anything else, whether it is God or laws or past. The agent, rather, set her will by choosing one of the options. Kane, thus, defines the "will-setting" actions in this way:

> ... that the question of which of the viable options is most wanted by the agent is not settled until the agent actually chooses or acts in one way or the other, then we have what I call "will-setting" choices or actions. These are choices or actions in which what the agent *wills* or most wants to do is settled then and there by the choice or action itself and not before.[10]

Kane also calls these actions Self-Forming Actions (SFAs) because by choosing one of the options, *i.e.* by setting her will in one way rather than the other, the agent displays what sort of person she wants to be. In other words, by setting her wills, the agent forms her character. That is why "will-setting" actions are named as SFAs. Kane identifies six types of SFAs or "will-setting" actions:

(i)   Moral decisions or choices
(ii) Prudential decisions or choices
(iii) Efforts of will sustaining purposes
(iv) Attentional efforts directed at self-control and self-modification
(v)   Practical judgments and choices
(vi) Changes of intention in action.

Among them Kane devotes much attention to situations where the agents are torn between moral choices and prudential choices.[11] In this situation the agent may have a belief, from the moral perspective (*e.g.* moral conscience), that she ought to do *A*, but she also has a desire, from the prudential perspective (*e.g.* personal ambitions), to do *B* which conflicts with *A* what she takes to be her moral duty. She is, then, torn between two options and exerts an effort of will that gives rise to whatever decision she finally makes. Kane offers a wonderful thought experiment of such an SFA:

> A woman is rushing to a business luncheon with an important client when she witnesses an assault in an alley. Should she stop to help by perhaps calling for assistance, altering the police, or joining with others to aid the victim? All this would take time and she might miss a luncheon that she believes is crucial for her career. She is strongly tempted to ignore the incident, plunge on to her meeting and leave the problem to others, as weary city-dwellers often do. But let us say that after passing by the alley she hesitates, her conscience troubled and considers turning back to help ... she has a moral conscience which has considerable weight in her reflections though she may ultimately decide against it. In fact, she is deeply torn between competing motivations (moral commitments and personal ambition) and will settle the matter of which motivations prevail only when she decides. Under these circumstances and absent further evidence to the contrary, we are inclined to think that the woman will settle her dilemma one way or the other *willingly*, and not against her will either way, and in that sense freely.[12]

In the above example, the woman has a powerful reason for going to her luncheon and a powerful reason to help the victim. Her powerful reason for going to her luncheon prevents her powerful reason to help the victim. In the same way and with the equal strength (by assumption), her powerful reason for helping the victim prevents her powerful reason for going to her luncheon. "And by assumption it is not settled which of these reasons will prevail until she chooses."[13] Thus, whatever she chooses, she chooses indeterministically and she could have chosen otherwise than what she has actually chosen. And, hence, it is a genuine example of an SFA.

It should be noted here that the "will-setting" actions are voluntary, rational and intentional. In other words, an SFA agent chooses one option rather than the other voluntarily, rationally and intentionally, and she could have chosen otherwise, again, voluntarily, rationally and intentionally. Here, by 'voluntarily' Kane means 'in accordance with one's will,' by 'intentionally' he means 'knowingly' and 'on purpose,' and by 'rationally' he means 'having good reasons for acting for those reasons.'[14] This feature distinguishes an SFA agent from an agent of the K-world. An agent of the K-world does not choose an option rationally, voluntarily and intentionally. All her wills are willed by God, and she could have only done otherwise by accident or mistake, unintentionally, involuntarily and irrationally. But an SFA agent's will is not settled by God or anything else beyond her control. It is she, the SFA agent, who settles her will one way rather than the other voluntarily, rationally and intentionally. Now, if "will-setting" actions are voluntary, rational and intentional, then they must be *plural voluntary*, *plural rational* and *plural intentional* because in a "will-setting" action, the SFA agent chooses from a selection of more than

one competing options, and she could have chosen otherwise, again, voluntarily, rationally and intentionally.[15] Kane calls this feature of SFAs as 'plurality conditions.' SFAs must satisfy these plurality conditions. In other words, an "will-setting' action or an SFA must be *plural voluntary*, *i.e.* there must be at least one alternative choice the agent could make which would also be voluntary, *plural rational*, *i.e.* there must be at least one alternative choice the agent could make which would also be rational, and *plural intentional*, *i.e.* there must be at least one alternative choice the agent could intentionally make. If an action does not satisfy these plurality conditions, then, according to Kane, that action is already set one way before that is performed by the agent and, hence, that action won't be a "will-setting" action or an SFA.[16]

One interesting feature of these plurality conditions of SFAs is that plurality conditions entail AP. We have seen in the above paragraph that an SFA involves a selection of motivationally competing options. And, an SFA agent can go more than one way voluntarily, rationally and intentionally in performing them. That means that the agent could have done otherwise voluntarily, rationally and intentionally in performing the action.[17] And, if the agent could not have done otherwise voluntarily, rationally and intentionally, then the action would not be an SFA. That is, it is not only the case that an SFA—in its way of satisfying plurality conditions—entails that the agent could have done otherwise, but it is also the case that 'the agent could have done otherwise' is a necessary condition for the SFA, because if the agent could not have done otherwise, then she would not satisfy the plurality conditions; and if she would not satisfy the plurality conditions, then her action would not be an SFA. Here, we see, 'could not have done otherwise' or AP is not derived as a necessary condition for free will directly. It is, rather, derived indirectly by the way of some other inter-connected features of free will. Kane describes this sequence of connected notions in this way:

> If (i) free will requires (ii) ultimate responsibility for our wills as well as our actions, then it requires (iii) will-setting actions at some points in our life histories; and (iv) will-setting actions satisfy the plurality conditions. But now, taking this argument one obvious step further, if free will requires the power to do otherwise voluntarily and intentionally, it implies *a fortiori* (v) the power to do otherwise *simpliciter*, i.e. alternative possibilities, for some actions in one's life history.[18]

So, the connection between free will and AP is not direct. It, rather, goes through UR, SFAs or "will-setting" actions and plurality conditions. Kane thinks that the requirement of AP is actually derived from, in his words, 'the stronger requirements' of "will-setting" and plurality conditions.[19] It should

be noted here that by displaying the indirectness between free will and AP, Kane does not weakens the role of AP. He believes that our intuition that free will requires AP is 'soundly based.'[20] What he wants to show here is that to be ultimately responsible for our actions, 'some' of our actions must be "will-setting" actions that necessarily involve AP. Here, the word 'some' is very important. It indicates that to be ultimately responsible for our actions, it is not necessary that *all* of our actions need to be a "will-setting" action. Many of our actions, for which we are ultimately responsible, are one way willed, given that we have already formed our character and motives in a certain way by performing relevant SFAs at some point of our life histories. And we know that AP is necessary only in cases of SFAs. So, we can say, in the similar way as above, it is not necessary that *all* of these actions require to have AP. AP is required only in cases when our will is not yet settled in one way and we are going through an SFA. So, for many of our actions, which are free and for which we are ultimately responsible, we do not need to have AP. We are responsible for those actions, though we do not have AP at the time we act these, because we have already form our characters and motives in that way by performing relevant SFAs at some point of our life histories where we necessarily had AP. Such is the case when Martin Luther says, "Here I stand, I can do no other" just before breaking the Church in Rome. In Kane's analysis, by claiming that he has no alternative, Martin Luther here does not avoid his responsibility for what he has done. Instead, Luther is taking the full responsibility for breaking the Church in Rome. But why is he responsible if he has no AP, *i.e.* he could not have done otherwise? Kane says that even if Luther is literally correct, *i.e.* he could really have done no other, he is still responsible for his germane action because he himself formed his present character and motives by performing a series of relevant SFAs satisfying plurality conditions, *i.e.* he could have done otherwise plural voluntarily, plural rationally and plural intentionally with respect to those actions. Kane describes this event in the following way:

> Persons who are familiar with Luther's biography know the long period of inner struggle he endured leading up to his fateful "here I stand." By numerous difficult choices and decisions during that time, Luther was shaping the character and motives that issued in his act. If we have no hesitation in saying that his final affirmation was a responsible act done of his own free will, I think it is because we assume that he was responsible for making himself into the kind of person he then was by numerous choices and actions in his past.[21]

This Luther-event is important because it reveals the fact that from our everyday actions to significant moral decisions, to be free and ultimately

responsible for these actions we do not need to have AP then and there. We are responsible for these actions if these actions are determined by our characters or motives provided that we have formed our relevant motives and characters by performing SFAs where we could have done otherwise voluntarily, rationally and intentionally in some points of our past histories. In other words, an agent does an action from his free will and hence responsible for that action if the action is an SFA or the action is determined by a relevant SFA performed previously in our past history. So, the idea of SFAs plays a very central role in the Kanean theory of free will and responsibility. It is worth noting here that this view is incompatibilist because it insists that free will and responsibility are incompatible with determinism. To be free and responsible for our actions some sort of indeterminism is necessary (particularly when the agents perform SFAs). Again this theory is 'restricted' in the sense that it does not require that *all* responsible actions done of our own free wills must be undetermined (we are responsible for the actions that are *determined* by our characters and motives we achieve by performing SFAs in our past life histories). That is why Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza branded it as Restricted Incompatibilism, and Kane seems to be comfortable with this brand name.[22]

Criticisms:
Like almost all other philosophical theories, Kane's account of SFAs as well as his Restricted Incompatibilism has received criticisms from many. Most critics object that Kane's account involves mere presence of responsibility-subverting luck which makes his theory untenable. In the following sections I will examine some of such objections that target Kane's account.

  (a) The Luck Objection: In order to understand the luck objection, let us look back to the businesswoman example. The businesswoman is torn between two competing desires: (1) to help the victim (2) to go to the luncheon. And by assumption, no alternative has sufficient reasons to make her decide in one way rather than the other. Her decision, whatever it is, comes through an indeterministic process. Then, isn't it the case that whatever decision she makes, her decision is a matter of luck? Let us imagine that there is a possible world with exactly the same past and laws. The counterpart of the businesswoman, say businesswoman*, chooses the option (2) while the businesswoman in actual world chooses the option (1). Suppose that Kane praises the businesswoman for choosing the option (1) and blames the businesswoman* for choosing the option (2). But what makes them different? The businesswoman could have chosen the option (2) and she had no reason not to. Similarly, the

businesswoman* could have chosen the option (1) and she had no reason not to. In other words, the businesswoman does not have any reason 'in her' to choose the option (1), and the businesswoman* does not have any reason 'in her' to choose the option (2). Thus, it is merely a matter of luck that the businesswoman has chosen the option (1) and received Kane's praise; and the businesswoman* have chosen the option (2) and received Kane's blame. And this sort of luck is responsibility-subverting because it does not lie 'in the agents', rather, it is something beyond agents' control. In that sense Kane (or anyone) is not justified in praising or blaming them, if he (or anyone) really praises or blames the businesswoman and businesswoman* respectively. The main target of this luck objection is Kane's SFAs because an SFA involves an indeterministic "will-setting" action which is an easy prey of it.

The luck objection, as described above, is just a preliminary version. A number of philosophers have devised similar attack against Kane's account from different angles. Probably the strongest attack comes from Ishtiyaque Haji. Haji, in his series of papers and books, shows that Kane's SFAs, since they involve indeterministic "will-setting" actions, cannot escape from luck objection. Haji diagnoses that there is no appropriate action-explanation that explains why an SFA agent chooses one option rather than the other. And this lack of action-explanation is caused due to indeterminism involved in SFAs. In his recent work, Haji offers a thought experiment that shows this lack of action-explanation in libertarian accounts like Kane's account of SFAs:

> Claudia is deliberating about whether to buy a Coke or some fizzy water. Trying to cut down on caffeine, there is a reason for her to favor the water. But she enjoys caffeinated Coke more than she enjoy fizzy water; so she has a reason to favor Coke ... Claudia decides to buy the water, and this decision is indeterministically caused by prior beliefs, desires, values, and the like. Since the causation is indeterministic, given *exactly the same* past and the laws, Claudia could have decided to buy the Coke instead. Had she indeed decided in favor of the Coke, it is not that she would have deliberated differently from the way in which she actually did. Nor would it have been the case that she would have entertained other beliefs than the ones she entertained. Nor, again, is it true that she would have given more weight to Coke-favoring considerations than she did. We are to imagine that *everything* is to remain *exactly* as it is in the scenario in which Claudia decides to buy the water save for her final decision; she ends up deciding to buy the Coke. Hence, the decision to buy the water that Claudia (indeterministically) makes seems to be a matter of luck provided it is true that given an identical past (and the laws), she could have decided to buy the water instead. The difference between the actual world in which Claudia decides at the time at which she does to buy the water, and

> possible worlds with the same past and the laws in which she decides
> at this time to buy the Coke, is a matter of luck. If, contrary to fact,
> we imagine that Claudia had decided to buy the Coke and (for
> convenience) we call Coke-deciding Claudia "Claudia*, then it
> appears that Claudia's decision to buy the water is luck-infused;
> this is richly suggested by the following query: why did Claudia*
> decide to buy the Coke when *under (type- or near type-) identical*
> *conditions of the past*, Claudia decided to buy the water? There
> seems to be no good explanation of this fact.[23]

The upshot of Haji's thought experiment is that there is no explanation, in
terms of prior reasons, of what makes the difference between Claudia's
buying the fizzy water in actual world and Caudia*'s buying the Coke in
the possible world. The absence of such explanation indicates the presence
of luck which is responsibility-subverting because the agents in question do
not have any control over this luck. This luck does not lie 'in agents,' it lies
somewhere else beyond the agents' dominance. So, Haji's diagnosis seems
to me correct. But Kane seems to be not convinced. He, rather, thinks that
the indeterminism involved in "will-setting" actions or SFAs does not have
a mere external source—it is closely connected with the efforts that the SFA
agents make. He writes:

> One must imagine that the businesswoman ... she is being thwarted
> in her attempt to do what she is trying to do by indeterminism.
> But ... the indeterminism does not have a mere external source; it is
> coming from her own will, from desire to do the opposite ... She
> may therefore fail to do what she is trying to do ... But ... if she
> nevertheless succeeds, she can be held responsible because ... she
> will have succeeded in doing what she is trying to do ... this will
> be true of her, whichever choice is made, because she was trying
> to make both choices and one is going to succeed ... when she
> succeeds (in choosing to help the victim) her reaction is not "oh no,
> that was a mistake or accident—not something I did." Rather, she
> endorsed the outcome as something she was trying and wanting
> to do all along and recognized it as her resolution of the conflict
> in her will. And if she had chosen instead to go to her meeting (as
> did businesswoman*), she would have endorsed that outcome as
> well, recognizing it as her resolution of the conflict in her will.[24]

Here, Kane asks us to think about the efforts the SFA agents make in choosing
a certain action. Kane suggests that the indeterminism lies in the efforts of
the agents—it is not something separate from the efforts, rather, it is a property
of the efforts.[25] In other words, the indeterministic choice occurs because of the
agents' efforts. So, the indeterminism does not come from an external source, it
is, rather, rooted 'in agents' efforts. And whichever option an SFA agent chooses,

she has reasons to choose it and she endorses the outcome as she was trying to do it due to those reasons. In that sense, the SFA agents, even though there is an indeterminism, choose their options freely on the basis of their own reasons and, hence, ultimately responsible for the actions in question. I, however, think that Kane's explanations of 'agents' efforts' and 'whichever option the agents choose, they have reasons to choose it' do not solve the luck problem. Think again about the businesswoman. Kane considers that she has control over her action, since she acts on her reasons. But, I think, to have control over her action, she must have control over which reasons lead her to act. In other words, she has to have the control in making one option as the one that leads her to act. If she does not have such control which can be explained on the basis of her prior reasons, and which ultimately leads her to act in a certain way, then whichever option she chooses, she chooses by chance. The agent, in such situation, cannot offer any prior reasons based action-explanation. This lack of 'prior reasons based action-explanation,' once again, signals the presence of luck problem. The lack of prior reasons based action-explanation can be shown in the following way: suppose that we add a second possible world in the businesswoman/businesswoman* case, described above. The counterpart of businesswoman/businesswoman* in this possible world is businesswoman**. She is not torn between two competing desires. She is, rather, curiously watching her counterparts, the businesswoman of the actual world and the businesswoman* of the first possible world. Now, being asked to give an explanation of her counterparts' choosing options, she will say, I believe, "oh no, I really do not know why I have chosen this option in this world (say, actual world) while I have chosen that option in that world (say, first possible world)." This scenario reconfirms that there is no prior reasons based action-explanation that explains an SFA agent's choosing one option rather than another. And, again, this lack of prior reasons based action-explanation reconfirms that luck plays a central role in SFA agents' choosing one option rather than another. Of course, Kane finally acknowledges that there is arbitrariness in SFAs. He writes:

> One might argue also that a residual arbitrariness remains in such undetermined SFAs since there cannot in principle be sufficient or overriding prior reasons for making one choice and one set of reasons prevail over the other ... I grant this, but argue that such arbitrariness relative to prior reasons tells us something important about free will. It tells us that "every free choice (which is an SFA) is the initiation of a 'value experiment' whose justification lies in the future and is not fully explained by the past [making such a choice we say], in effect, 'Let's try this. It is not required by my past, but is consistent with my past and is one branching pathway my life could now meaningfully take. I am willing to take responsibility for it one way or the other.[26]

Here, the phrase 'whose justification lies in the future and is not fully explained by the past' invites serious metaphysical debates. Does Kane appeal to some sort of teleological causation? Can we offer an explanation of a present event by a future event? Does future justify the present? These, and the like, are the metaphysical questions that are invited by the above mentioned phrase. But in this paper I won't focus on these issues. I will, rather, be focused on Kane's acknowledgment about the presence of luck in SFAs. He admits that luck plays some role in SFAs because there cannot be, by assumption, any reason that makes one option prevail over the other in SFAs. But, according to him, it does not do so much harm to his theory of SFAs and free will as well; rather, it shows some important features of free will. And, here is where I get my final point: if there is luck in SFAs, it is there with its responsibility-subverting characteristics. It does not matter how much role it is playing. The matter is that when luck plays a role in choosing an action, the agents' responsibility for those actions is under question.

(b) The Problem of Akratic Actions: This objection, *i.e.* the problem of akratic action, is closely connected to luck objection. This objection against Kane's SFAs comes, again, from Ishtiyaque Haji. Haji claims that Kane's account of SFAs cannot handle akratic actions, because in cases of akratic actions, there are misalignments between agents' best judgments (moral or prudential) and their strongest motivations. Think about Haji's Claudia/Claudia* case. Claudia judges that the fizzy water is better for her whereas her desire for Coke is stronger than her desire for water. So, the motivational strength of her desire for Coke is misaligned with her evaluation of the object, *i.e.* how good the Coke is for her.[27] Under these circumstances, Claudia buys the fizzy water in accordance of her best judgment. She does not act akratically. But unlike Claudia, Claudia* acts akratically—she buys the Coke against her best judgment. But why does Claudia* acts akratically? It is not the case that she weighs more to her Coke-favoring considerations; it is not, either, the case that her beliefs about fizzy water have been changed. Everything, by assumption, remains the same as it is when she buys the fizzy water in actual world. In fact, when she buys the Coke in the possible world, she still holds the judgment that it is better for her to buy the fizzy water.[28] Thus, it appears that there is nothing, accept the presence of luck, about Claudia*'s deliberations that can explain why she, unlike Claudia, intends to buy the Coke against her best judgment, instead of buying the fizzy water which is consistent with her best judgment. So, it seems that Kane's account of SFAs cannot explain the akratic actions. In fact, it fails to accommodate akratic actions within SFAs.

Kane, however, does not agree that his account of SFAs fails to accommodate akratic actions. He thinks that the 'problematic' misalignment does not take

place prior to the choice is made. The misalignment occurs, according to him, at the moment of choice. He explains: "But this worry fails to take account ... The desire to go to her meeting does not become the strongest or prevailing desire for businesswoman* until she makes it so at the moment of choice. For SFAs generally, akratic misalignment does not preexist the choice; it is created by akratic agents themselves when they choose."[29]

Now, I see, there is a scope of confusion. It seems to me that for Haji, the misalignment between the motivational strength of the desire on which the akratic agent in question acts and her best judgment occurs *before* the agent makes her choice. But for Kane, this misalignment occurs *at the moment* when the agent makes her choice. So, when Haji's akratic agent can 'see' which one is the best option for her (though she does not act upon her judgment), Kane's akratic agent is still torn between the options. Kane's akratic agent, since she is passing through an SFA, is not allowed to say that she has a better reason for either of the options. However, if Haji is correct, *i.e.* the misalignment takes place before the agent makes her choice, then Kane's account of SFAs cannot handle the akratic actions, because his account cannot give explanation of why the agent in question acts akratically. Of course, in that case it is open to Kane to say that the akratic actions, in the way Haji describes it, are not SFAs at all. On the other hand, if Kane is correct, *i.e.* the misalignment takes place at the moment when the agent makes her decision, then Kane's account can accommodate akratic actions within SFA. But, then, another issue will come in and that issue is how one can distinguish between pure SFAs and akratic actions (*akratic* SFAs).

However, from the above discussion, it seems to me that we cannot conclude either way before we are settled about the characteristics of akratic action, *i.e.* whether it takes place before the choice is made or at the moment of choice. But settling the characteristics of akratic action is beyond the scope of the present paper. So, I better leave the debate open.

(c) The Paradox of SFAs: It seems to me paradoxical that a self which is already there performs an action to form itself. Let us call it the *Paradox of SFAs*. One way to get rid of this paradox is to consider that the self-formation is a gradual process, and one forms one's self or character by passing through a series of relevant SFAs. Kane's evaluation of Luther's "Here I stand. I can do no other" indicates this feature of SFAs. But it invites a dilemma: does the outcome of the previous (or the first) SFAs sufficiently cause the outcomes of the later SFAs? Either it does or it does not. If it does, then the later SFAs are not genuine SFAs, because in that case the SFA agents become one way willed and there won't be plural voluntariness, plural rationality or plural intentionality. In other words, if

the outcome of previous SFAs sufficiently causes the outcomes of later SFAs, then the SFA agents, in later time, do not have AP, and hence, the later SFAs are not genuine SFAs. In fact, to be a genuine SFA, each SFA needs to be *individual*, *unique* and must be thought as *the first* SFA because it cannot be determined by any previous SFA's outcome. On the other hand, if previous SFAs do not sufficiently cause the later SFAs, then later SFAs are genuine SFAs. But the problem is that in that case the SFAs are not really 'self-forming' actions. It is not unlikely that after performing an SFA at t_1 an agent, say Jones, returns the wallet (full of hundred dollar bills) he found somewhere, and the same person Jones pockets the dollars instead of returning the wallet after performing another SFA at t_2. In these cases, both SFAs, *i.e.* SFA at t_1 and SFA at t_2, are genuine SFAs, but none can be said as 'character forming' actions. Indeed, in our everyday life we perform many such SFAs that are inconsistent with each other. So, SFAs are "will-setting" actions, but they do not form our characters in the way that Kane thinks. All SFAs are individual, unique and impromptu. So, we can say, if the previous (or the first) SFAs sufficiently cause the later SFAs, then later SFAs are not genuine SFAs. And, if the previous SFAs do not sufficiently cause the later SFAs, then later SFAs are not self-forming actions.

Finally, Kane's account of SFAs is interesting and innovative. The most groundbreaking contribution of his account of SFAs is that it provides support for our intuition that to be morally responsible for many of our actions we do not need to have AP then and there. If some action is caused by our character, we are ultimately responsible for that action even though we may not have AP at the time we perform that action. But Kane's account of SFAs faces some troubles; particularly, it involves a responsibility-subverting luck problem which severely undermines the tenability of the whole theory. Had it resolved the luck problem, it would have been one of the most plausible theories in the relevant field.

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Notes and References:

1. Kane, Robert (2000a): "Free Will and Responsibility: Ancient Dispute, New Themes," *The Journal of Ethics* 4, Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 315. [It is worth noting that Kane distinguishes free will from freedom of action. To have freedom of will an agent needs to be the ultimate originator of his will. But an agent may have some sort of freedom of action even when she is not the ultimate originator of her germane action. If there is some sort of indeterminism and the agent could have done otherwise (even by chance or by accident) than what she has actually done, then the agent has, at least, some 'limited' sort of freedom of action, though she may not will freely. This happens in K-world (discussed later).

The agents of K-world, according to Kane, have some limited sort of freedom of action, since they could have done otherwise by accident or by chance in Austinean manner, and there is indeterminism too. Despite having freedom of action, the agents of K-world do not have freedom of will because all of their wills are preset by God. For detail, see: Robert Kane (1996a): pp. 75-77, Kane (2000b): pp. 60-61, Kane (2005): pp. 126-28].

2. Kane, Robert (2005): *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc, p. 121.
3. Kane, Robert (2000b): "The Dual Regress of Free Will and the Role of Alternative Possibilities," *Philosophical Perspective*, 14, *Action and Freedom*, p. 65.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
5. *Ibid.,* p. 60.
6. Kane, Robert (2005): pp. 126-28.
7. Kane Robert (2000b): p. 60.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
9. Kane, Robert (1996a): "Freedom, Responsibility and Will-Setting," *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 1996, p. 76.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
11. Kane, Robert (1996b): *The Significance of Free Will*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 125.
12. Kane, Robert (1996a): p. 68.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 70
14. Kane, Robert (2005): p. 128.
15. Kane, Robert (1996a): p. 78.
16. *Ibid*., p. 78.
17. *Ibid*., p. 79.
18. Kane Robert (2000b): p. 71.
19. Kane, Robert (1996a): p. 79.
20. *Ibid*., p. 79.
21. *Ibid*., p. 80.
22. Kane, Robert (2000b): pp. 72-73.
23. Haji, Ishtiyaque (2009): *Incompatibilism's Allure: Principal Arguments for Incompatibilism*, Broadview Press, pp.185, 187-88.
24. Kane, Robert (1999): "On Free Will, Responsibility and Indeterminism: Response to Clarke, Haji and Mele," *Philosophical Exploration* 2, pp. 112-13
25. Kane, Robert (2000a): p. 321.
26. *Ibid*., p. 322.
27. Haji, Ishtiyaque (2009): p. 194.
28. *Ibid*., p. 194.
29. Kane, Robert (1999): Note 7.