

## AN EXAMINATION OF ROBERT KANE'S PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

**Okechukwu, Chidiebere Peter**

Department of Philosophy

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

[okechukwuchidiebepeter@gmail.com](mailto:okechukwuchidiebepeter@gmail.com); [chidiebere.okechukwu@unn.edu.ng](mailto:chidiebere.okechukwu@unn.edu.ng)

+2348030978892

&

**Bruno Yammeluan Ikuli**

Institute of Foundation Studies,

Federal University Otueke,

P.M.B. 126, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

[ikuliby@fuotueke.edu.ng](mailto:ikuliby@fuotueke.edu.ng); Phone: +2348052500435

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.36675.73766

### **Abstract**

*Over the years, there has been the contention among some philosophers on the nature of an action. Some argue that for an action to occur, there must be some certain mental dispositions such as willing, volition and the engagement of the mind, in connection with responsibility. As it were, action theory takes care of issues like; freewill, motive, intention, etc., which are of course littered in the writings of Kane. In this light, Kane sustains that an action that responsibility should be accorded is that action that was done with the will of an agent, who is a rational being. This work highlight the ideas of Kane as it refers to action theory themes found therein and thus places him in a particular classification of Action Theories highlighted in philosophy.*

**Keywords:** Robert Kane, Philosophy of Action, Freewill, Intention Motive

### **Introduction**

The central point that would first come to the mind of a rational person (at least a deep thinker) is the idea that an individual is both a subject and an agent; active and passive. The issues that largely surround philosophy of Action are topics like autonomy, criminal liability, freewill, decision, reasoning, intention, etc. As humans, we tend to act in the world, and for every of our actions, there is that mental element, that point of deliberation and decision. Hence, the very nature of an individual, is that he is an agent with action and experience, agency and consciousness, and they all go in one accord. Njoku F. O. C, defines Action as the

doing of humans, hence, a product of the will.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the work of the will is to change the world, not necessarily to fathom it. Its role also is to make the world comfortable with what an acting individual would want, not necessarily to characterize it.<sup>2</sup> The will is by nature active, it effects change by virtue of its characteristics to cause substantial changes. It must be linked with corporal acts that could bring about those changes.<sup>3</sup> Actions bring about changes in the world. For an action to occur, a certain mental disposition has to be in place. This mental disposition must take into cognizance the working of the will and the intellect.

### **Reason for the strong Debate on Action and Freewill: Kane's Five Freedoms and Action propellers**

Kane sustains that the reason why the problem of freewill/ free action is difficult is that "freedom" is a word with many meanings. He identifies five notions of freedom and action propellers which for him, play an important role in historical debates about freewill in general.

The first notion is freedom of self-realization; seen as "the power or ability to do what we want or will to do, which entails an absence of external constraints or impediments preventing us from realizing our wants and purposes in action."<sup>4</sup> The constraint that may undermine this freedom Kane says are of different kinds; like being in jail, physical restraints by force, paralysis etc. these constraints are external, and are impediments outside our wills, and prevent us from realizing our wills in action; that is, the freedom of self-realization. These constraints for Kane are what Classical compatibilists tended to focus on when talking about freedom. They had less to say about internal constraints within the will, such as compulsions, obsessions, neuroses, and addictions, that may also affect freedom. These internal constraints come into the picture with the second kind of freedom.

Kane also likens this notion of freedom of self-realization as surface freedoms of action, that is, the freedoms to buy what we want, go where we please, live as we choose, without interference or harassment from others. He stresses that the first freedom of self-realization is compatible with determinism, as argued by classical compatibilists such as Hobbes, Hume, and Mill. It thus means that this freedom is compatibilists freedom. This freedom Kane also sees as the freedom in line with those social and political freedoms such as freedom to speak one's mind to associate with whom we please, etc. But the freedom in every significant sense worth wanting, that Kane defends is the freedom that is not compatible with determinism.

The second notion of freedom is the Freedom of (Reflective or Rational) Self-control; seen as “the power to understand and reflectively evaluate the reasons and motives one wants to act upon, or should act upon, and to control one’s behavior in accordance with such reflectively considered reasons.”<sup>5</sup> This goes beyond the freedom of self-realization. Thus, to have reflective self-control, one should be both capable of reflecting on what desires or other motives one wants to have or should have, and be capable of controlling one’s behavior in the light of such reflections. Kane furthers that this second freedom of reflective self-control allows one to take account of internal constraints on the will; such as compulsions, obsessions, addictions, and neuroses, which were neglected by classical compatibilists. Such internal constraints can also undermine freedom; and they can do so even when no external constraints would prevent us from doing what we want. Kane though sees that this second freedom goes beyond the first, but it is also a compatibilist freedom. Hence, having the power to reflectively evaluate one’s reasons for acting and to control one’s behavior in the light of these evaluations is a freedom consistent with determinism. It then follows that the freedom of reflective self-control does not even require alternative possibilities or the power to do otherwise, and this for Kane makes it compatible with determinism.

The third notion of freedom is the Freedom of Self-perfection; seen by Susan Wolf as “the power to understand and appreciate the right reasons for action and to guide one’s behavior in accordance with the right reasons.”<sup>6</sup> The freedom of reflective self-control has been viewed by wolf as necessary for freedom and responsibility but not sufficient. It then means that something needs to be added. To explain the views of Wolf, Kane writes that True freedom and responsibility requires that agents be able “to do the right thing for the right reasons” or “to act in accordance with the True and the Good.” We may call this ability.<sup>7</sup> To get what these right reasons are, thus the third freedom of self-perfection. Kane also agrees that this third freedom, the power to do the right thing for the right reasons is compatible with determinism (but this runs contrary to Kane’s position though). Kane distinguishes this from the ultimate freedom of self-creation that libertarians insist upon for free will, which Wolf thinks is impossible.

The fourth and the fifth notions of freedom are the Freedom of Self-determination and Freedom of Self-formation. Notably, the three freedoms discussed above are compatibilist freedom. Their defenders see them as compatible with freedom, but the remaining two freedoms are by difference libertarian freedoms. The Freedom of Self-determination; is seen as “the power or ability to act of your own free will

in the sense of a will (character, motives and purposes) of your own making; a will that you yourself, to some degree, were ultimately responsible for forming.”<sup>8</sup> In this case, being self-determining, or acting “of your own free will” does not require that an agent in question has the power to do otherwise here and now. An agent’s will may have become so corrupted that he can no longer do otherwise. But he still might be ultimately responsible for what he does if he himself was responsible to some degree for creating his corrupt will by virtue of earlier undetermined acts in his life history. The freedom of self-determination thus presupposes a further incompatibilist freedom, the fifth notion of freedom which is the Freedom of Self-formation; seen as “the power to form one’s own will in a manner that is undetermined by one’s past by virtue of will-setting or self-forming actions (SFAs) over which one has plural voluntary control.”<sup>9</sup>

Kane sustains that incompatibilists do not deny that the first three compatibilist freedoms are valuable and important freedoms worth wanting, but they insist that the first three compatibilist freedoms are not enough to account for genuine freedom of the will and true responsibility. Incompatibilists might even grant the importance of the freedom of self-perfection as a kind of ideal freedom. But they will insist that what we want to know when we think about free will and responsibility is not merely whether someone is a saint who always does the right thing or a monster. We also want to know whether saintly or monstrous persons were ultimately responsible to some degree for making themselves into the saints or monsters they became by exercising the freedoms of self-determination and self-formation.<sup>10</sup>

It is worth noting that the freedom of self-determination presupposes the freedom of self-formation, but not all self-determining acts are self-forming; however, all self-forming acts are self-determining. Kane explains further that we often act from a will already formed, and are thus self-determining; but it is our own free will by virtue of the fact that we formed it by earlier acts that were will-setting or self-forming; hence, the Self-Forming Actions (SFAs).

Kane sees that the freedom of self-determining is an incompatibilist freedom in that while individual exercises of the freedom of self-determination do not have to be undetermined and such that the agent could have done otherwise, the freedom of self-determination itself cannot exist in a determined world.<sup>11</sup> Self-determination for the compatibilists is to be able to determine one’s actions in terms of the Real or Deep Self with which one is wholeheartedly committed; or it is to be able to control one’s desires in terms of one’s Reason or values; as well as being able to do what one wants without hindrances or impediments. On the

contrary, Self-determination for the incompatibilists requires in addition that, your Real or Deep Self, or your Reason or your Values, cannot in turn be wholly determined by something outside or beyond your own self. Hence, you yourself must be in part responsible for being the kind of person you are. This is the way Kane captures and explains the five notions of freedom which, he considers, have played vital roles in historical debates about freewill.

### **A Glimpse of Relevant Action Theories' Identification**

Within this connection, Action Theory concerns itself with the distinction between things that happen to a person and things that one does or makes happen. It takes care of issues like; motive, decision, desires, purpose, deliberation, decision, intention, trying, freewill, etc. It follows then that, "the problem of action is to explicate the contrast between what an agent does and what merely happens to him, or between the bodily movements that he makes and those that occur without his making them."<sup>12</sup> A central problem is the question of volition, what connects intention with bodily movement. In Robert Kane, an action that responsibility should be accorded is that action that was done with the will of an agent, who is a rational being. Hence, an acting individual is to be responsible for whatever he does, and that there is enough and essential/necessary reason for the occurring of that act.<sup>13</sup>

To discuss the philosophy of Action as gleaned from the writings of Kane, and its proper placement; one needs to understand where his emphasis lies. As already established, action theory takes care of issues like; freewill, motive, intention, etc., which are of course littered in the writings of Kane. As a result, it is proper then to place Kane in a particular classification of Action Theories. Hence, there have been different identifications of Action Theory. F. O. C. Njoku notes the identification of Brand as: The Old-time Voluntary Theory, Mental Action Theory, The Causal Theory, and the Double Action Theory.<sup>14</sup> On his part, Jerome, A. Shaffer, identifies five as follows; Mental Act Theory, Theory of Agency, Performative Theory, Goal-oriented Theory, and Contextual Theory. However, the emphasis that is laid is to explain intentional Action.

Subsequently, the relevant nature of Kane's freewill discourse, and his emphasis on the ultimate responsibility placed upon the acting individual/agent, one can here place Kane in the category of the Theory of Agency. However, it will be extended to the Volition Theory that places action from the will/willing of the acting individual.

### **The Volition Theory: Kane's Connection and the Point of Divergence**

The Volitionist theorists hold that to produce an act/action, there must be an independent act of the will. Arguably, desire inclines one's will. For instance, when one actively raises up his arm, that arm goes up because one wants it so. Thus, the volitionists insist that action is an act of the will coupled with the bodily movement. Willing/volition is the cause of acting. It could be passive or active. It is passive as a state of mind when it is activated by decision. It is active when an action proceeds from desire/will. When one sees the deployment of choice and decision, there could be the quick nudge to place Kane's idea in this category, but he himself contends this designation.<sup>15</sup> This shall be taken care of later.

From the foregoing, Kane argues that the issue of freewill, and in this connection, action theory is that freedom which an agent enjoys is predicated on the fact that the agent has his will; hence, freedom of the will. It is only a person who could have freewill. He touches back two types of reasoning as put forwards by Aristotle namely: Theoretical, that spells out 'what is the case'; and practical reasoning, which takes care of 'what is to be done'. The capacity for theoretical reasoning he observes as "the Intellect (*intellectus*)" and the capacity for practical reasoning he sees as "the will (*voluntas*)".<sup>16</sup> Hence, the expressions rational agency or selfness, defined as the capability to reason and to act in a rational way, means then having both a will and an intellect.

This position is initially employed by Aquinas. Kane submits that to be an individual or rational agent is to have the capacity to reason, and this is essential for the exercise of anything one could call freewill. By implication, the will as rational will, is a set of conceptually interconnected capabilities, comprising of the capability to deliberate, or to think in a practical manner, to select, to make real-world judgments, to process intentions, to analyze rationale for action, etc."<sup>17</sup> He makes a distinction between 'freedom of will', which for him, includes freedom of choice/decision; and 'freedom of the will' which for him is more than freedom of choice/decision. In this broader sense, choices/decisions bring about intentions, then actions are their results. Intention here relates to purposes; hence, a decision could be designated as both the development of intention and the establishment of an objective that successively directs action. Kane's formula for freewill is; the ability/power to be the ultimate creator/sustainer of an individual's goals.<sup>18</sup>

It is to be noted that Kane's use of choice and decision is in the ordinary sense; hence, they are not to be mistaken as volitions. He submits that "the controversial

claim of these volition theories is that all actions qua actions are necessarily initiated by volitions, even when we are not aware of trying or making an effort to perform them"; thus, Volition is a technical term of action theory oriented to issues that arise about the initiation of action.<sup>19</sup> He goes further to declare that his use of decision and choice here signify 'settlements of conditions of doubt or uncertainty in the mind.' Despite, the fact that Kane has given this explanation, one could, by the very fact of his use of them see him as that philosopher that lays emphasis on the relevance of choice and decision. Be that as it may, he debars choice and decision from what he sees as a controversy in the minds of volitionists. It then follows from the point made in this thesis that Kane could be called a Neo-volitionist, having taking a break away from the tradition and bringing in his new designation of choice and decision as "settlements of conditions of doubt or uncertainty in the mind."<sup>20</sup> This position, (Neo-volitionist), is thus placed because of the way he moved away from the position of the Volitionists.

He employs the idea of Gilbert Ryle, who states certain identified progressions with which volitions are occasionally erroneously branded. Thus, individuals are time and again in doubt about what to do; having considered alternate sequences of action, they occasionally select one of these paths. This process of opting for one of a set of alternate sequences of action is sometimes said to be "volition." But this designation will not do, for most normal acts are not borne out of situations of indecisiveness and are not therefore outcomes of settlements of indecisiveness.<sup>21</sup> Kane notes that the use of decision and choice by Ryle, (as to settlement of indecision) play an important role in his details on freewill. Here, they sometimes terminate deliberation/negotiation, and sometimes initiate action; but their pivotal role in freewill is that they essentially form intentions and create purposes that guide actions/acts, both in the future and now. He thence wraps up his line of thought, holding that the theory to follow does not require any technical notion of volitions or 'tryings' as initiators of all actions. He continues that what the theory *does* entail are efforts and trying as we ordinarily experience them when we *are aware of resistance* to our mental/physical activities. Volitional theories are thus not required, but striving will *is* required. This is the distinction Kane makes, which this work sets as what could be called a Neo-volitionist. Thus, Kane explicates, choices and decisions are *acts* of mind (or will), and hence events that happen at a time, possibly terminating deliberations and giving rise to intentions. Distinctively, intentions are the mind's state that persevere through time and direct actions/acts.

He went further to discuss the 'will' in three other senses differing from the rational will, which for him plays a role in account of freewill. He reflects on the familiar expression "I can do what I will to do," which has appeared in many views on freewill. In this way he says, "What I will to do" he reasons takes divergent meanings. It could mean he says: what I long, want or prefer to do; what I *choose, or have an intention* to carry out; what I endeavor or struggle to do.<sup>22</sup> He submits that the second (ii) of these meanings represents rational will, the will as practical resulting in what agents choose, decide or intend. While the meaning (i) refers to desiderative or appetitive will, that is, when willing is seen as craving for, or being inclined to a particular outcome. Then, meaning (iii) refers to what he calls 'striving will,' a term he borrowed from O'Shaughnessy Brian. He conceives that common to each is the fact that each signifies an inclination towards some end that is desired, selected or struggled for. Hence his thesis about freewill involves the three senses of the will, but in different ways. To justify this, he reconsiders practical reason, and views that Wishes, longings, inclinations, and other expressions of wills that desiderative are parts of the make of practical reasoning. For him; they work as motives for one's choice or one's cause of action. By contrast, choices, decisions, and intentions, the expressions of rational will, are the outputs of practical reasoning, its products."<sup>23</sup> His indeterminacy on freewill for him comes somewhere amongst the input and the output, among desiderative and the will which is rational, the indeterminacy that is "in the will" of the agent.

He takes up another technical meaning for wills which he says is important for freewill because it falls between the three senses highlighted above. Kane writes using (W) for "Will" and (t) for time. Thus, an individual *resolves* to do something at a specific time (t), just peradventure the same individual has explanations or reasons at that specific time (t) for doing it that the individual wants to act on more than she wishes to act on any added rationale for acting contrarily.<sup>24</sup> It could be remarked here that the introduction of time "t" is a way Kane carefully settles the question of what an act is-the problem of individuation. This individuation is needed to clear the relatedness of an act to another, say; raising of one's arm and the arm going up. Here, Alvin Goldman distinguishes between act-types and act-token. An act-type is just a property; for instance, writing a letter. Any time an act is attributed to a person, the person thus shows a property; for instance, Anthony writes a letter. But when a person exemplifies that act of doing a thing at a specific time; hence, act-token. For example; Anthony writes a letter at 6pm. Hence, an act-token is not a property by a person (agent).<sup>25</sup>

Kane further makes some distinctions between reason and motive. He submits that the inputs of practical reason include; wishes, cravings, and other expressions of will that are desiderative. They all work as reasons for choice or action. A rationale for choosing or acting is a mental approach of an individual that can be properly named in response to the demand of why the individual performed whatever action.<sup>26</sup> It is one thing to have a reason and another to act for that reason. He argues for reason more in the psychological attitude sense. On the other hand, motive he argues has been used by some thinkers interchangeably with reason. However, he notes the slight difference. He writes that an individual can have a motive for doing something because it is not attended to; it does not enter into the individual's deliberation and does not influence his choice. For him, motive moves, while reason explain; reason cannot explain actual choices/actions unless they in fact move the agent towards the action performed.<sup>27</sup> On the contrary, if motives in fact travel toward choosing/acting, they should perform a role in clarifications of why the choosing/acting ensued.

Kane, however, furthers the distinction on what the agent wills to do, (as in W for Will) by explaining the meaning of voluntary and involuntary action. The involuntary is what an individual does against his will; while voluntary is what an individual does out of his will, something done without any form of pressure. To explain this further, Kane arrives at (V) thus "an individual acts *voluntarily* (or *willingly*) at t just in case, at t, the individual acts what he wills to act (as in W), for the rationale that prompted his acting thus, and the individual's acting that way and willing to act so are as a result of forcefulness or coercion.<sup>28</sup> In this connection, Aristotle, discussing Voluntary action holds that "...the man acts voluntarily for the principle that moves the instrumental pain of the body is in him, and the things of which the moving principle is in a man himself, are in his power to do or not to do.<sup>29</sup> Hence, voluntary action are those done by choice, that is, the actions an individual has control of. Kane, however, is not comfortable with this ground of voluntary action. He argues that it is not enough to throw off the argument of the compatibilists; hence something more is needed and that which is needed, is not just the ability to act otherwise, that is, AP, alternative possibility gauge, but (UR) ultimate responsibility gauge, that up-to-ness of the individual.

As noted earlier, irrespective of the contention of Kane, to break away from the Volitionists, his employment of choice and desire even in the ordinary sense as he stated still brings his idea in connection with them; however, (on this ground, this work better placed him on a ladder as a neo-volitionist) because of his explanation that they were employed for the 'settlements of conditions of doubt or uncertainty

in the mind. Be that as it may, there is another proper place where Kane's idea could be placed.

### **Theory of Agency**

The Theory of Agency emphasizes that the cause of an action is not an event, but an agent.<sup>30</sup> There is then a distinction between event-causation and agent-causation. Sequel to this, an emphasis is laid that an agent follows voluntarily to act of which he/she can do otherwise. Note that this is evident in Kane's self-forming Actions (SFA), which is built upon the UR (Ultimate Responsibility). Thus, to argue that the acting agent/individual caused his action and not any event outside of him is to create a chance for ethical/moral responsibility. It then presupposes that an individual who acts does that through his will/choices he makes or he sees as good. Kane is that one philosopher who has, in his freewill/responsibility discourse, always emphasized the agent's causation. He follows the position of Ben Sirach of the part of the Scripture named Deuteronomical/Apocrypha, (Ecclesiasticus 15:14), that God himself has made all human beings in the beginning and then left free to make their own decision/choices (Freewill).

Notably, freewill, for Kane, lies on the power to act and to act otherwise too. This is the idea of Alternate Possibility, which Kane holds that it is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for freewill. But the core of the freewill he argues here is that there is this "ultimate responsibility" placed upon the actor, which most thinkers have often neglected. And this for him he seeks to justify and bring to the limelight.

He takes into cognizance the case of Martin Luther when he broke off from the Church of Rome. Luther made an assertion that he stands where he is, and that he cannot do otherwise. This assertion may not have hidden the 'Alternate Possibility Criterion' as a way of justifying moral responsibility, but Kane argues in line with other incompatibilists that moral responsibility will be on the shoulders of Luther when one checks up the circumstances and background of his action. Hence, if his action issues from his character and motives at the time it was made, then his moral accountability for it would depend on whether he was responsible for being the sort of person he had become at that time. Ironically, Kane believes *inter alia* that one is responsible in such a case because one chose those choices and 'acts' and making oneself into the type of person one is hitherto. This is a logical blend of his idea of 'Self Forming Actions (SFAs)'. The agent causation of Kane's theory is traceable to his position that one acts upon freewill in so far as the origin of that act is in that agent rather than something not within his control.<sup>31</sup> He maintains

that UR, (Ultimate Responsibility) lies in the person who performs out of his will, even when that act is traceable to the SFA.

Kane places responsibility to an individual who acts, no matter the cause (whatsoever), even if there was a neglect in the early days of the life of that individual, that necessitated the action. He argues that if a man is arraigned in court for murder, that it is possible for those there to feel angry towards him for that act. But if on the same situation it was learnt that he suffered parental neglect, a pitiable situation, that it is possible to reduce the blames upon him, and then the feeling of pity will set in. There comes the question: how responsible is he for the act? Kane places the responsibility on the man (a connection between with agency theory) in that the man could have chosen to do otherwise. To make clear the theory of agency inherent in Kane's discourse, he defines freewill as the ability of an acting individual to be the ultimate/sole originator and nurturer of his own goals.<sup>32</sup> Hence, to act freely is to be unobstructed in the chase of one's purposes, usually expressed by intentions. And to will freely is to be the ultimate creator, or the prime mover of one's own purposes. This freeness, so to speak, is not to be traced to anything hereditary or God, because it will amount to the fact that the individual who acts will bear the sole responsibility, that is (Ultimate R), but on some power or force outside of him. It is at this point he balances with the traditional libertarians that freewill is associated, and intimately linked with moral responsibility.

The responsibility still rests on the agent because of his belief in freewill as a power. He insists that freeness of an action is not to be traced to anything hereditary, not even God. If this is done, he sustains, it will not be up-to the agent/acting individual; hence, the agency theory. This view is buttressed by Galen Strawson who opines that one is verily deserving praise (or blame) because it is up-to-oneself the dictates of one's action.<sup>33</sup> Kane notes that there could be a situation where one's action could be determined by an existing character, freely formed by one in the past and those acts formed could be freely changed; and for this reason, (of its own ability to do otherwise as an alternative possibility AP) those acts remain free, and are up-to the acting individual/agent. This is his idea of SFAs, (Self-Forming-Actions).

For Kane, there are two conditions for freewill, namely; Alternate possibility (AP) and Ultimate Responsibility (UR). He recounts that there are two causes why some persons are led to consider that determinism and freewill are not compatible. The first is that freewill by nature should possess that alternate possibility, that forking path garden that is open for a choice to be made; the up-to-us-ness. Secondly,

freewill entails that the cause of the act comes from the individual actor, and not something apart from himself; not even the acts of a god or power somewhere, that he cannot handle.<sup>34</sup> Kane's main argument here seems to be not in the alternate possibility, but in the ultimate responsibility. Hence, having alternate possibility is not enough, but there should be something else that can make the argument stand out, which is, Ultimate responsibility. To be ultimately accountable for an act Kane views, an individual necessarily must be answerable for whatever that is an adequate rationale, root, or purpose for the act's happening. If for example, a particular choice of action comes from, and can be adequately explicated by an individual's personality traits and motivations, then to be ultimately accountable for the choice, the individual must be in part accountable by benefit of choices or actions executed in the past for having the personality trait and motivations he possesses at the moment. He then holds that people often act from the will already formed, and as such, it is our own freewill in that we formed it by past free choices and actions. This is in line with the idea of Aristotle who holds that if a person is answerable for the noble or ignoble acts that stream from his personality traits or character, he of necessity at some period in the past has been answerable for developing the noble or ignoble character from which these acts stream. This is Kane's backbone for the idea of Ultimate responsibility.

Paradoxically, Kane views that Ultimate Responsibility does not rule out the possibility that our choices and actions might be determined by our wills, characters, and motives; however, he points out that to be absolutely accountable for what one is, and for one to have freewill, one must be accountable for developing the personality traits or character that hitherto determine one's actions. Hence, if John kills someone at school, due to the fact that he was determined by his character; he could still be held responsible for his acts, because his will and character were formed by his previous picks and acts, not simply by the social order or genetic material or other influences over which he could not take charge of. Hence, the Ultimate Responsibility is the hub of freewill debate in that; it is about the forming of character and motives that are the sources of praiseworthy or blameworthy actions. Hence one ought to take responsibility for any act that flows from their wills, and also be accountable for developing the wills where those acts flow from. This position arguably is a far cry from the position of Galen Strawson, who would hold that being a decisive cause of individual's will is illogical and unmanageable, because it would necessitate one to be a chief driving force of oneself, self-caused (*causa sui*), which is absurd.

However, Kane holds that if freewill requires such an idea, it has to be incompatible with determinism. He sees the freewill issue as severely hypothetical, for it pertains to the origin and rationale behind some relevant matters in the world, namely: what we choose and what we do. To have freewill then, whatever an individual chooses and acts upon must be up to him. In line with Aristotle, he claims that an action is up to an individual when he the origin streams from him and nothing more than him; hence, being ultimately accountable. Arguing further, Kane tries to juxtapose the ultimate responsibility and alternate possibility. He holds that both of them are connected and have something to do with freewill after all. To prove this point, he returns to his previous position that having other paths is not adequate for freewill, even if the other paths are undetermined. Thus, responsibility is placed upon an agent when he has acted in response to his Self-Formed Actions that are not determined, but are with the whole gamut of the agent's own free choices. By and large, the theory of agency of Kane is that the cause of an action by an agent is not from an event outside of an agent who acts, but on the agent himself, thus; responsibility should be placed on his (blameworthy or praiseworthy) shoulders.

### **Evaluation and Conclusion**

Kane, one would say has in a dogged way outlined his action and freewill theory in a logical process. He broke away from the ordinary view of action/freewill theory to a metaphysical height. But the question is; how free is the deep free action advanced by Kane? Even though Kane rightly holds that life itself is not just on the basis of freedom and action in the common usage, but on the idea that we as men have some level of responsibility, experience has shown that ultimate responsibility is not always tenable. Imagine a situation where a man is convicted for killing his wife. He was arraigned in the law court and all blames thrown on him for carrying out such a heinous act. Imagine also that he told his story on how the mother did same to the father that led to his abandonment as a teenager who had no direction. He then suffered so many humiliations and bad weathers with the scorching of the sun. It is apparently human to begin to shift some of the blames off his shoulders and shift them to the parents for their negligence. At this juncture, would he be said to be ultimately responsible since for him the "up-to-us-ness" also suggests that the ultimate sources of our actions lie in us and not outside us in factors beyond our control? This serves as a problem when it comes to the issue of ultimate responsibility Kane proposes in his idea of deep Freedom. And as Bernard Williams rightly observed, there are some actions that cannot be

accounted for and that cannot warrant holding the person involved responsible. Such actions could be those arising from issues like Somnambulism and kleptomania.<sup>35</sup> This is the same reason why Richard Double, contends that there is nothing like freewill that is deep, and ethical responsibility. He argues that the concepts are just a matter of expressing honor and as such idiosyncratic/particular; and cannot be made legitimate in reality. He sustains that Freewill and ethical accountability should not be recognized within the sphere of entities that are real, hence freedom or un-freedom of choice debate cannot in any way bring about lucid answers.<sup>36</sup> Thus, no deep sense of freedom/action and ultimate ethical responsibility.

In the final analysis, Kane's overhyped emphasis on agent's causation than event causation is highly problematic. He loses the sight of the fact that an individual could be circumstanced by an event to act in certain ways that would relieve him of some Ultimacy in accountability.

In conclusion, the concept of free action, freedom/ freewill cannot be solved by any form of speculative reasoning. Man, in some sense can be said to be free from the point of view of moral experiences. The moral and legal systems show the idea of human freedom. As it were, if no freedom at all, then no things like moral codes, criminal codes; no courts and no prisons.<sup>37</sup> There will be no need blaming, condemning, or punishing anyone for doing anything wrong. There will also be no need of praising anyone too. Obviously, there is some level of responsibility placed on our shoulders as moral agents; and our choices are to be checked because of excesses. But there is no gainsaying that most of our actions are conditioned and determined by prior events. However, this should not totally be the reason to act out of the law.

### Endnotes

1. Francis O. Njoku, *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, (Owerri: Claretian Institute of philosophy, 2010), 183.
2. Collins McGinn, *The Character of Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 81.
3. Collins McGinn, *The Character of Mind*, in Francis Njoku, *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, (Owerri: Claretian Institute of philosophy, 2010), 182.
4. Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, Oxford Fundamentals of Philosophy Series. Oxford University Press, 2005), 163.
5. Kane, 165.

6. Kane, 168.
7. S. Wolf “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility”, quoted in Kane, 168.
8. Kane, 172.
9. Kane, 172.
10. Jonathan Jacobs, in *Choosing Character* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), quoted in Kane, 172.
11. Kane, 173.
12. Harry G. Frankfurt, “The Problem of Action”, in Jonathan Dancy and Constantine Sandis (Eds.), *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*, (UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 26.
13. Robert Kane (Ed.), *Free Will* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell. 2003), 224.
14. Myles Brand, *Intending and Acting; Towards a Naturalized Action Theory*, (London: The MIT Press, 1984), 6-7; in F.O.C. Njoku, *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, 183.
15. Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28.
16. Kane, 21.
17. Kane, 22.
18. Kane, 23.
19. Kane, 24.
20. Kane, 24.
21. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, (NY: Hutchinson’s University library, 1949, 68, quoted in Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 24.
22. Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 26.
23. Kane, 27.
24. Kane, 30.
25. Alvin I. Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action*, (New Jersey: Princeton University press, 1970, 10. In F.O.C. Njoku, *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, 179.
26. Kane, 28.
27. Kane, 29.
28. Kane, 30.

29. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1110a15-19, in F.O.C. Njoku, *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, 184.
30. F.O.C. Njoku, *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, 184.
31. Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 120.
32. Kane, Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 5.
33. Galen Strawson, *Freewill and Belief*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26.
34. Robert Hilary Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 120.
35. Bernard Williams, *Freedom and the Will*, ed. D.F Pears, (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc, 1963),1.
36. Richard Double, *The Non-Reality of Free Will*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5.
37. Omeregbe J. *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*, (Lagos: Joja Press, 1993), 35.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aristotle, *Basic Works*. Ed. Mceon, New York: Randon House. 1941.  
-----, *Nichomachean Ethics*. Trans. Oswald Martin. NY: Macmillan, 1462.
- Berofsky Bernard, *Determinism*. USA: Princeton university Press, 1971.
- Bramhall John, *The Works of John Bramhall*. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844.
- Brand Myles, *Intending and Acting; Towards a Naturalized Action Theory*. London: The MIT Press, 1984.
- Carlson, N. *Foundations of behavioral neuroscience 8th ed*. Boston, MA: Pearson, 2011.
- Double, Richard., *The Non-Reality of Free Will* , Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Chukwuma Joseph N., Okechukwu Chidiebere, P., et all, "An Evaluation of the Concept of Freewill in Robert Kane", in the *Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical & Control Systems*, Vol. 11, 10-Special Issue, 2019. DOI:10.5373/JARDCS/V11SP10/20192809 ISSN 1943-023X.

Doyle B., *Freewill Scandal: Robert Kane's Libertarianism*. Cambridge: I-Phi Press, 2011.

Frankfurt Harry G., "The Problem of Action", in Jonathan Dancy and Constantine Sandis (Eds.), *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*. UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Goldman Alvin I., *A Theory of Human Action*. New Jersey: Princeton University press, 1970.

Honderich Ted, *A Theory of Determinism*, vol.2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988.

Kane Robert, *Free Will and Values*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1985.

....., *The Significance of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

....., "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism" in *The Journal of Philosophy*. United Kingdom: Routledge 1999.

....., *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

....., *Free Will*. (editor) New York: Wiley-Blackwell. 2003.

....., *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*. Oxford undamentals of Philosophy Series. Oxford University Press, 2005.

....., "Rethinking Free Will: New Perspectives on an Ancient Problem." in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will 2nd edition*. Ed. Robert Kane. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Kane, Robert, et al, *Four Views on Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2007.

....., *Ethics and the Quest for Wisdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Levy Neil, *Hard Luck: How Luck Undermines Free Will and Moral Responsibility*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

McGinn Collins, *The Character of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Njoku, O. C Francis, *Studies in Ethics*. Lagos: Claretian Publications, 2006.

....., *Studies in Philosophy of Mind*. Owerri: Claretian Institute of philosophy, 2010.

Omeregbe J. *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos: Joja Press, 1993.

Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. by B. Jowett. Vols 1 and 2. (New York: Random House, 1937.

Ryle Gilbert, *The Concept of Mind*. NY: Hutchinson's University library, 1949.

Strawson Galen, *Freedom and Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Tracy P. Van Wagner, *Making Robert Kane's Libertarianism more Plausibe: How James Woodward'S Interventionist Causal Theory can give an Agent Control Over Her Undetermined Decisions*. A thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences, Georgia: Georgia State University 2011.

Wallace Jay, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. London: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Wegner Daniel, *The Illusion of Conscious Will*. London: The MIT Press, 2002.

Williams Bernard, *Freedom and the Will*, ed. D.F Pears. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc, 1963.