

## How (not) to attack the luck argument

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The *Luck Argument* is among the most influential objections to the main brand of libertarianism about metaphysical freedom and moral responsibility. In his work, Alfred Mele [2006. *Free will and luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press] develops – and then attempts to defeat – the literature’s most promising version of the Luck Argument. After explaining Mele’s version of the Luck Argument, I present two objections to his novel reply to the argument. I argue for the following two claims: (1) Mele’s reply is *either* otiose *or* undermined by his own defense of the Luck Argument from a different objection and (2) Mele’s reply turns out to lack the form required to engage the step of the Luck Argument it targets. Having shown that the failure of Mele’s novel attack is overdetermined, I close by defending a different (and, I believe, decisive) objection to the Luck Argument – which, as it happens, lurks right under Mele’s nose.

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### Introduction

The *Luck Argument* is among the most influential objections to the main brand of libertarianism about metaphysical freedom and moral responsibility. In his work, Alfred Mele (2006) develops – and then attempts to defeat – the literature’s most promising version of the Luck Argument. After explaining Mele’s version of the Luck Argument, I will present two objections to his novel reply to the argument. More fully, I will argue for the following two claims: (1) Mele’s reply is *either* otiose *or* undermined by his own defense of the Luck Argument from a different objection and (2) Mele’s reply turns out to lack the form required to engage the step of the Luck Argument it targets. Having shown that the failure of Mele’s novel attack is overdetermined, I will close by defending a different (and, I believe, decisive) objection to the Luck Argument – which, as it happens, lurks right under Mele’s nose.

### The luck argument against traditional libertarianism

*Libertarianism* (as I use the term here) is the view that metaphysical freedom and moral responsibility (i.e. worthiness of moral praise or criticism) exist *and* are incompatible with *Determinism* – the thesis that, at any given time, the current state of the universe and the laws of nature jointly entail every truth about the future (alternatively: at any given time, only one future is compatible with the current state of the universe and the

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laws of nature). What we will call *traditional libertarianism* (TL) adds two claims to libertarianism: (1) You have a significant degree of basic (nonderivative, direct) moral responsibility for some of your free acts.<sup>1</sup> (2) You freely Aed (at time *t*) *only if* your Aing (at *t*) was not entailed by the immediate past (i.e. the past right up to *t*) plus the laws of nature – put differently, *only if* your not performing A (at *t*) was compatible with the immediate past (relative to *t*) and the laws of nature.

Now, say that an event E (at *t*) *lacks a complete explanation* iff ‘there is no fact or truth to be reported in a correct answer’ to the question why E happened (at *t*) *rather than* failing to happen then (Mele 2006, 70). As we will soon see, the Luck Argument exploits the following important consequence of TL: each free act of yours lacks a complete explanation.<sup>2</sup> On TL, you freely Aed (at *t*) *only if* A’s non-occurrence (at *t*) was compatible with the immediate past (the past right up to *t*) and the laws – i.e. *only if* the immediate past (relative to *t*) and the laws did not jointly entail your Aing (at *t*). Suppose TL is true and that you Aed freely at *t*. *Question*: Why did it come to pass that you Aed at *t* rather than *not* Aing then – i.e. rather than doing something else, or nothing at all, then? Since the immediate past and the laws were consistent with your *not* doing A at *t*, any fact or truth you might cite in reply – e.g. the fact that you had been wanting to do A right then – will leave the contrastive question above unanswered. (We all know that the fact you cited could just as easily have been followed by your *not* Aing at *t*; so citing that fact will not help us understand why you Aed at *t* *rather than* not Aing then.) Ultimately, the only reply available to you will be something like ‘That is just what happened’ – which of course simply repeats, without explaining, the target contrastive fact. Upshot: TL entails that each free act of yours lacks a complete explanation (in the above sense: ‘there is no fact or truth to be reported in a correct answer’ to the question why you did the act then rather than doing something else, or nothing at all, then).

We are now ready for (my reconstruction of) Mele’s Luck Argument against TL, widely regarded as the most promising such argument in the literature.<sup>3</sup>

1. If TL is true, then you are (nonderivatively morally) responsible for some act that was not entailed by the immediate past and laws.
  2. If you are responsible for an act that was not entailed by the immediate past and laws, then that act (i) was significant for you (i.e. was objectively either good or bad for you)<sup>4</sup> *but* (ii) lacked a complete explanation (i.e. ‘there is no fact or truth to be reported in a correct answer’ to the question why you performed the act rather than doing something else or nothing at all).
  3. If an act (i) was significant for you *but* (ii) lacked a complete explanation, then you are not morally responsible for that act (i.e. you do not deserve moral credit or criticism for the act).
  4. So: If TL is true, then there’s an act for which you both *are* and *are not* morally responsible [steps 1–3].
  5. There are no acts for which you both *are* and *are not* morally responsible.
- Conclusion. So: TL is false [steps 4, 5].

If the Luck Argument fails, it fails at step 3. Now 3 may not initially strike everyone as *prima facie* plausible. Here is what Mele (2006, 60) says on its behalf:<sup>5</sup>

Given exactly the same laws of nature and antecedent conditions, in a world in which you have better (worse) luck at the time at which you in fact did the act in question (call it **A**), you instead do something for which you’re praiseworthy (blameworthy) – or perhaps

nothing at all – at that time. Knowing this, one is disinclined to blame (praise) you for doing A, and that is evidence of an inclination to believe that you are not blameworthy (praiseworthy) for doing A.

Assuming A was not entailed by the immediate past and laws, the question why you did A rather than something else or nothing at all ‘is, in principle, unanswerable’ (2006, 70). Mele suggests (with some plausibility, I think) that once we recognize there simply is ‘no fact or truth to be reported in a correct answer’ to the question why you did A rather than something else or nothing at all, whatever sense we may have had that you are morally responsible for A begins evaporating. To the extent you find yourself agreeing with Mele’s suggestion here, 3 should strike you as (at least somewhat) plausible.<sup>6</sup>

After defending the Luck Argument from several recent objections – including the ones due to Kane (1999), O’Connor (2000) and Clarke (2005) – Mele presents a novel (and, by his lights, successful) objection to the argument. In the next section, I will develop two criticisms of Mele’s objection to the Luck Argument. I will then defend a better (indeed, I believe, decisive) objection to the Luck Argument – one that, as it happens, lurks right under Mele’s nose.

### The overdetermined failure of Mele’s objection to the luck argument

#### *Mele’s novel reply*

Like Kane’s (1999) reply – and unlike O’Connor’s (2000) and Clarke’s (2005) – Mele’s reply assumes a view we will call,

*Reductivism*: Strictly speaking, only events (occurrences, happenings) are causal contributors.<sup>7</sup>

On this view, substances, e.g. people, are not *themselves* causes. Of course, substances are frequently involved in events that cause other events. In such a case, it is appropriate – but strictly speaking false – shorthand to say the substance caused the event.

Mele’s critical strategy is to design a position – what he calls *Daring Soft Libertarianism* (DSL) – that yields a counterexample to step 3 of the Luck Argument. Here are the key passages where Mele develops his novel reply (culled from §4.3 and chapter 5 of *Free will and luck*):

Traditional libertarians are hard-line incompatibilists. They claim that free action and moral responsibility are incompatible with determinism. I call them *hard libertarians*. A softer line is available to theorists who have libertarian sympathies. A theorist may leave it open that free action and moral responsibility are compatible with determinism but maintain that the falsity of determinism is required for a more desirable species of free action and a more desirable brand of moral responsibility. This is a *soft libertarian* line. Soft libertarians would be disappointed to discover that determinism is true, but they would not conclude that no one has ever acted freely and that no one has ever been morally responsible for anything. (95–6)

Daring soft libertarians (DSLs) try to stare down the problem of present luck. They claim that present luck [i.e. the compatibility of a significant act’s *non*occurrence with the immediate past and laws] is entailed by an agent’s having a kind of initiatory power that they value and that its presence in a case of action does not preclude the action’s being freely performed or the agent’s being morally responsible for it. The softness of their libertarianism makes their situation less treacherous than that of [traditional] libertarians. Soft libertarians do not assert that free action and moral responsibility require the falsity of determinism. (113)

Consider the first time a normal child, Tony, makes a decision about whether to snatch a toy from his younger sister. [...] Tony knows his father is nearby; and, on the basis of some

unpleasant experiences, he associates taking the toy with his sister's screaming and his father's scolding him. He decides not to snatch it and feels a little frustrated. [...] Suppose now that owing to Tony's being an indeterministic decision maker and to his being tempted to take the toy, there was a significant chance at the time that he would decide to take it. In another world with the same past and laws of nature, that is what he decides to do, and he proceeds to grab the toy (with predictable results). Does that entail that Tony has no moral responsibility at all for deciding not to take the toy? (129–30)

When we do wonder about [the earliest decisions for which agents have some moral responsibility], we need to keep firmly in mind how young these agents may be and how trivial their good and bad deeds may be by comparison with the full range of good and bad adult deeds. [...] [I]f people are morally responsible for some things, they have to develop from neonates into morally responsible agents, and Tony's decision not to take the toy is a reasonable candidate for an action for which this young agent is morally responsible. (130–1)

Moral responsibility is very commonly and very plausibly regarded as a matter of degree. If young children and adults are morally responsible for some of what they do, it is plausible... that young children are not nearly as morally responsible for any of their deeds as some adults are for some of their adult deeds. When we combine our recognition of that point with the observation that the good and bad deeds of young children are relatively trivial in themselves, we should be struck by the implausibility of stringent standards for deserved moral praise and blame of young children – including standards the satisfaction of which requires the absence of present luck. [...] [A]s the frequency of the indeterministically caused free actions of little agents increases and as the range of kinds of situations evoking such free actions expands, the agents take on greater moral responsibility for associated [probabilities of future action] and for their morally significant free actions. This... helps to account for the fact that the moral credit and blame that little agents deserve for their indeterministically caused free actions tend to increase over time. (131–2)

Boiled down to essentials, Mele's reply to the Luck Argument is this: the case of Little Tony (LT) is a counterexample to step 3. LT's choosing not to snatch that toy was significant for him (it was objectively good for him) *yet* lacked a complete explanation (there was, just before he chose against snatching, a 'significant [objective] chance' he would instead choose to snatch). Step 3 thus implies that LT deserves no moral praise whatsoever for choosing against snatching. Intuitively, though, LT does deserve at least a bit of moral praise for so choosing. Accordingly, the case of LT casts doubt on step 3 of the Luck Argument.

### ***Objection 1: Mele's reply is either otiose or undermined***

My first objection to Mele's reply is that it faces a dilemma. Partly in order to motivate his novel reply, Mele spends considerable space and time (chapter 3 of *Free will and luck*) defending the Luck Argument from prominent attacks already in the literature. As it happens, one of these defenses provides resources to protect the Luck Argument from Mele's reply as well. So, *either* Mele drops that defense of the Luck Argument *or* he keeps it. If he drops it, then his reply to the Luck Argument is otiose. But if he keeps the relevant defense, then it also undercuts his own objection to the Luck Argument. Upshot: Mele's novel reply is *either* otiose *or* undermined by his own defense of the Luck Argument from a different objection.

Let us start with the alternative to Mele's reply that he attempts to neutralize on the way to presenting his own favored reply. The reply in question is due to Kane (1999) and is (like Mele's) aimed at step 3 of the Luck Argument. Here is Mele's (2006, 51) explanation of Kane's objection to the Luck Argument:

Kane... finds special importance in scenarios in which we struggle with ourselves about what to do. In some cases of this kind, he says, we simultaneously try to make each of two competing

decisions. Because the agent is trying to make each, she is morally responsible for whichever of the two decisions she makes and makes it freely, Kane claims, provided that ‘she endorse[s] the outcome as something she was trying and wanting to do all along’. Someone who takes this position can consistently hold that even if the agent’s deciding to A, as she in fact did, rather than her deciding to B, as she did at the same time in another world with the same past and laws of nature. . . is just a matter of luck, the agent decides freely and is morally responsible for her decision.

Kane has proposed a sufficient condition for making a free, morally responsible choice. But it is possible that a choice meet Kane’s condition *even if* it is a significant one (for its agent) that lacks a complete explanation. So, if meeting Kane’s condition really does suffice for making a free choice you are morally responsible for, then it is possible that you be morally responsible for a significant act that lacks a complete explanation – i.e. step 3 of the Luck Argument is false.

Mele (2006, 52) defends step 3 via the following argument against Kane’s alleged sufficient condition for making a free, morally responsible choice:

[I]magine that a manipulator compels an agent, Antti, simultaneously to try to choose to A and to try to choose to B. . . Imagine also that the manipulator does not allow Antti to try to choose anything else at the time and that the manipulation is such that Antti will endorse either relevant ‘outcome as something [he] was trying and wanting to do all along’. The tryings are internally indeterministic, but Antti does not freely try to make the choices he tries to make. Apparently, whatever he chooses, he does not freely choose it – especially when the sort of freedom at issue is the sort most closely associated with moral responsibility. To be sure, in this scenario the unfreedom of the efforts is tied to serious monkey business. But take the monkey business away: if the efforts to choose still are not freely made, why should a corresponding choice count as free? The combination of trying and endorsement that Kane describes does not suffice for freely making the decision one makes: that combination is present in Antti’s case.

Kane’s reply to step 3 of the Luck Argument depends on this claim: if a choice of yours was caused non-deterministically by one of multiple competing efforts to choose (and you subsequently regarded the choice as something you were ‘trying and wanting to do all along’), then the choice was a free one for which you are morally responsible. But, Mele thinks, the case of Antti – *even if* we ‘take the monkey business away’ – is a counterexample to Kane’s claim: because ‘Antti does not freely try to make the choices he tries to make. . . , whatever he chooses, he does not freely choose it’ – and so, Antti is not morally responsible for the resulting choice. Note that Mele’s argument here applies equally well to a variant of Antti’s case in which Antti’s decision isn’t preceded by any efforts at all.<sup>8</sup> Mele is thus committed to claiming that Antti is not morally responsible for the choice he makes in this ‘no preceding effort’ variant.<sup>9</sup>

Here’s what we have seen so far: Mele’s defense of the Luck Argument from Kane’s reply commits him to claiming Antti is not morally responsible for the choice he makes in any of the three variants mentioned above – viz., the ‘unfree effort *with* monkey business’, ‘unfree effort *without* monkey business’, and ‘no preceding effort at all’ variants. *Question:* What could it be about all three variants that, to Mele’s mind, keeps Antti from being morally responsible for the choice he makes? A bit of reflection reveals this candidate: in all three cases, all the causal contributors to the choice Antti makes are events with respect to which Antti is not free.<sup>10</sup> But assuming Reductivism is true (as Mele does in developing his own reply to the Luck Argument), the same goes for LT’s decision against toy-snatching (in Mele’s attempted counterexample to step 3): all the causal contributors to LT’s choice are events with respect to which LT is not free. So, assuming Mele

wants to retain his defense of the Luck Argument from Kane's reply (and to treat like cases alike), he will have to concede that his defense of the Luck Argument is self-defeating in the following way: the defense defeats his own objection to step 3 of the Luck Argument along with Kane's.

That was a somewhat quick and dirty way to bring out the tension in Mele's overall position on the matters at hand. Here is a more careful development of the argument. When we try to express Mele's intuition about the cases involving Antti more formally and generally, what we get is something like this:

*Principle:* Suppose that the only causal contributors to an event E are other, prior events – in other words, suppose E has only other events in its causal history. Then if there's not an event in E's causal history you're free with respect to, you aren't morally responsible for E.

Equivalently,

Suppose that the only causal contributors to an event E are other, prior events. Then you're morally responsible for E *only if* you're free with respect to some of the events that contributed causally to E, some of the events in E's causal history.

I see no way for Mele to maintain his verdicts about the cases involving Antti while rejecting Principle. For suppose Mele rejects Principle. To do so would be to countenance the following possibility: an agent, S, makes a morally responsible choice whose only causal contributors were prior events with respect to which S was not free. But if Mele countenanced such a possibility, it is very hard to see what could justify his confidence that Antti is not morally responsible for his choice in any of the three scenarios canvassed above. So far as I can see, then, Mele's judgments about the cases involving Antti commit him (at least implicitly) to Principle (or something very much like it).

So, Mele's defense of the Luck Argument from Kane's reply seems dependent on Principle. But Principle entails that LT (from Mele's attempted counterexample to step 3) is *not* responsible for his decision against snatching after all. By Reductivism (which, recall, Mele assumes in crafting his novel reply), LT's decision against snatching has only *events* in its causal history. By Principle, then, LT is responsible for that decision *only if* he is free with respect to some or other prior event that contributed causally to his decision. But the stipulated details of the case make clear that LT is *not* free with respect to any such prior event (LT's decision is supposed to be the *first* event he's free with respect to and morally responsible for). So Mele's defense of the Luck Argument from Kane's reply undercuts his own objection to the Luck Argument: that defense commits Mele to Principle, but Principle entails that his own attempted counterexample to step 3 fails (by entailing that LT is not morally responsible for his decision against snatching).

At this point, Mele must make one of two moves (on pain of having an inconsistent overall position). *Either* he rejects Principle along with his defense of the Luck Argument from Kane's reply and concedes that his own reply is unnecessary, *or* he keeps Principle along with the defense and concedes that it defeats his own reply as well.<sup>11</sup> Either way, Mele's novel objection to the Luck Argument loses much of its interest and importance.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Objection 2: Mele's reply is structurally deficient***

My second (and, I believe, stronger) objection to Mele's reply begins by noting an important ambiguity in the Luck Argument, one that careful readers may have noticed already.

The expression ‘you aren’t morally responsible for’ in 3’s consequent can be read in either of two ways:

**Strong:** ...you don’t have *any* degree of (basic moral) responsibility for. . .

**Weak:** ...you don’t have a *significant* degree of responsibility for. . .

TL, recall, says that you have a *significant* degree of *basic* moral responsibility for some or other act whose occurrence was not entailed by the immediate past plus the laws of nature. Supposing the Luck Argument is intended primarily as an objection to TL, the more charitable reading of 3’s consequent sees it as employing Weak; for that reading of 3’s consequent yields an argument just strong enough to engage TL (employing Strong, on the other hand, would constitute attempted overkill). The upshot is that a case involving a person who has merely *some* degree of basic responsibility for an undetermined (by the immediate past and laws) act will not engage the proper (because more charitable) reading of 3. Any successful counterexample to step 3 must display a person who has a *significant* degree of basic responsibility for an undetermined (by the immediate past and laws) event.

As it turns out, though, that is precisely the kind of case Mele’s DSL cannot deliver. At best, the position Mele creates establishes only the following two modal claims:

- It’s possible that an agent have *some* degree of *basic* responsibility for an undetermined event.
- It is possible that an agent have a *significant* degree of *derivative* responsibility for an undetermined event (by virtue of having some degree of basic responsibility for earlier undetermined acts that helped shape probabilities of subsequent, more significant undetermined acts).

Unfortunately for Mele’s reply, the above modal claims leave the proper reading of 3 untouched, the reading on which 3 implies just that no agent can have *significant basic* responsibility for an undetermined (by the immediate past and laws) event. On close inspection, then, we see that Mele’s reply is not of the right form to engage the proper reading of the Luck Argument. We should conclude that Mele’s novel reply cannot disable the Luck Argument after all. We will have to look elsewhere if we are to find a satisfying defense of TL from that argument.

### A better reply to the luck argument

Fortunately, we need not look far beyond chapter 5 of *Free will and luck* (where Mele develops his DSL-based objection to the Luck Argument) to find a satisfying defense of TL. For a certain kind of *Frankfurt Case* that Mele himself employs in chapter 4 of *Free will and luck* is, I believe, a clear counterexample to step 3.<sup>13</sup> Here is the case I have in mind (2006, 88):

...Black initiates a certain internally deterministic process P in Bob’s brain at t1 with the intention of thereby causing Bob to decide at t2 (an hour later, say) to steal Ann’s car. The process, which is screened off from Bob’s consciousness, will culminate in Bob’s deciding at t2 to steal Ann’s car unless he decides on his own at t2 to steal it or is incapable at t2 of making a decision (because, for example, he is dead by t2). The process is in no way sensitive to any ‘sign’ of what Bob will decide. As it happens, at t2 Bob decides on his own to steal the car, on the basis of his own indeterministic deliberation about whether to steal it, and his decision is not deterministically caused. But if he had not just then decided on his own to steal it,

P would have issued, at  $t_2$ , in his deciding to steal it. Rest assured that P in no way influences the indeterministic decision-making process that actually issues in Bob's decision.

Given further details (including, e.g. that Bob is sane), Bob, in the actual world, W, would appear to be morally responsible for deciding at  $t_2$  to steal Ann's car. . .

I endorse the following very plausible (and, accordingly, relatively uncontroversial) claims about the above 'indeterministic' Frankfurt Case. This example can be understood so that Bob has a significant degree of direct responsibility for deciding *on his own* at  $t_2$  to steal Ann's car.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Bob's failing to so decide (i.e. *on his own*) at  $t_2$  was consistent with the immediate past and laws of nature. Bob's so deciding at  $t_2$  thus lacks a complete explanation: there is no 'fact or truth to be reported in a correct answer' to the question why Bob decided *on his own* at  $t_2$  to steal Ann's car rather than being forced (by P) to decide to steal Ann's car then (that's just the way the cookie crumbled). Cases like this one strongly suggest that you could have significant basic responsibility for an event that lacks a complete explanation, thereby casting doubt on step 3 of the Luck Argument.

Mele (2007, 208) has recently made clear that he is aware of this kind of reply to the Luck Argument: he now recognizes that (what I have called) step 3 is incompatible with the above plausible claims about the kind of Frankfurt Case he helped invent.<sup>15</sup> But Mele has also made clear his conviction that presenting the indicated kind of Frankfurt Case does not itself constitute a satisfactory defense of TL from the Luck Argument. Far from it! For according to Mele (2007, 208; cf. 2006, 82, 95–6), combining the Luck Argument with the relevant sort of Frankfurt Case should move theorists with 'libertarian sympathies' *away* from TL and *toward* his DSL. He writes:

[A] combination of reflection on luck and reflection on Frankfurt-style cases can motivate alternatives to traditional libertarianism [ – e.g. Daring Soft Libertarianism]. (2006, 82)

My development of the problem of present luck for libertarians is meant to push some libertarian views out of the limelight and to move libertarians to feel a need for a solution. My discussion of Frankfurt-style cases. . . provides some guidance about where libertarians in search of a solution should look [ – viz., Daring Soft Libertarianism]. (2007, 208)

As we saw above, Mele's DSL is noncommittal on two claims definitive of TL: (1) Metaphysical freedom and moral responsibility are incompatible with Determinism and (2) Some people have significant basic responsibility for acts not entailed by the immediate past and laws of nature. The upshot is this: *if* Mele is right about the dialectical pressure created by combining the Luck Argument with his 'indeterministic' Frankfurt Case, proponents of TL have a good reason to fear that combination.

So far as I can see, though, proponents of TL should *welcome* that combination; indeed, they should do the combining themselves. For (as I have argued) the main result of bringing Mele's 'indeterministic' Frankfurt Case (plus the plausible claims about it endorsed above) together with the Luck Argument is that the former impugns a key step of the latter (viz., step 3). Far from creating pressure to give up claims central to TL, the combination actually works to *protect* TL from one of the most influential attacks on it. If Mele's view on these issues really is the right way to think about what results from combining the Luck Argument with the indicated kind of Frankfurt Case, he has got a good deal more explaining to do.

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## Notes

1. Basic (non-derivative, direct) moral responsibility for an act is worthiness of moral praise or criticism for the act that does not depend on or derive from your worthiness of moral praise or criticism for some prior act. Unless otherwise noted, I use ‘responsibility’ as shorthand for ‘basic moral responsibility’.
2. A caveat: as Randolph Clarke (2004, 52–3) notes, if some of the immediate antecedents of your undetermined act A made your Aing considerably more likely than your *not* Aing, then citing those antecedents (e.g. a firm belief that Aing would be much better than not Aing, coupled with a strong desire to do what is best) *may* constitute a correct answer to the question why you Aed rather than Aing. If you think such ‘probable’ undetermined acts *do* have a complete explanation (as that is defined here), then you should understand TL so that it includes the following claim: (1 + ) You have a significant degree of basic moral responsibility for some of your free acts *that were, just before you performed them, about as likely to occur as not*. The Luck Argument would then exploit the fact that there will not be a complete explanation of any such ‘non-probable’ undetermined act of yours. Because (a) it is somewhat unclear whether ‘probable’ undetermined acts really do have complete explanations *and* (b) most (if not all) theorists who endorse (what is here called) TL would also endorse 1 + , I omit discussion of this complication from the main text.
3. For his presentation of the argument, see Mele (2006, 6–9, 50, 63–4, 70).
4. Clause (i) follows from the antecedent on the plausible assumption that your being praiseworthy (blameworthy) for an act is an objectively good (bad) thing for you (cf. Mele 2006, 70). (Thanks to an anonymous referee for a comment that led me to add this note.)
5. I have slightly altered Mele’s text so as to make it fit my restatement of the Luck Argument. Nothing important depends on the minor alterations.
6. Thanks to some anonymous referees for comments that led me to revise and expand an earlier, less satisfactory reconstruction of Mele’s Luck Argument.
7. Writes Mele (2006, 113): ‘Not wanting to be saddled with a questionable species of causation [viz., so called *agent* causation] for which [I] have no use, [I] opt for event-causal... libertarianism’.
8. Assuming such a variant is possible, Antti doesn’t there try to make the choice he makes (he just chooses). *A fortiori*, Antti does not *freely* try to make the choice he makes, and Mele will thus have to say that ‘whatever he chooses, he does not freely choose it’.
9. It is worth noting that Mele’s position on the ‘no preceding effort’ variant of the Antti case reveals that his defense of the Luck Argument from Kane’s reply depends on more than just the (relatively) innocuous thought that moral responsibility attaches primarily to certain non-overt mental acts (things like tryings, efforts and choices). For that thought is compatible with the verdict that Antti chooses freely and responsibly in (at least) the ‘no preceding effort’ variant. If Mele were invoking only the indicated thought regarding the locus of moral responsibility, he simply would not be engaging Kane’s alleged sufficient condition for free and morally responsible choice. So Mele must have something else in mind here; I offer a plausible suggestion below. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for comments that led me to add this note.)
10. That is, events with respect to which Antti doesn’t exercise what Mele (2006, 76) calls ‘MR freedom-level control’, which is ‘a kind... of control such that to exercise control of that kind is to satisfy all freedom-relevant conditions for basic moral responsibility’.
11. For what it is worth, I would recommend Mele keep Principle along with his defense of the Luck Argument from Kane’s reply, conceding that the defense defeats his own reply as well. For I find Principle quite plausible, notwithstanding the fact that it entails Reductivism is false when coupled with the plausible claim that we’re morally responsible for some of what we do. For thorough discussion and defense of a thesis very similar to Principle – as well as an argument from the indicated thesis to the denial of Reductivism similar to the argument of the last paragraph – see Smith and Coffman (forthcoming). See also Pereboom (2001, chap. 2).
12. I am grateful to some anonymous referees for comments that helped me significantly improve this section’s overall argument.

13. Mele and Robb (1998, 2003) developed and defended the indicated kind of Frankfurt Case in their work. (For any uninitiated readers, Frankfurt Cases are so called because the first such case appeared Frankfurt (1969, §IV).) Notably, the fact that this sort of example elicits a firm anti-3 intuition from some theorists quite sympathetic to the Luck Argument, e.g. Mele himself, suggests that such an example can ground a successful objection to that argument.
14. Two notes in one. First, I think that certain other ‘indeterministic’ Frankfurt Cases in the recent literature are also counterexamples to step 3 of the Luck Argument. See, e.g. the case Pereboom (2000) calls ‘Tax Evasion’ in his work. Second, I need not take a stand here on the vexed question whether Bob is morally responsible for the more general fact that he decided at *t*<sub>2</sub> to steal Ann’s car. For the record, I maintain – *pace* Mele – that Bob *is not* morally responsible for that more general fact. For a compelling defense of the view that Bob isn’t responsible for the more general fact, see Ginet and Palmer (2010).
15. Mele (2007) discusses an argument for the incompatibility claim presented by Coffman and Warfield (2007).

### Notes on contributor

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