

# Incompatibilism

A top-down view of a glass filled with a frothy green smoothie. A stalk of celery is placed on the rim of the glass as a garnish. The smoothie is surrounded by various fresh green vegetables, including large spinach leaves and a whole green apple, creating a healthy and natural aesthetic.

# Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

- Compatibilism has been a popular belief among philosophers and scientists.
- As we saw, its appeal to **counterfactual freedom** allows it to fend off the charge that determinism implies the inability to act otherwise (a necessary condition for freedom)
- This shifts the burden of proof to the incompatibilist.

# Incompatibilism

**Incompatibilism:** The theory that the doctrine of free will and determinism cannot both be true.

- Free will and determinism are inconsistent
- If determinism is true, then there is no free will
- If there is free will, then determinism is false



# The Consequence Argument

# Consequence Argument

We will look at one central argument *to support incompatibilism*: **the consequence argument (CA)**

- CA aims to show that determinism implies that **we do not** have capacity to do otherwise (it is impossible for us to ever change the fact that our present actions occur)
- And if we do not have the capacity to do otherwise, then we are **not free**.
- The Consequence Argument is big so we'll look at it in parts.

# Consequence Argument: Part 1

- P1: There is nothing we can now do to change the past.
- P2: There is nothing we can now do to change the laws of nature.
- IC1: Therefore, there is nothing we can do to change the past and the laws of nature (follows from P1 and P2)

**Explanation:** P1 and P2 are straightforward, while IC1 is the conjunction of both premises.

# Consequence Argument: Part 2

- **P3:** If determinism is true, it is necessary that, given the past and the laws of nature, our present actions occur.
- **Rule  $\alpha$ :** There is nothing anyone can do to change what is necessarily the case.
- **IC2:** If determinism is true (P3) and there is nothing one can do to change what is necessarily the case (Rule  $\alpha$ ), then there is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions are *necessary consequences* of the past and the laws of nature.

## Explanation:

- P3 is a statement of a consequence of determinism.
- Rule  $\alpha$  asserts: We cannot change **what is necessarily true**
- IC2 says that we cannot change the fact that our present actions are consequences of the past and laws of nature



# Rule $\alpha$

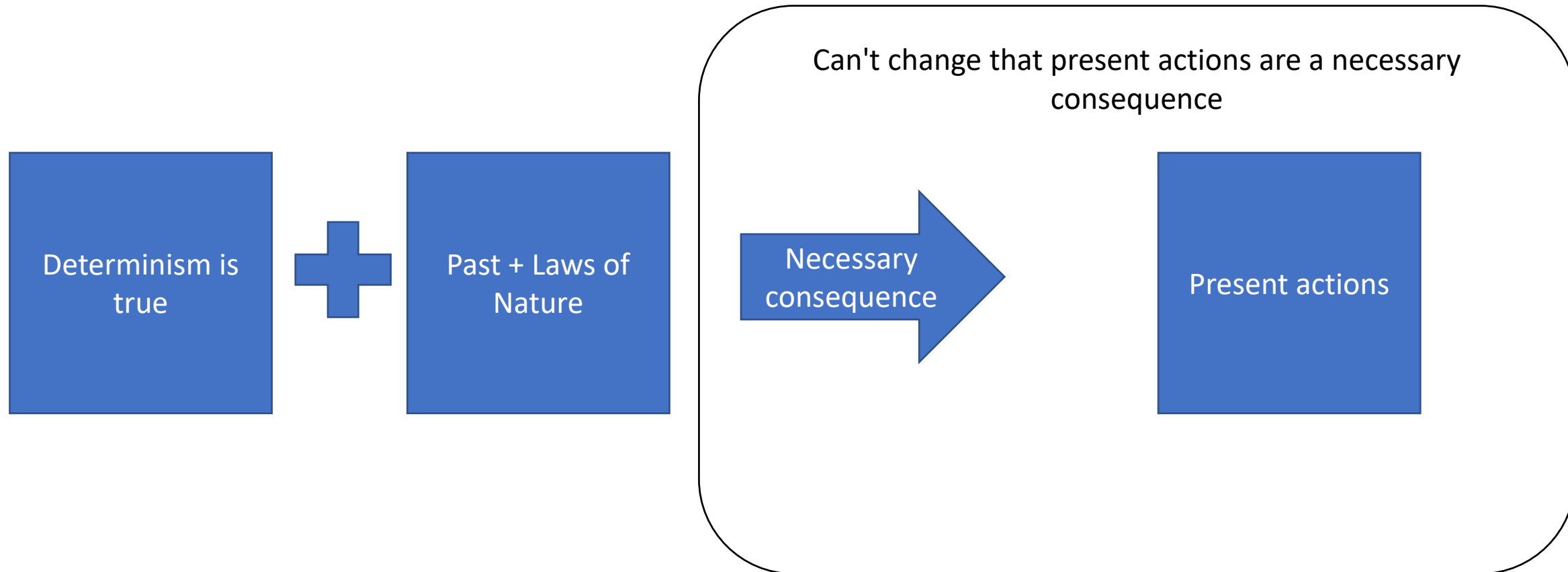
Rule  $\alpha$  says we cannot change what is necessarily the case.

- Example 1:  $2+2=4$  is necessarily true (true in all possible worlds). Rule  $\alpha$  asserts that there is nothing anyone can do to stop this from being the case.
- Example 2: All Euclidean squares have four sides. Can't change this.
- Example 3: Suppose the following is true: "if Socrates had not died, it is *necessarily true* that he would have become a dictator." Rule  $\alpha$  asserts that if Socrates had not died, **then there is nothing anyone could do to stop Socrates from becoming a dictator.**





**IC2** concludes we cannot change the fact that our present actions are necessary consequences of past + laws of nature (assuming determinism is true).



- **Rule  $\beta$ :** If there is nothing anyone can do to change X, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that Y is a necessary consequence of X, then there is nothing anyone can do to change Y.
- **C:** There is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions occur.

Explanation:

- **Rule  $\beta$ :** if Y is a necessary consequence of X, and we cannot change X, then we cannot change Y.

# Rule $\beta$

**Example 1:** Suppose there is nothing anyone could have done to prevent Trump's presidency. And suppose that a necessary consequence of Trump's presidency are impeachment proceedings.

## Rule $\beta$ asserts:

- (1) since we cannot prevent Trump's presidency, and
- (2) it is a necessary consequence of this presidency that impeachment proceedings occur
- (3) we cannot prevent the impeachment proceedings.



# Rule $\beta$

Example 2: Tek pushing you

- Suppose there is nothing you can do to stop Tek from pushing you (he is an unstoppable force).
- And, it is a necessary consequence that if Tek pushes you, then you will fall.

**Rule  $\beta$  asserts:**

1. Since you cannot stop Tek pushing you
2. And since it is a necessary consequence of this act that you will fall
3. There is nothing you can do stop from falling.

# The Conclusion of CA

The conclusion of the CA is this:

**C: There is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions occur**

But this is the opposite of what the compatibilists assert and so incompatibilism must be true.

# The Consequence Argument

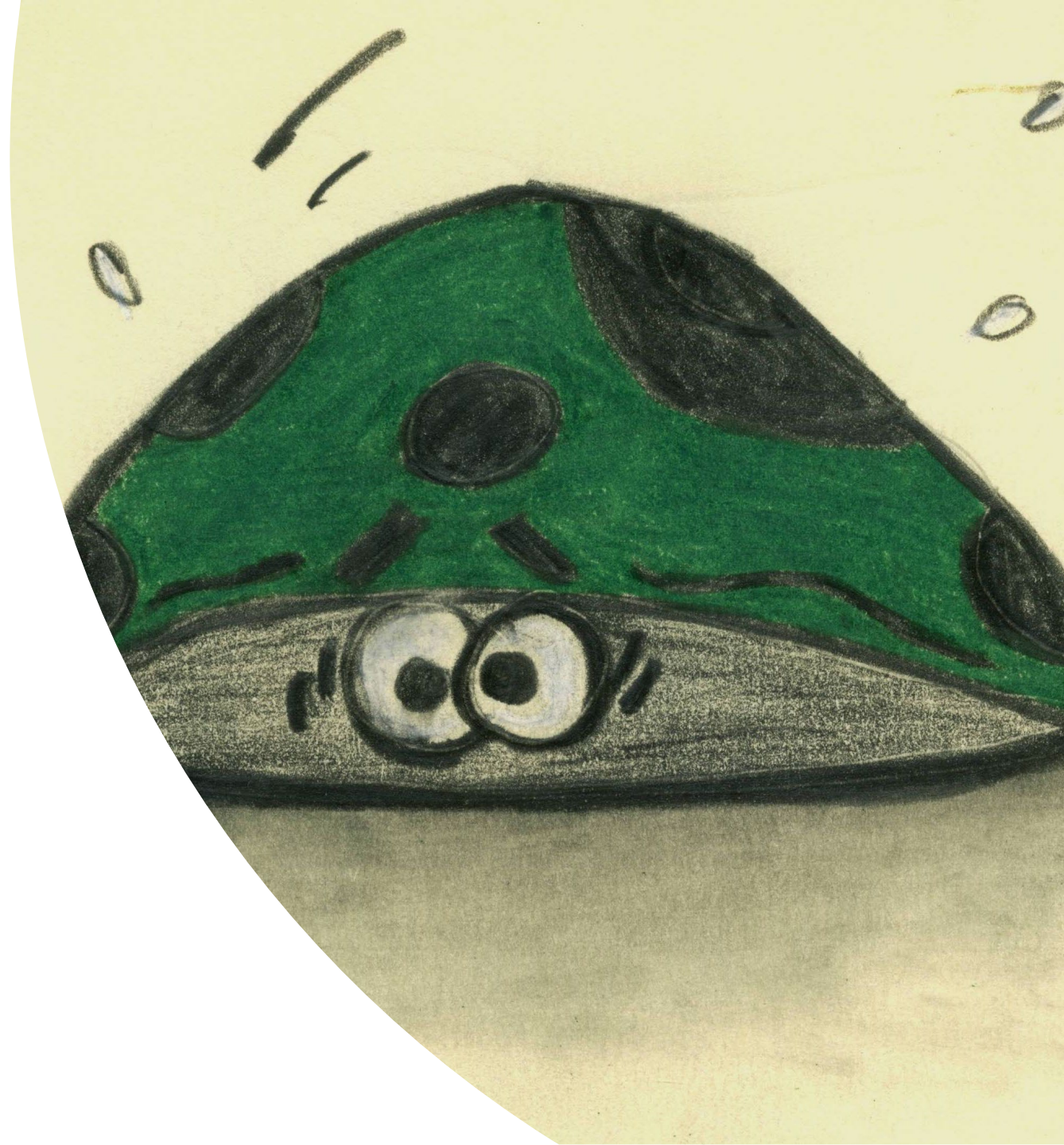
- P1: There is nothing we can now do to change the past
- P2: There is nothing we can now do to change the laws of nature
- IC1: Therefore, there is nothing we can do to change the past and the laws of nature
- P3: If determinism is true, it is necessary that, given the past and the laws of nature, our present actions occur.
- Rule  $\alpha$ : There is nothing anyone can do to change what is necessarily the case.
- IC2: If determinism is true (P3), there is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions are necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.
- Rule  $\beta$ : If there is nothing anyone can do to change X, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that Y is a necessary consequence of X, then there is nothing anyone can do to change Y.
- C: There is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions occur.

# RAP: The Consequence Argument


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Short statement of the consequence argument: If we cannot control the past or the laws of nature, and our present actions are necessary consequences of the past/laws, and we cannot change the fact that these actions are necessary consequences, it follows that we cannot control our present actions. And, if we cannot control our present actions, then we lack any capacity to do otherwise. And, if we lack the capacity to do otherwise, we are not free.

1. Explain the consequence argument in your own words?
2. Illustrate your explanation with an example.







# Responses to the consequence argument

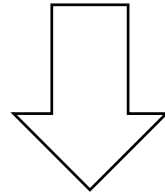
- Recall that one response to the initial charge that determinism implies we cannot behave otherwise is to articulate freedom as a kind of **conditional (counterfactual) power**.
- We are free (could act otherwise) provided we have the power such that if we had desired to do otherwise, then we would have done otherwise.
- On this account of freedom, while we never behave other than how we do, but we nevertheless are free in that if we wanted to do differently, we would have.

# Compatibilists contend that **Rule $\beta$** is false.

- P1: There is nothing we can now do to change the past
- P2: There is nothing we can now do to change the laws of nature
- IC1: Therefore, there is nothing we can do to change the past and the laws of nature
- P3: If determinism is true, it is necessary that, given the past and the laws of nature, our present actions occur.
- Rule  $\alpha$ : There is nothing anyone can do to change what is necessarily the case.
- IC2: Assuming that determinism is true (P3), and there is nothing we can do to change the past and the laws of nature (IC1), then there is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions are necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.
- Rule  $\beta$ : If there is nothing anyone can do to change X, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that Y is a necessary consequence of X, then there is nothing anyone can do to change Y.
- C: There is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions occur.

# Compatibilists contend that **Rule $\beta$** is false.

**Rule  $\beta$ :** If there is nothing anyone can do to change X, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that Y is a necessary consequence of X, then there is nothing anyone can do to change Y.



**Rule  $\beta$ :** If there is nothing anyone can do to change past + laws, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that present actions are a necessary consequence of past + laws, then there is nothing anyone can do to change present actions.

# Compatibilists contend that **Rule $\beta$** is false.

Compatibilists will say

- This is true: there is nothing anyone can do to change past + laws, and
- This is true: nothing anyone can do to change the fact that present actions are a necessary consequence of past + laws
- But this is false: there is nothing anyone can do to change present actions.

**Rule  $\beta$ :** If there is nothing anyone can do to change past + laws, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that present actions are a necessary consequence of past + laws, then there is nothing anyone can do to change present actions.

# Compatibilists contend that **Rule $\beta$** is false.

1. **True:** There is nothing we can do to change the **past** and the **laws of nature** (even if we had desired differently, we could change neither)
2. **True:** There is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions are a necessary consequence of the past and the laws of nature (even if we wanted to, we cannot change the fact that our actions follow from laws + state of affairs)
3. **False:** there is nothing we could do to change the fact that our present actions occur

**Rule  $\beta$ :** If there is nothing anyone can do to change past + laws, and nothing anyone can do to change the fact that present actions are a necessary consequence of past + laws, then **there is nothing anyone can do to change present actions.**

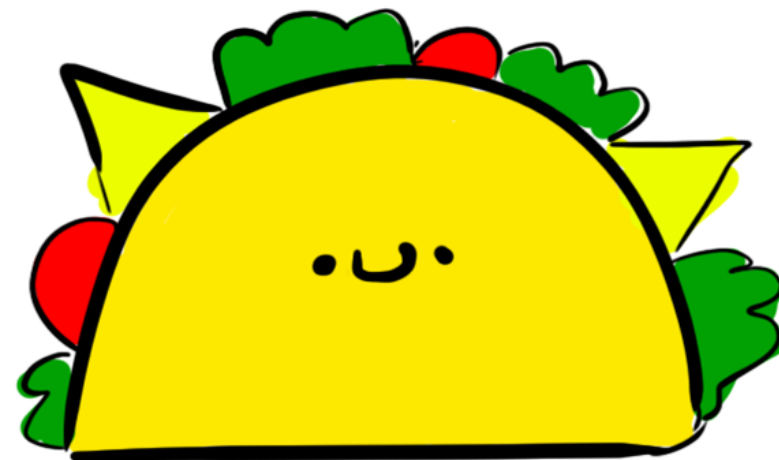
False: there is nothing we could do to change the fact that our present actions occur

- There is something we could have done to change the fact that our present actions occur
- IF **we had desired differently**, then different actions would have occurred (counterfactual freedom!)




# Example: Taco

- Suppose that Tek desires to eat a taco (D), eats the taco (E), and then regrets it.
- He wonders whether he was free not to eat the taco (act otherwise, not-E)
- Tek knows he is not free to change the past or the laws of nature
- Tek knows he cannot change the fact that given his desire D, it is a necessary consequence that he ate the taco
- Tek also knows that he can not change the fact that his eating the taco is a necessary consequence of his desires
- **But Tek reflects:** "if I had desired differently (not-D), then there would be nothing stopping me from abstaining from the taco. I could have acted differently"
- Thus, he concludes **he was free not to eat the taco**



Because **Rule  $\beta$  is false. The conclusion does not follow nor is it true.**

- The conclusion states that it is **impossible** for a person to act otherwise
- Compatibilists say this is **not impossible**. While given our desires, we wouldn't have acted differently than we did, nevertheless we could have acted differently if we had different desires.



# Defending the Consequence Argument

# Argument 1: Weighing intuitions

Suppose we are undecided about the entire matter. We might weigh our intuitions.

- I1: Intuitions about premises of consequences
- I2: Intuitions about counterfactual account of freedom

## **Argument from Weighing Intuitions**

P1: If undecided, then we ought to accept which position for which there is strong intuitions.

P2: I1 are stronger than I2.

C: Therefore, we ought to accept the consequence argument (and therefore incompatibilism)

# Response

## Argument from Weighing Intuitions

P1: If undecided, then we ought to accept which position for which there is strong intuitions.

P2: I1 are stronger than I2.

C: Therefore, we ought to accept the consequence argument (and therefore incompatibilism)

**Objection 1:** A compatibilist will say that **P2 is false** (intuitions about counterfactual freedom are greater than intuitions involving consequence argument).

**Objection 2:** P1 is true only if belief in compatibilism and belief in incompatibilism are jointly exhaustive of the attitudes one can have about the matter. But we might instead choose to be **agnostic** about the matter.

# Argument 2: Against Counterfactual Freedom

There is reason to think that counterfactual freedom isn't a good account of what it means to be free.

- P1: Counterfactual accounts of freedom produce cases where individuals S are said to **be able to do otherwise** when **they are not able to do otherwise (contradictory results)**.
- P2: Accounts of freedom should not produce contradictory results.
- IC: Therefore, we ought to reject counterfactual freedom.
- C: Therefore, since compatibilism requires counterfactual freedom, we ought to reject compatibilism

# Argument 2: Against Counterfactual Freedom

- Suppose Tek is deathly afraid of guns (his father and mother were killed in accidental shootings).
- He is neither able to pick up a gun nor is he even psychologically capable of desiring to pick up a gun.
- Tek goes to Liz's house. She asks him to pick up her gun.
- Tek doesn't pick up the gun.

**According to counterfactual freedom:** Tek could have picked up the gun for **if he had desired to pick up the gun**, he would have. Therefore he was free.

**However:** It seems that Tek **could not** have picked up the gun because **he could not even desire** to pick up the gun.

Thus, contrary to counterfactual freedom accounts, Tek **was not free at all**.



END OF LECTURE

Let's evaluate each premise using counterfactual freedom.

Premise	Counterfactual Analysis
P1 and P2: There is nothing we can now do to change the past or the laws of nature	<b>P1 and P2 are true.</b> It is false to say: If we had desired to change the past or the laws of nature, then we would have. So P1 is true.
P2: There is nothing we can now do to change the laws of nature	<b>P2 is true.</b> It is false to say: If we had desired to change the laws of nature, then we would have. So P2 is true.
P3: If determinism is true, it is necessary that, given the past and the laws of nature, our present actions occur.	<b>P3 is true.</b> Statement of determinism.