Robert Kane, “Responsibility, Luck, and Chance”

I. The Luck Principle (299-305)

A. What is the luck principle and why is it a problem for libertarians? (299-301)

B. What sorts of lines of reasoning (Kane’s “intuition pumps”) support the luck principle? (301-305)

II. Indeterminism and Responsibility (305-312)

A. Why does Kane caution against equating terms like “luck” or “chance” with “indeterminism”? (305)

B. How does Kane argue that libertarians need not insist that indeterminism is involved in every free and responsible actions? What does Kane mean by a “self-forming action” (SFA)? How does Kane’s story of the businesswoman illustrate his conception of an SFA? (305-307)

C. How do the examples of the assassin with the jerking arm and the husband arguing with his wife help to show that indeterminism can be compatible with responsibility? (308-309)

D. How do the examples of the assassin and husband differ, in a significant way, from the example of the businesswoman’s SFA? How does this difference motivate Kane to consider a new version of the luck principle (LP*) that would be immune from the objections to LP raised by the examples of the assassin and husband? (309-310)

III. How LP* Fails According to Kane (312-317)

A. How does the possibility of “parallel processing” in the brain enable Kane to build the indeterminancy present in the examples of the assassin and husband into the formation of the will of the businesswoman and John and enable us to see how, regardless of which choice they make, they will make it voluntarily and intentionally? (312-313)

B. Why is it important for Kane to stress that “one must think of the effort and the indeterminism as fused” in examples of self-forming actions under consideration? (313-314)

C. Why does the inference, “He got lucky, so he was not responsible” fail when applied to the cases of the husband and the assassin? How does it, likewise, fail
when applied to the case of the businesswoman SFA? (314-315)

D. How does Kane respond to the objection that since a duplicate of the businesswoman and John (up to the moment of choice) in another possible world could make a completely different choice the difference between the two versions of the businesswoman and John can only be a matter of chance? (315-317)

IV. Control and Explanation (318-321)

A. After admitting that indeterminism always diminishes or is a hindrance to an agent’s voluntary control, Kane argues that agents making SFAs still have what he calls “plural voluntary control”? What does he mean by this and how does he distinguish it from “antecedent determining control”? How does he argue that plural voluntary control still enables us to say an agent determines which action will occur (if not before it occurs, then) when it occurs? (318-319)

B. After admitting that indeterministic choices are, in a sense, arbitrary, how does Kane go on to qualify this admission by . . .

1. characterizing SFAs as “value experiments” “whose justification lies in the future and is not fully explained by the past” (319) and . . .

2. comparing the situation of an agent making an SFA to an author making a decision about how a character in her novel will act? (321)

3. 