

A microscopic image of a plant tissue section, likely a leaf, showing a central vascular bundle. The bundle is composed of several large, circular vessels (xylem) and a surrounding ring of smaller cells (phloem). The surrounding tissue consists of a dense network of small, hexagonal cells (epidermis and mesophyll). The image is overlaid with a dark, semi-transparent gray rectangle.

Compatibilism

Quick Review

Determinism is the general idea that either physical or causal determinism is true

Surface freedom: S has surface freedom if and only if S can act on their desires without interference.

Deep freedom: S has deep freedom if and only if (1) S could have acted otherwise and (2) the source of S's action is found in themselves (they are in control of their desires to the extent to which they can be held morally responsible for their action)

Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

Compatibilism - freedom and determinism are *consistent*, viz., both of the positions can be true.

Incompatibilism - freedom and determinism are *inconsistent*, viz., both of the positions cannot be true.

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Compatibilist 1 | Determinism is true | We are free |
| Compatibilist 2 | Determinism is true | Not free |
| Compatibilist 3 | Determinism is false | We are free |
| Compatibilist 4 | Determinism is false | We are not free |

The classical compatibilist **asserts that the truth of determinism does not entail the nonexistence of freedom.**

Compatibilism does not entail determinism



Classical compatibilism

Classical compatibilism -- The world can be determined and individuals can be free since:

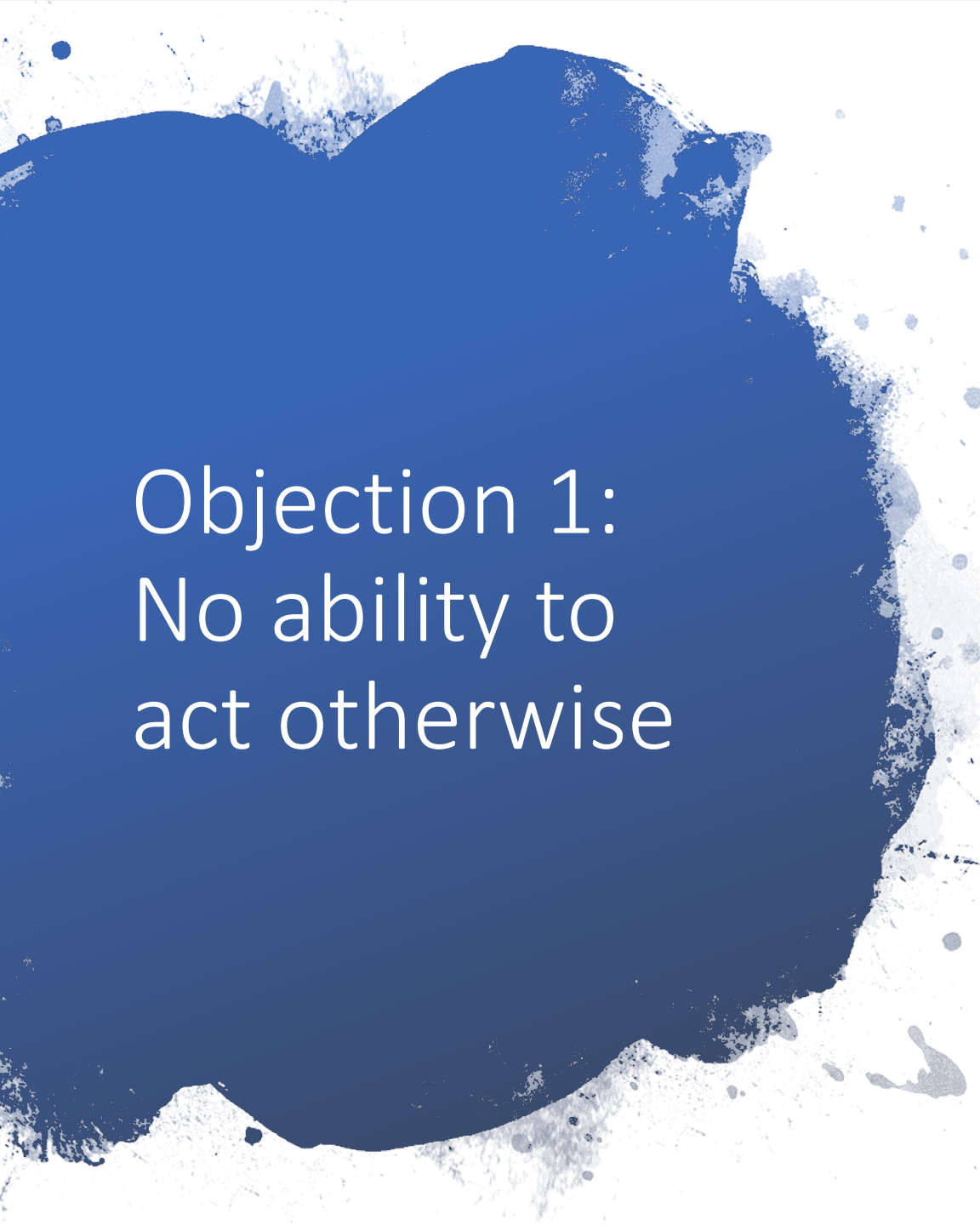
1. The world can be determined and
2. A subject S can be free since there are cases where it is true that *were* S to desire to do X, they would both have the power or ability to do X and nothing would prevent them from doing X.



Arguments against Classical Compatibilism

We will consider three objections to classical compatibilism:

1. Determinism entails the **lack of capacity to act otherwise** (a necessary ingredient for freedom) and so compatibilism is false
2. Determinism entails the **lack of deep freedom** (ability to control our desires to the extent to which we can be said to be morally responsible), and so compatibilism is false.
3. Compatibilism entails determinism; determinism is a **hopeless doctrine**; therefore, we ought to accept compatibilism as a last resort. **We'll skip this one for now.**



Objection 1:
No ability to
act otherwise

Critics of compatibilism will immediately reject the theory because:

- Freedom implies the capacity to act otherwise
- Determinism seems to exclude the capacity to act otherwise
- Therefore, compatibilism cannot be true.

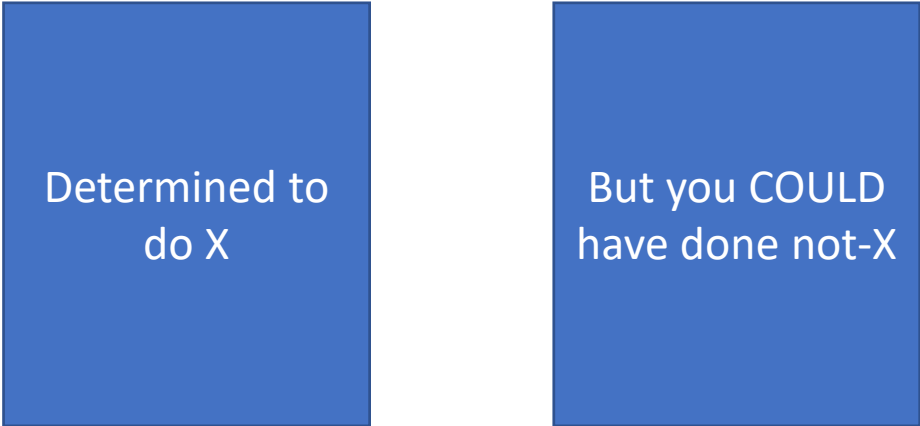
Let's call this the **Argument from the ability to do otherwise**

Objection: no ability to do otherwise

Argument from the ability to do otherwise

- P1: If determinism is true, then every single one of my actions is determined in advance.
- **P2: If every one of my actions is determined in advance, then I could never have acted differently than I did (can't act otherwise).**
- P3: The ability to act otherwise is an essential component of what it means to be free.
- IC: Therefore, if determinism is true, then no one is free.
- P4: Classical compatibilism says that if determinism is true, then we can still be free.
- C: Therefore, classical compatibilism is false.

Response: P2 is false. Even though my actions are determined, there are countless cases where individuals could have acted otherwise

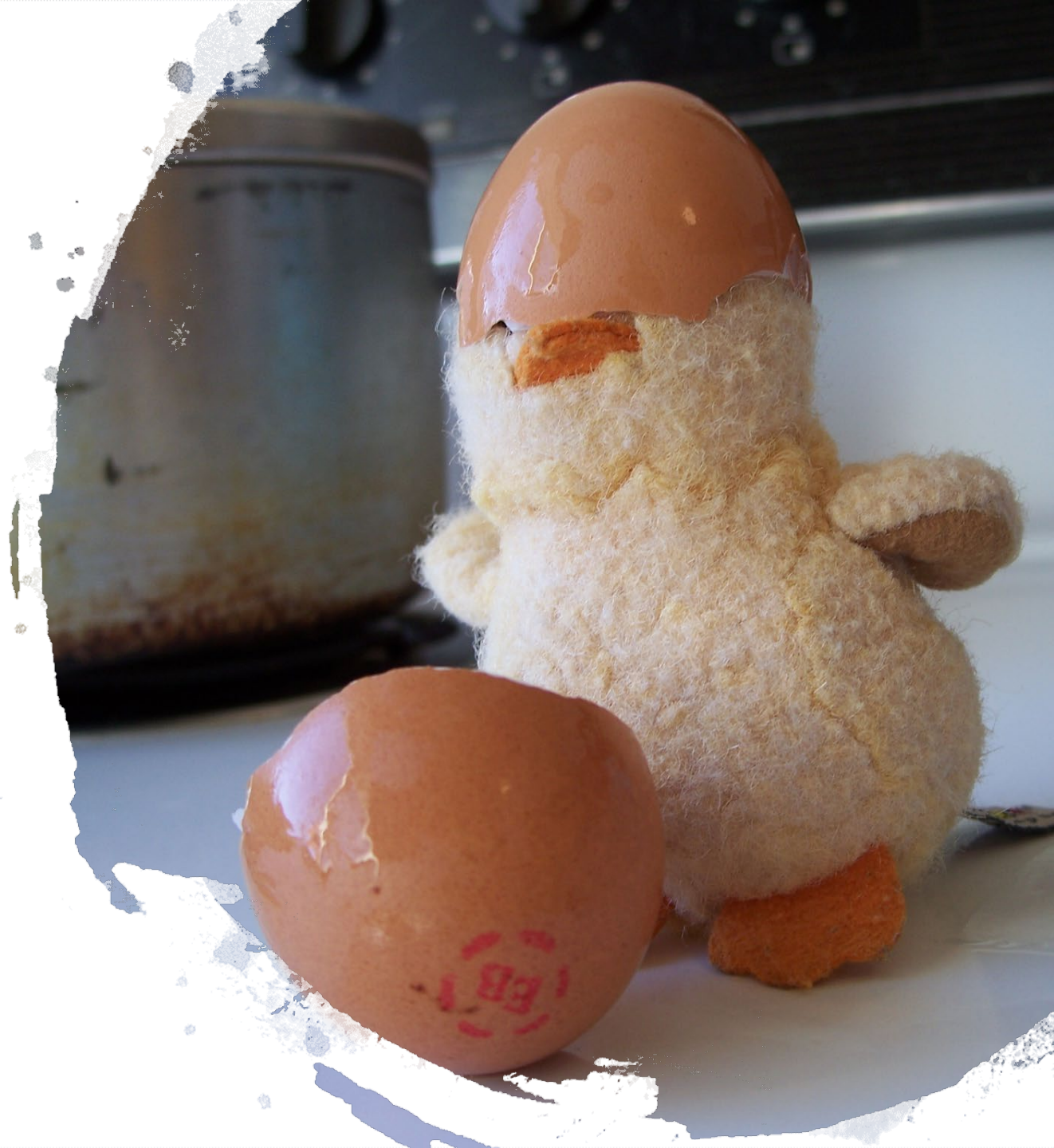


Determined to
do X

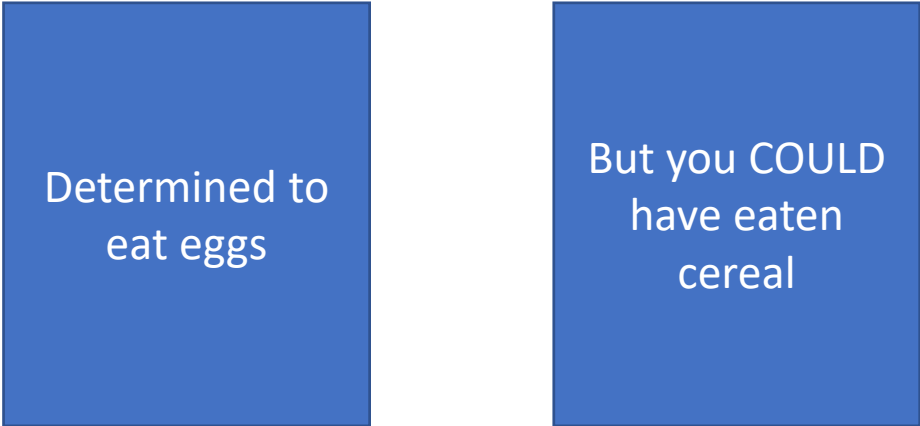
But you COULD
have done not-X

Cereal Case

- Suppose I ate eggs breakfast.
- I ate eggs because (1) I desired to eat eggs rather than something else and (2) I had power to act on this desire.
- Suppose also that I was **determined** to eat eggs. Past events along with factors outside of my control shaped the desire: *I will want eggs for breakfast.*



If I am free, then I could have eaten something else. I could have acted otherwise. I could have eaten cereal instead? Compatibilists say:



Determined to
eat eggs

But you COULD
have eaten
cereal

Compatibilists: Yes, even though you were determined to eat eggs, **IF** you had desired to eat the cereal and nothing was preventing you given that desire, then you could have eaten the cereal.

1. **Ability:** If you desired to eat cereal, you would have the **power** to do so (e.g. not paralyzed),
2. **No coercion or constraint:** No one would be physically holding you back or coercing you (e.g. gun to the head, “don’t do it”)
3. **Opportunity:** You'd have the means to eat the cereal (e.g. there is a box available)



Counterfactual freedom

The compatibilist provides a **counterfactual account of freedom**.

- **Counterfactual:** a statement that expresses what would have occurred if something contrary to fact had occurred
- **Structure of (many) counterfactual statements:** If X had occurred, then Y would have occurred.

Example 1: If coach had played me (counterfactual), we would be State Champs.

Example 2: If Clinton had won, there would be no impeachment proceedings.

Example 3: If Oswald had not shot Kennedy, then someone else would have.

Counterfactual definition of freedom: S is free just in the case that

- S could have acted otherwise, and
- **S could have acted otherwise** if and only if the following is true:

if **S had desire D2 rather than desire D1** and there was no interference in S's capacity to act on D2, then S would have acted on D2.

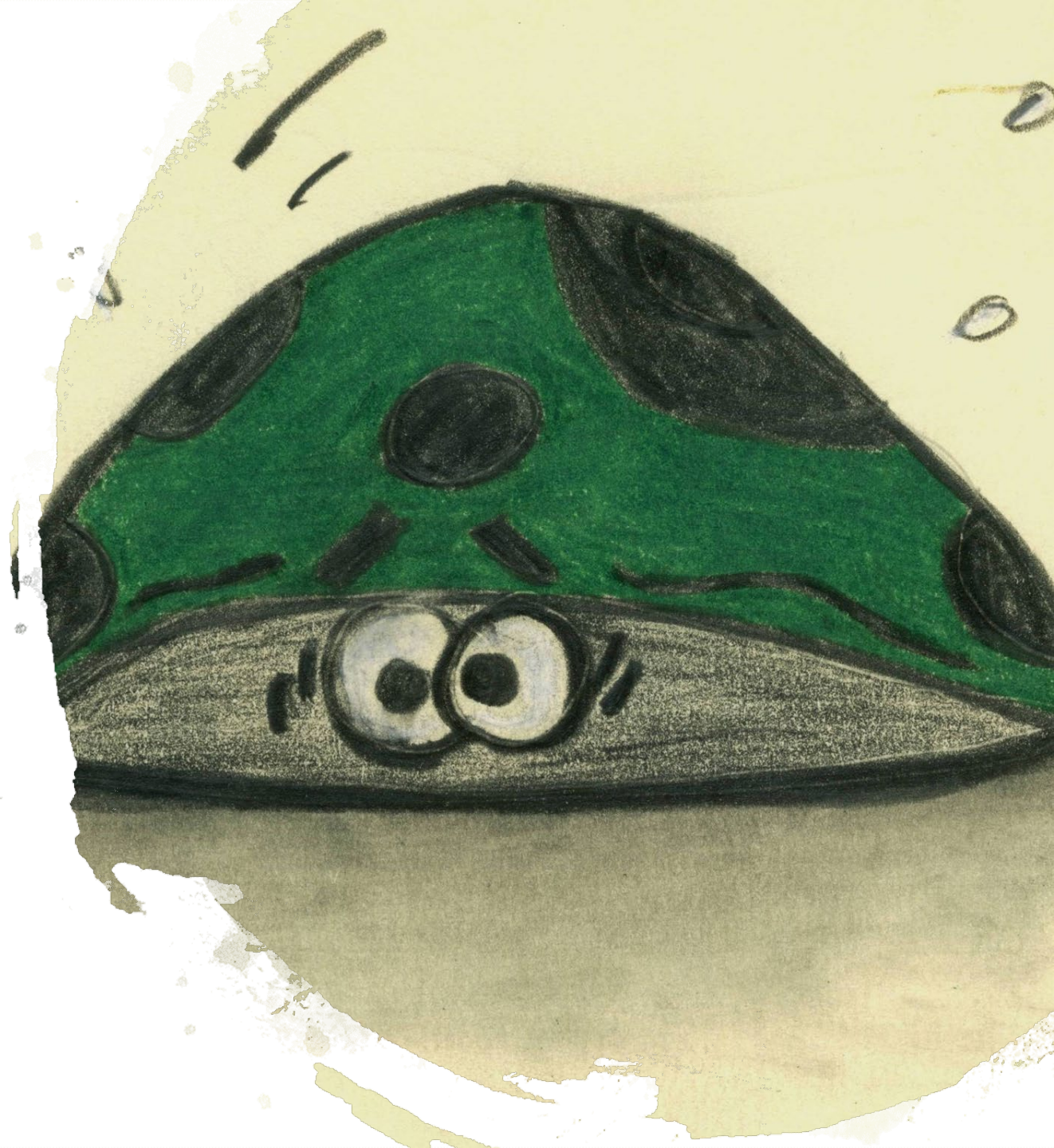
Is Tek free? Could he have eaten cereal rather than eggs?

Yes! Tek could have eaten cereal provided the following is true:

if Tek **had desire to eat cereal rather than eggs** and there was no interference in S's capacity to act on **eat cereal**, then S would have eaten **cereal**.

Suppose you are sitting in class right now. According to determinism, this act was determined by the prior state of affairs and the laws of nature. Compatibilists say that the truth of determinism does not entail that you are not free. You still could be free.

1. Using the compatibilist's counterfactual account of freedom, **explain why you are free to leave the room** (to act otherwise) even though it was already determined that you would stay in the room.
2. Include a picture to help illustrate



The ability to do otherwise

The compatibilist gives an account of how freedom and determinism can coexist.

We are free in a determined world provided we have counterfactual freedom



Objection 2:
No Deep
freedom

Critics of compatibilism will reject the appeal to counterfactual freedom.

- They will contend that **there is something more to freedom** than counterfactual freedom (the ability to act otherwise had they desired differently)
- They will contend that an individual could have chosen otherwise **without having different desires** but **with the same desires they had**
- In short: same past can yield different futures

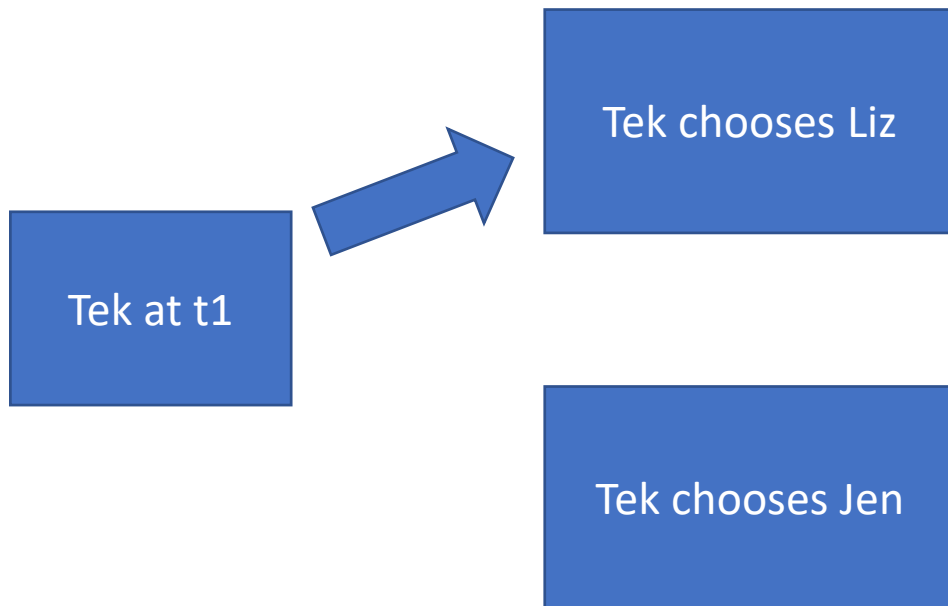
Argument from deep freedom

Argument from deep freedom

- P1: If determinism is true, then every single one of my actions is determined in advance.
- P2: If an individual is truly free, then I can exert control over my actions to such a degree that given a state of the world (including my desires) w and the laws L , $w+L$ can yield different actions.
- C: Therefore, classical compatibilism is false.

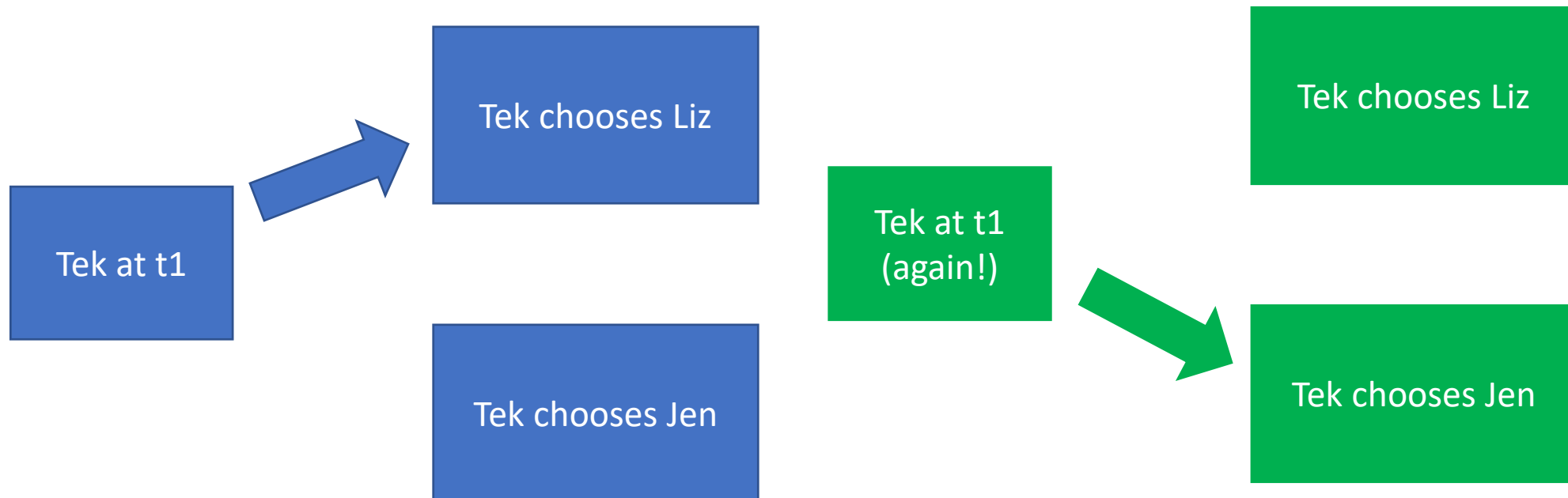
Test Case

- Suppose Tek is asked to his high school prom by Liz and Jen.
- Tek deliberates about who he wants to go with
- He decides on Liz.



If there is DF, then **Tek could have chosen otherwise while having the same thoughts, desires, and circumstances**

- Were we to rewind time and have Tek consider the decision again using the same process of deliberation, DF implies he might choose differently.
- DF implies: **Same past** can lead to **different futures**



Objection: Arbitrary and irrational

Compatibilists reject this idea: **same past** yields **same future**

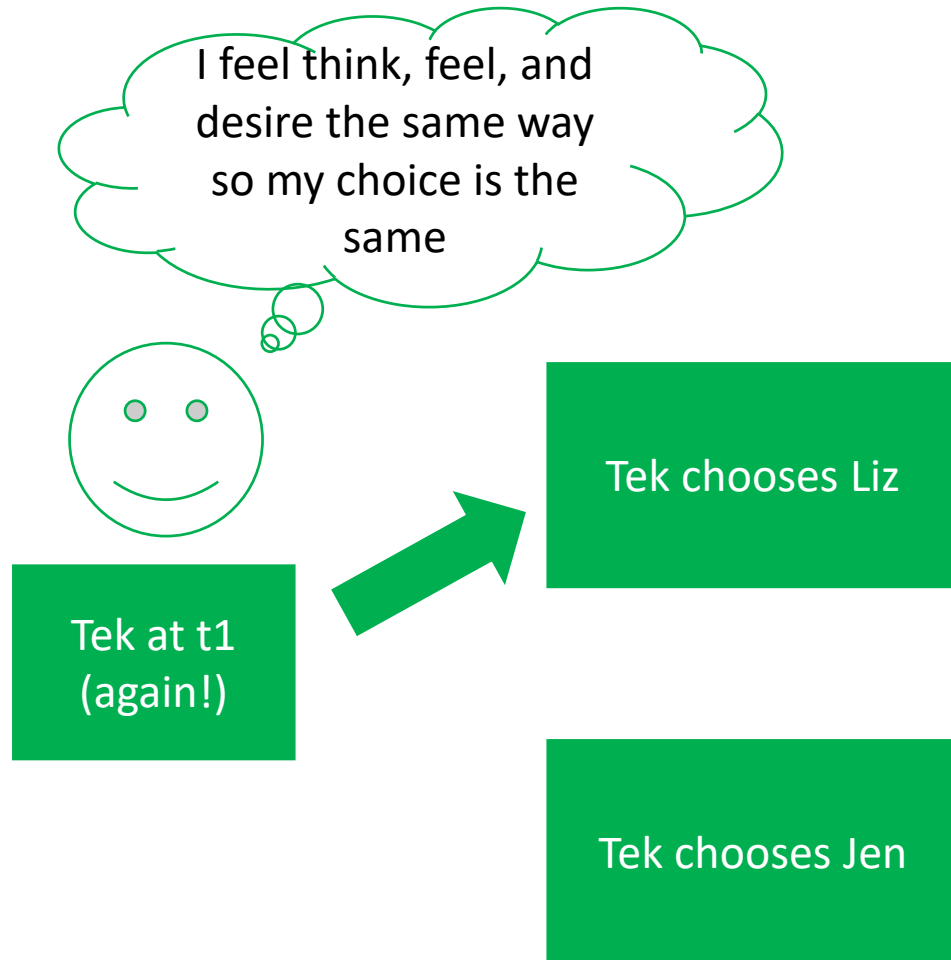
- There is **no non-question-begging reason** that Tek would **choose** differently given that (1) he has the **exact** same desires and (2) is in the **exact** same circumstances
- Compatibilists thus contend P2 is false because it would make freedom an **arbitrary and irrational power**

Objection: Arbitrary and irrational

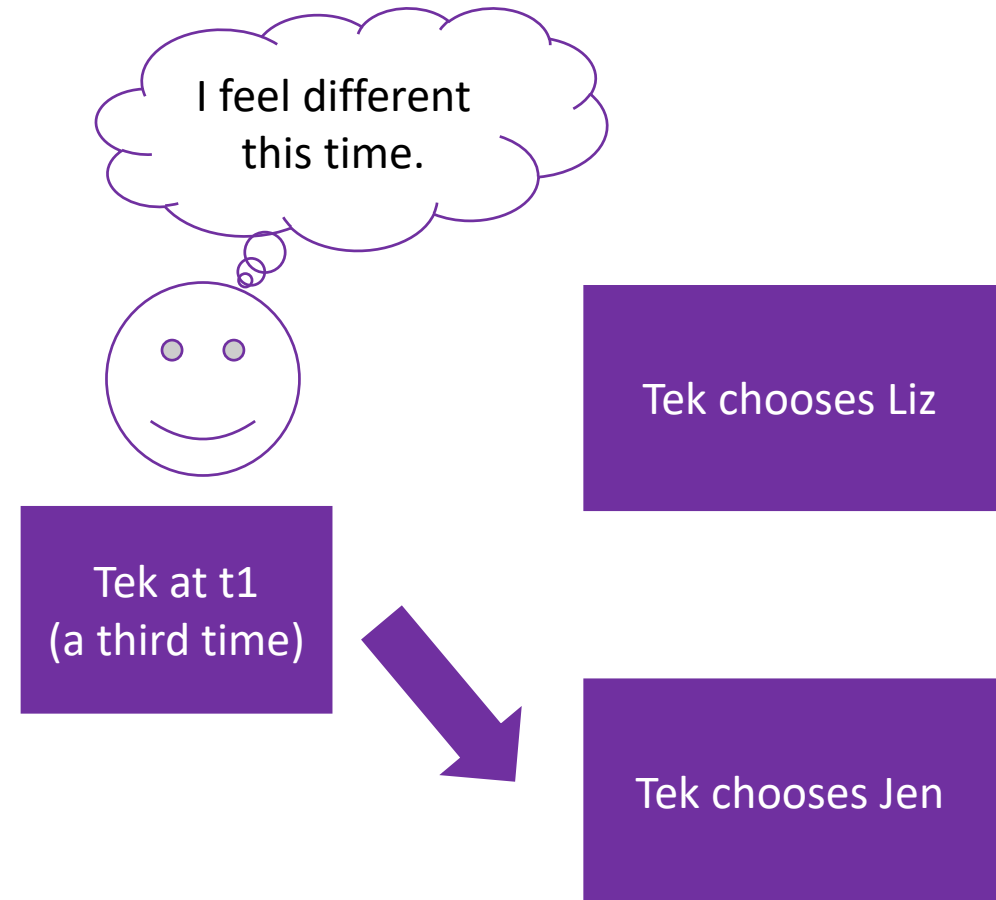
Consider that the circumstances that were involved in Tek's choice as to whom to take to prom at t_1 . In every scenario in which we rerun the event, Tek has:

- The same thoughts, desires, feelings
- The same physical circumstances, same biology, subject to same physical laws in the same way
- There is the same environment, same lighting in the room, same twinkle in Liz's eye
- The same school, same prom, same friends and family
- He makes the same pro/con list

Compatibilists contend there is **no non-arbitrary or rational reason** why Tek would behave differently.



The only non-arbitrary or rational reason why Tek's decision would change is **if Tek had been different** (e.g. had different desires or feelings). But this is counterfactual freedom.

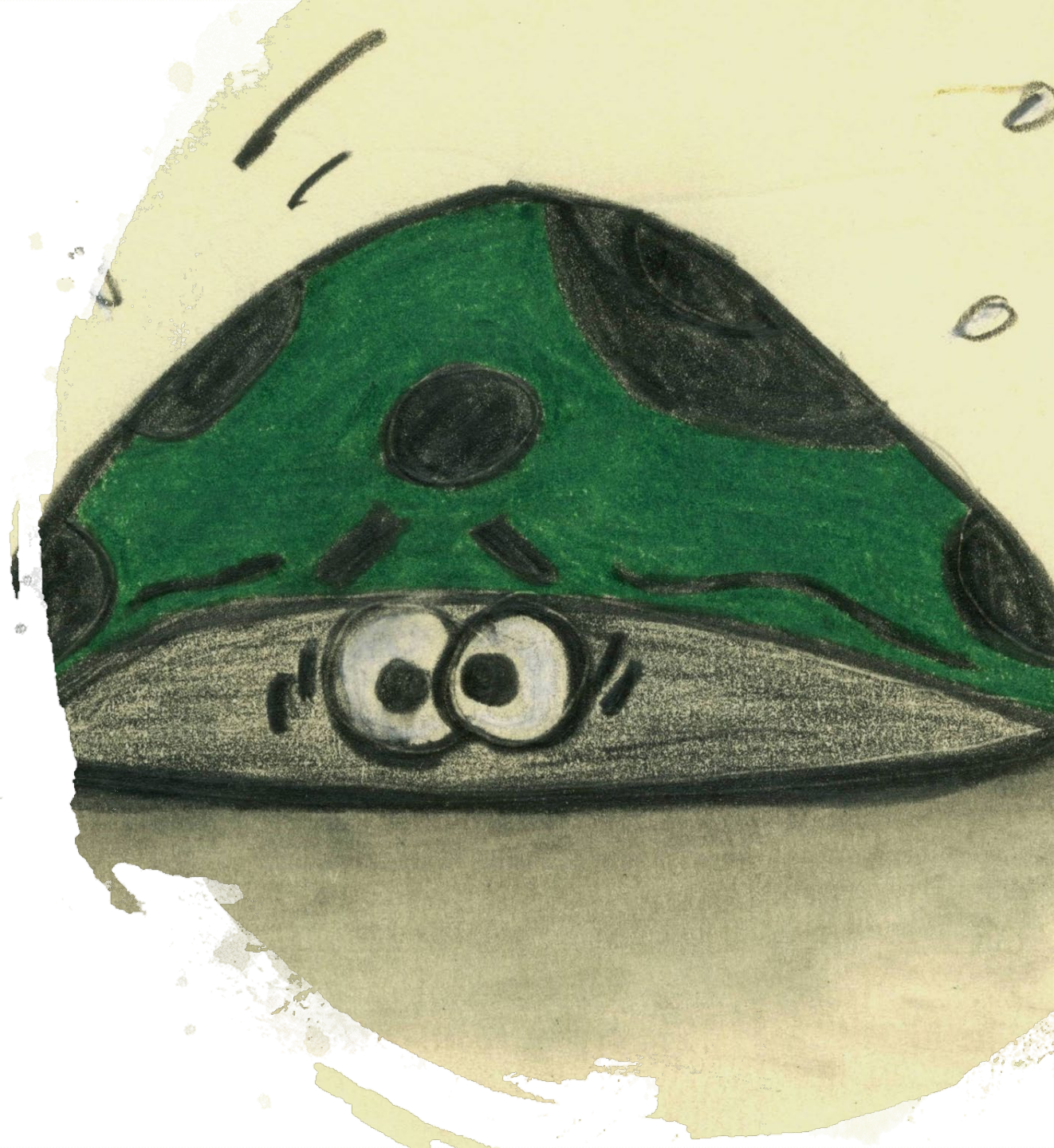


Determinism and Indeterminism

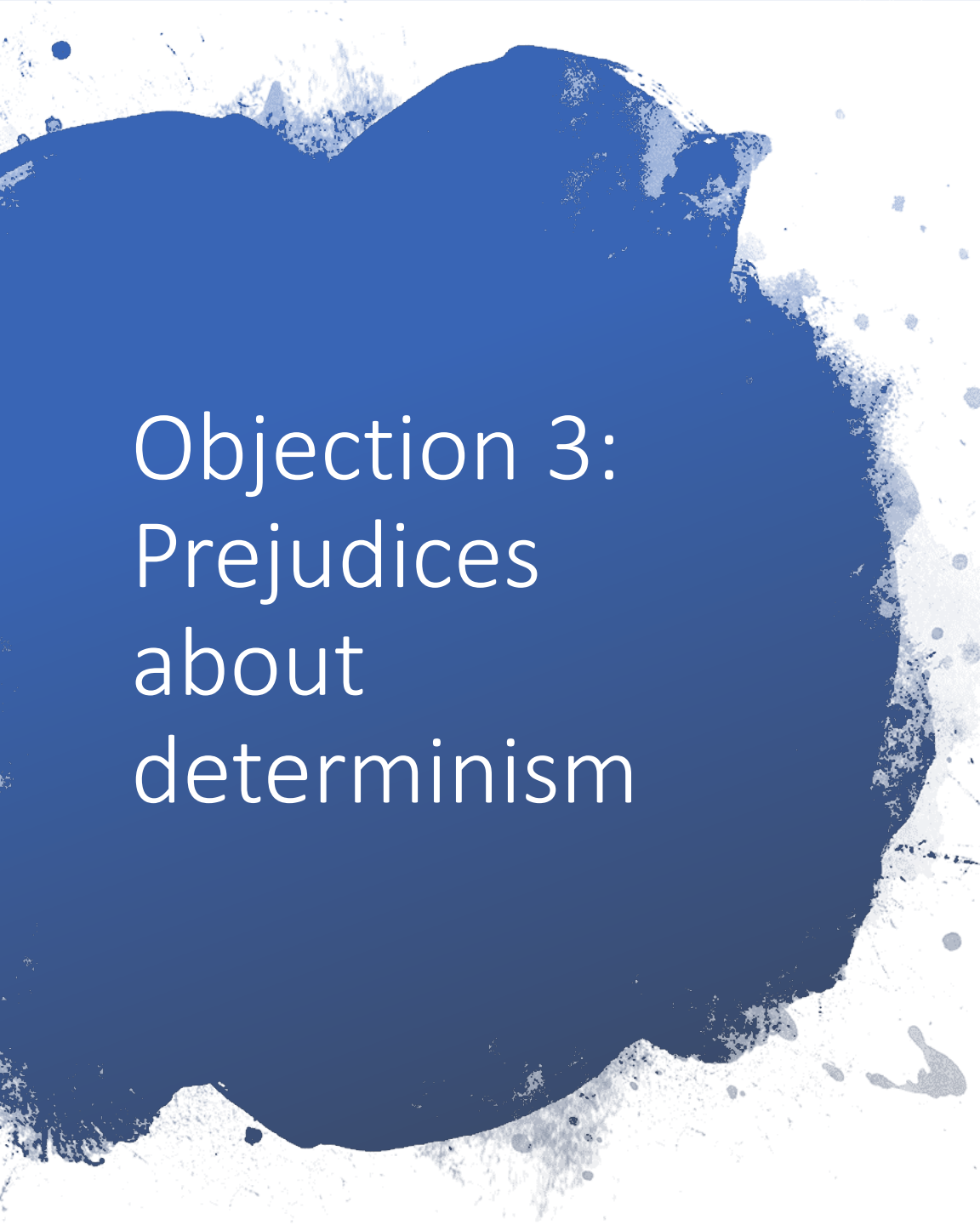
- One might **deny that determinism is true** and say that Tek may have chosen differently because determinism is false and there is randomness in the universe.
- But this is **not to deny that the truth of compatibilism**: it says that determinism and free will are logically consistent. It does not say that determinism is true.

RAP

- Critics of compatibilists contend that freedom implies that the **the same past can yield different futures**, but compatibilists contend that this notion of freedom is completely arbitrary and irrational.
- For compatibilists, the only rational reason why someone would choose differently is because they had desired differently. But this is counterfactual freedom.
- Which theory do you think is true and why: compatibilism or incompatibilism? Can we be free if everything is determined?



- Stop here. Lecture



Objection 3: Prejudices about determinism

Let's review! Two arguments and two responses

The compatibilist can fend off the charge that freedom and determinism are incompatible by arguing

1. freedom when appropriately defined is consistent with determinism and
2. deep, or ultimate freedom is absurd / irrational / unmotivated

- On the other hand, the compatibilist can further strengthen its position by clarifying prejudicial interpretations of it.
- In this section, we consider some of these **misconceptions (or confusions) of determinism**.

A third argument against compatibilism is as follows:

P1: Determinism cannot be true.

P2: If determinism cannot be true, then compatibilism cannot be true.

C: Therefore, freedom and determinism cannot be compatible

But consider the following argument against compatibilism.

- If

- First, **determinism is not the same as having your actions constrained**, interfered with, coerced, or compelled.
- You are coerced if your action is persuaded by force or threats to do something against your will.
- Coerced acts are thus always contrary to your desires. In contrast, you may be determined to do X, but insofar as you desire to do X, you are not being coerced to do X.

- Second, **causation is different from constraint**. A constraint is a type of impediment to doing what we want. It might be considered as a type of cause that prevents us from acting on our desires.
- For example, we are constrained if we are behind bars or lack the economic means to buy a car.
- However, just because your action is caused by a prior set of events does not mean you are constrained. If you want to lift a heavy rock, and you have spent your whole life developing your physique to do so, these prior events actually enable you to lift the rock rather than prevent you.

- Third, determinism isn't to be confused with control by another agent.
- Nothing about determinism implies that there is some mastermind who is controlling us to do X rather than Y.

Fourth, determinism is not to be confused with defeatist forms of fatalism.

Defeatist – a way the world can be where your actions have no influence on what will ultimately happen

Determinisms

- Future events are determined by the **details of the world** at a time t and **the laws of physics**
- Future events are determined by the details of the world at a time t , physical laws, and any other laws (e.g. psychological laws)

Fatalism

- Future events are **completely outside of our control for any reason. They could be:**
- fixed by the details of the world and the laws of nature (determinism)
- fixed because God has a plan and will institute that plan regardless of the laws of nature, or
- because of the **logical structure** of the universe: every sentence is true or false (one or the other, not both and not neither), there are future-tensed sentences, these sentences are made true or false by future events, therefore, the future is already determined.

- Some forms of fatalism are defeatist.

Example: Calling the doctor

- The fatalist and determinist will agree that every event is **outside of our control**, but they will differ as to how and what this means for individuals.
- Suppose Tek is a defeatist **fatalist** and Liz is a **compatibilist**.
- If Tek gets sick, he will contend that it doesn't matter what he does, he will live/die regardless of whether or not he calls the doctor.
- This is because Tek thinks that his actions have no effect on the future.
- Tek's attitude is a defeatist one since he thinks that his desires and actions have no effect on the future.

Example: Calling the doctor

- If Liz gets sick, she will contend that it may matter what she does.
- If she calls the doctor, then this may mean she recovers
- If she doesn't call the doctor, this may mean she fails to recover.

Liz's attitude is **not a defeatist** one since she thinks that how she acts effects the future.

- Even if her action is determined, she will think that how she acts plays a role in terms of future events.

Determinism vs Fatalism

| Determinism | Fatalism |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Every event is determined | Every event is determined |
| Future is causally determined | Future is not necessarily causally determined |
| Our actions influence future events | Our actions have no influence over future events |
| Not necessarily defeatist | defeatist |