




God and Freedom

The background of the left half of the slide features a series of thin, concentric circles in a light gray color, centered on the left side. Overlaid on these circles is a solid blue speech bubble shape, which is rectangular with a small triangular tail pointing downwards. The text is centered within the main body of this speech bubble.

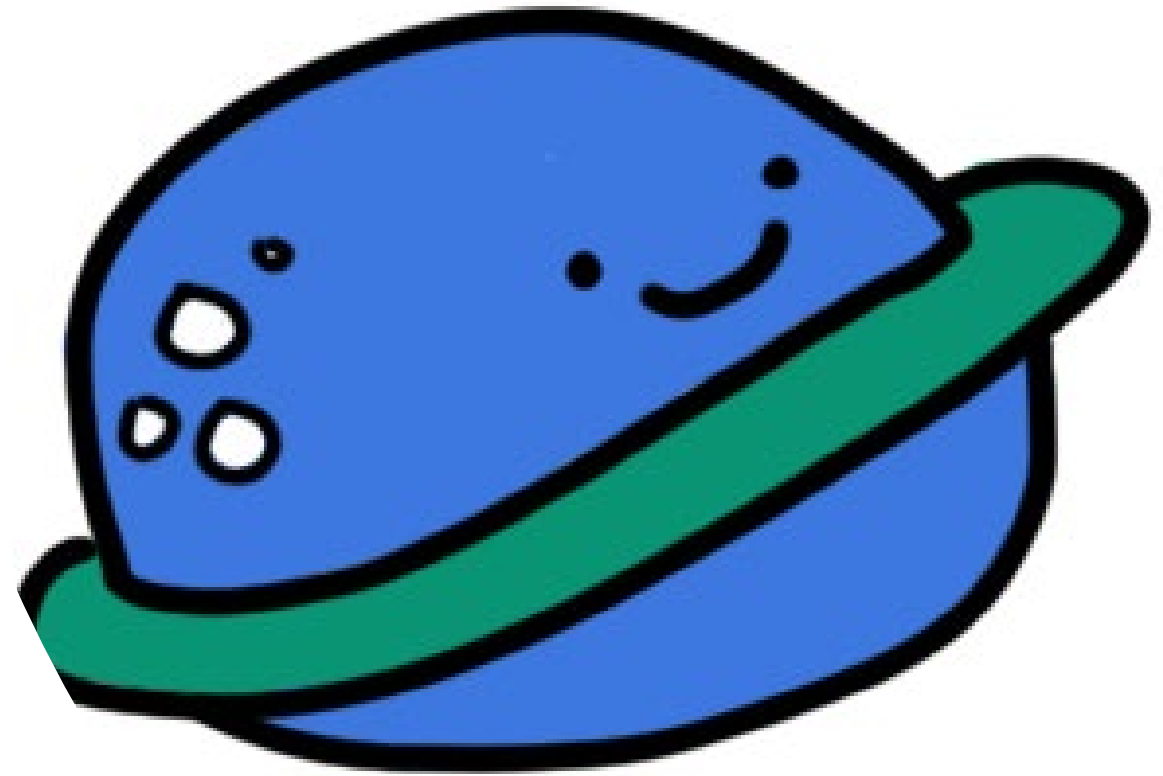
Introduction to God and free will



Freedom and the world

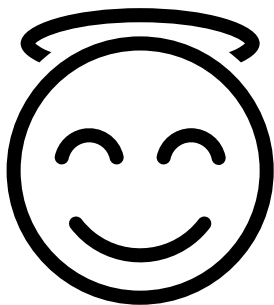
Focus has been on freedom and the world (scientific image)

- If science tells us **determined**, then does freedom fit?
- If science tells us events are **undetermined**, then does freedom fit?

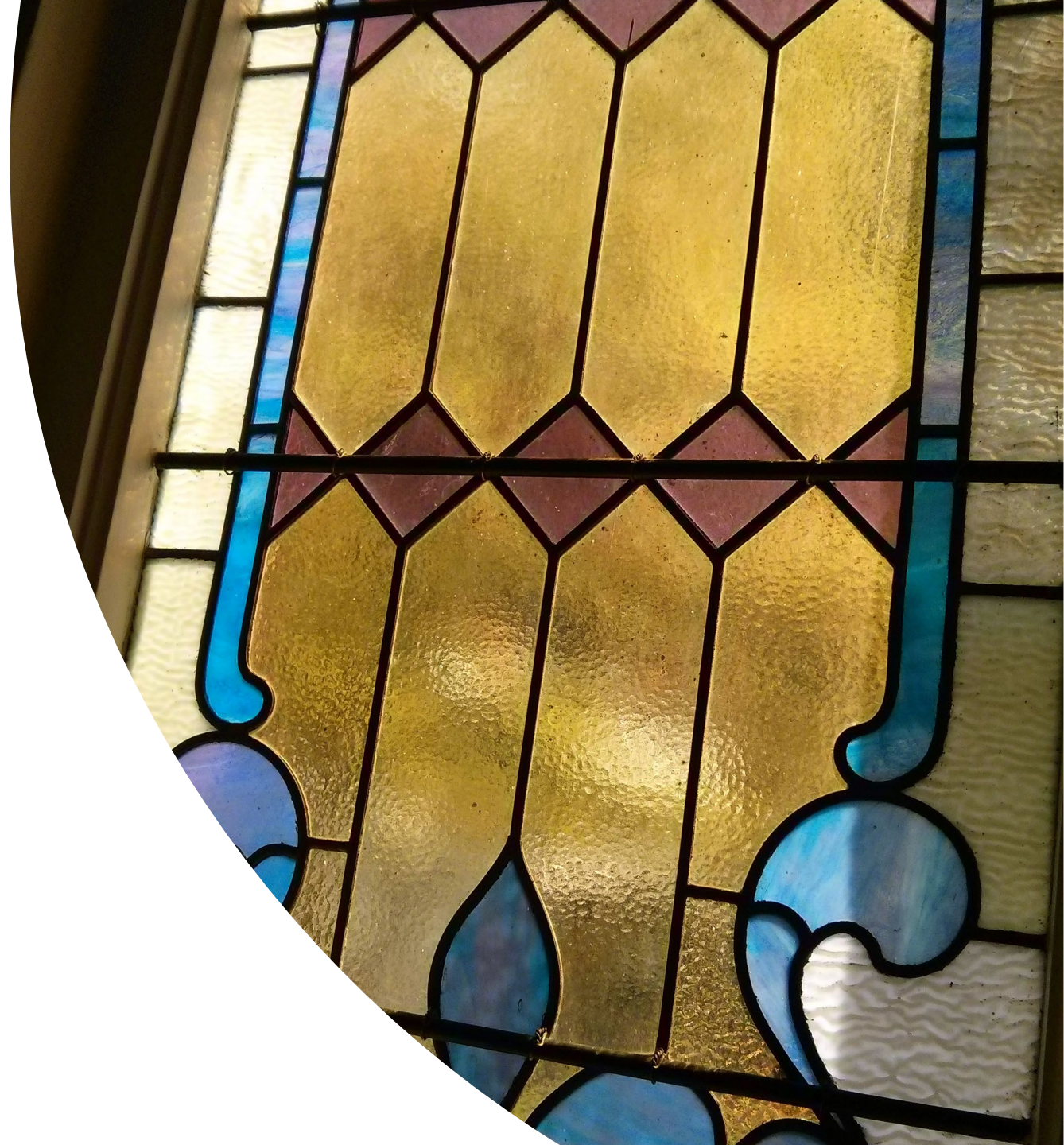


Freedom and religion

- Question of whether freedom fits into the **religious view of the world**
- Not only might freedom conflict with aspects of religious doctrine (e.g. some individuals are destined to be saved) but also may conflict with the **nature of God**



If I exist, then
no freedom



Unconcerned

If you believe in God, then this question is important

- If your belief in God is **rational**, then you will want to figure out how both can be true: (1) belief in God and (2) belief in free will

If you don't believe in God, then question still important

- If you wish to show that God does not exist, then you can try to show that both cannot be true: (1) belief in God and (2) belief in free will

Faith alone

The debate about free will and God assumes that belief in God and free will is a **rational belief**

You might assert that:

1. You believe in God
2. You believe in free will
3. It is not necessary that your beliefs in (1) and (2) are rational.

Defining God



Stronger vs. Weaker Conceptions of God

There are many definitions of God (some **stronger/weaker** than others)

- **T1 (The Roman Catholic God exists):** all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving being exists that is responsible for the creation (and ultimate destruction) of the world and is one and the same person as Jesus Christ
- .
- .
- .
- **Tn (God exists):** Some being exists that created the world



Stronger vs. Weaker Conceptions of God

A **strong** conception of God tends to have a lot of explanatory power

- A strong conception of God might explain (1) creation of world, (2) moral rules, (3) end of world, (4) rituals that should be observed, (5) justify certain organizations, etc.
- A weaker conception tends to explain a lot less



Stronger vs. Weaker Conceptions of God

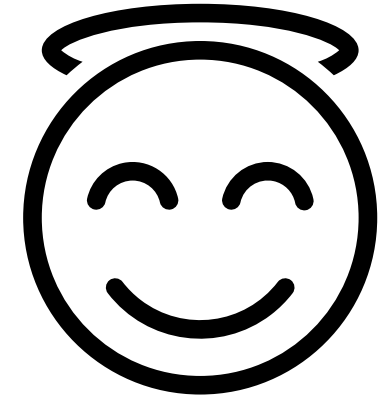
Need to be very clear about what conception of God we are using.

- Stronger theories of God entail the weaker theory
- **Proof** of the stronger theory entails a proof of the weaker theory
- A **refutation** of the weaker theory entails a refutation of the stronger theory

The omni-conception of God

Omni-God: a being with the following four properties:

1. Omniscient (all-knowing)
2. Omnibenevolent (all-good, all-loving)
3. Omnipotent (all-powerful)
4. Creator of that which exists



Omni-God is sometimes also said to be omnipresent (occupying all-space and time) but this won't matter for our purposes.

Attitudes toward the Omni-God

Need to clarify the positions and attitudes toward the omni-God. Let's abbreviate the proposition *God exists* as **G**

Belief: willingness to act based on G

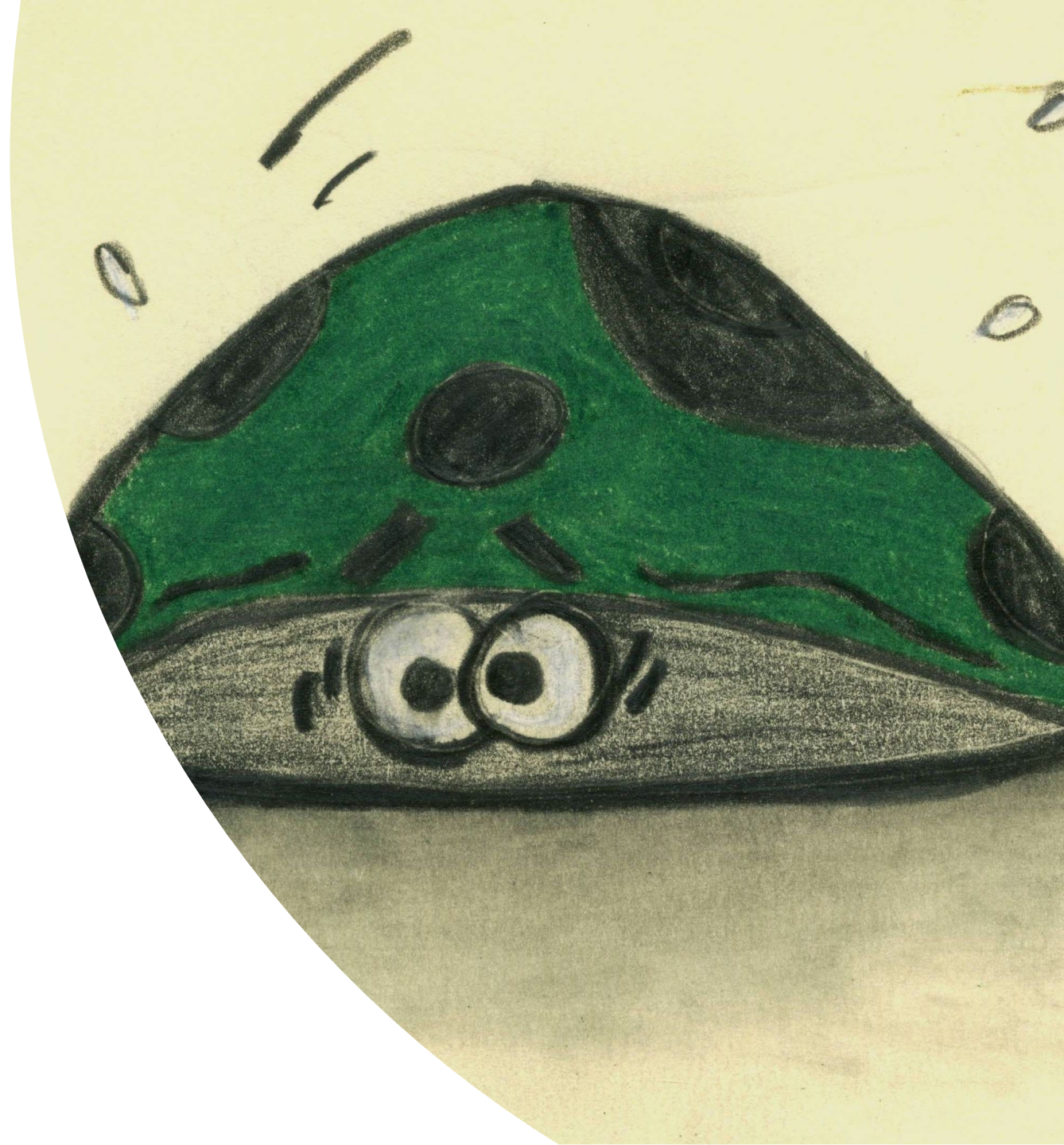
- Belief that G
- Belief that not-G

Knowledge: justified true belief about G

- **Theism:** I know that G
- **Atheism:** I know that not-G
- **Agnosticism:** I neither know G nor know not-G

RAP

- There are two attitudes toward God (belief and knowledge). Characterize yourself along both of these attitudes.
- Is belief in God rational?



Divine
predestination



Divine predestination

Divine predestination: type of religious determination such that all events are due to the will of God

- **Example (constant creation):** God is constantly creating every moment
- **Example (intelligent designer):** God created the world at the beginning in time such that each event is determined by God's initial act of creation

Divine predestination

The creation of the world seems to be **consistent** with God's nature:

- Omnipotent: God has the power to determine events
- Omnibenevolent: Given God's nature, what happens must be good
- Omniscient: God has divine foreknowledge (God not only created the world but knows what will happen)

Problem of Divine predestination

- P1: If God every event is determined by God (divine predestination), then there is no room for freedom.
- P2: There is freedom in the world.
- C: Therefore, either God does not exist or divine predestination is false.



God exists



Free will exists

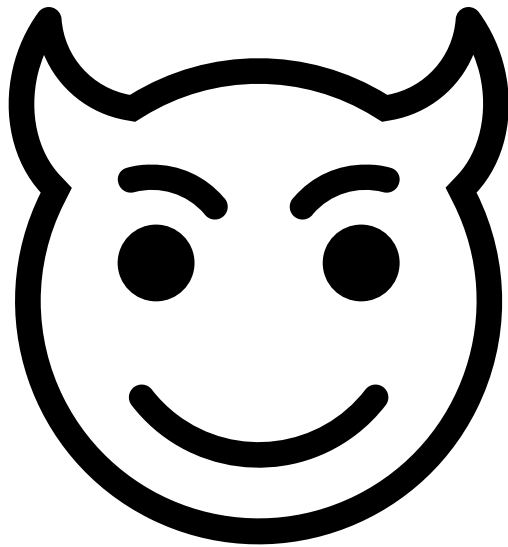
Responses to the
divine
predestination
problem



Position 1: Compatibilism

- DP is true and we are free.
- If we were differently (had different natures), then we would act differently

Objection: Problem of Evil



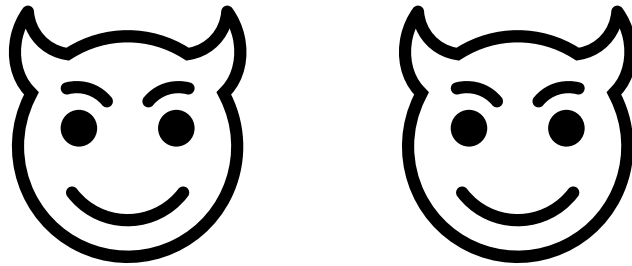
Objection 1: This means that God is ultimately responsible for evil (conflict with God's omnibenevolence)

Problem of Evil

- P1: If the omni-God exists, then there should be no evil in the world.
- P2: There is evil in the world due to **human nature**.
- C: Therefore, the omni-God exists (and all stronger conceptions)

Objection: Problem of Divine Judgment

Objection 2 (for stronger theories): If God is ultimately responsible for our evil nature / acts, then God acts *immorally* if we are judged for these acts.



Example: God creates Tek to have an evil nature. Tek commits evil acts. In the final judgment, God punishes Tek for his evil deeds.

Double immorality

- **Weaker theories:** God creates evil and does wrong in creating us in a way where we will commit evil
- **Stronger theories:** God does wrong in punishing us for an act that God is ultimately responsible for

Position 2: Incompatibilism

Deny predestination: DP is false and humans are still free

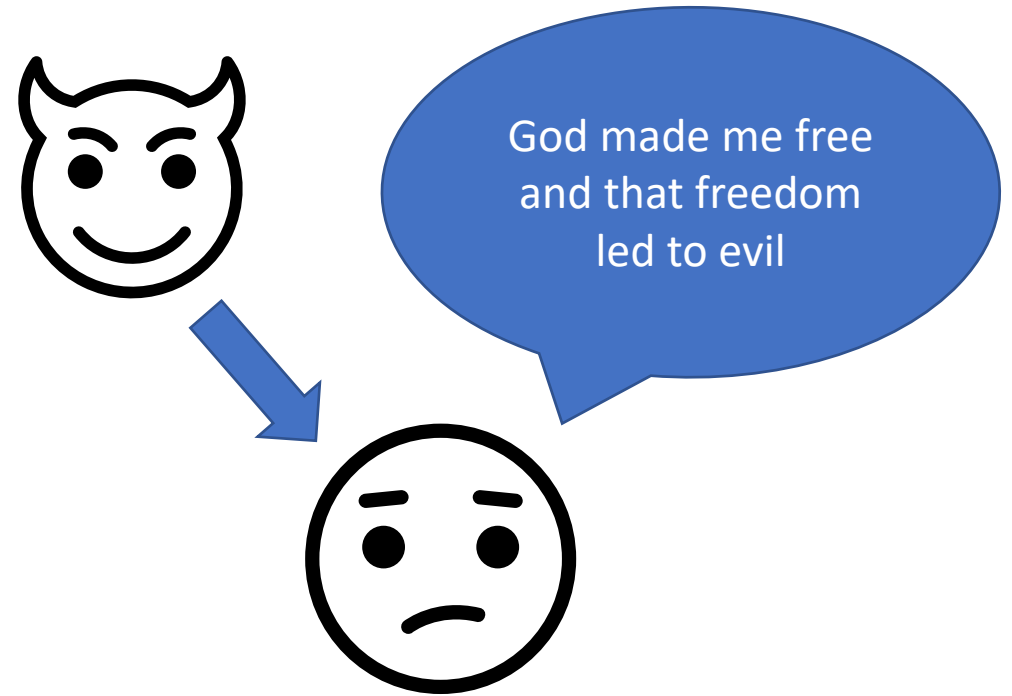
1. God is omnipotent but does not predestine: God can predestine all events but chooses not to
2. God makes us free

Objection: Problem of Evil, AGAIN!

Objection 1: God is still ultimately responsible for evil (conflict with God's omnibenevolence). God made us free, and this act results in evil. God knows what we will do with this free will (God is omniscient)

Problem of Evil

- P1: If the omni-God exists, then there should be no evil in the world.
- P2: There is evil in the world due to human **freedom**
- C: Therefore, the omni-God exists (and all stronger conceptions)



Objection: Foreknowledge

- God may not have predestined events but God is **omniscient**
- **God thus has divine foreknowledge** (God knows the future)
- So God knows that we will do evil with our free will
- If God knows we will do evil and does not prevent it, then God is still responsible for that evil.

Response 1: Best available option

One response is that while God made us free and this freedom led to us committing evil, this is the **BEST** available option available to God.

- If Tek has to choose between A and B, and neither option is good, but A is better than B, we can't fault Tek for choosing A.
- Wrong to fault Tek for choosing the best option (even if the best option isn't a good one)

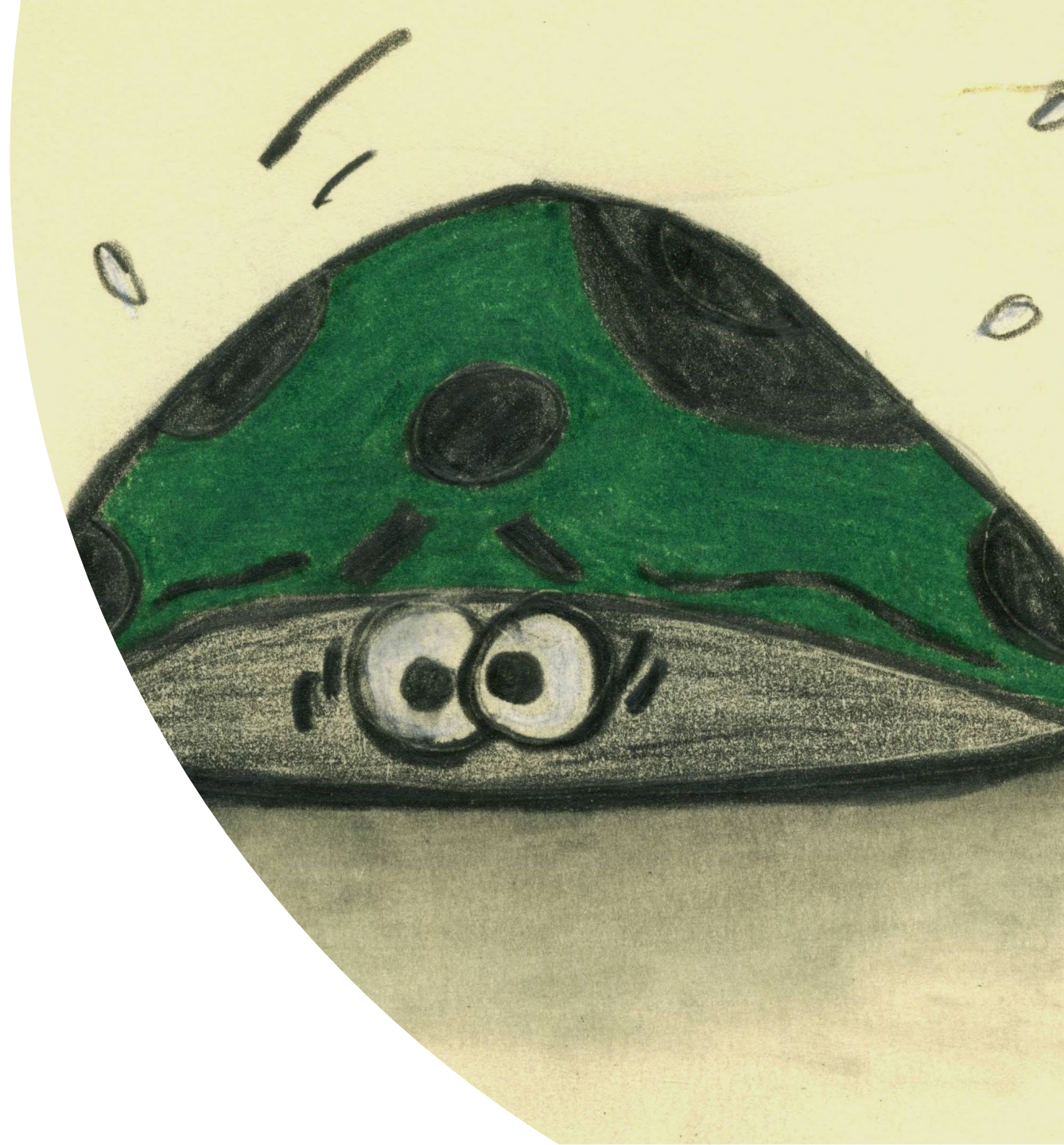
Response: Divine compromise

Consider that you are God and planning on creating a universe. You have two options:

- O1: Create a world where humans are **not free**
- O2: Create a world where humans are **free**

If you pick O1, then you seemingly create a world that is lacking (not as good). But if you pick O2, it admits of evil.

1. Which of these two options are the better choice?
2. Give one reason to support your view



Response 2: Knowledge and Causation

- Need to distinguish between *causing someone to do P* and *knowing that they will do P*
- God knows we will do P but God's knowledge did not cause us to do P.

Example: Tek *knows* who will win the election in 2020 but Tek did not *cause* the person to win.

Objection: Knowledge, Causation, Responsibility

Objection: You can know P, not cause P, but be responsible for P



Preventing Evil

- t1: Suppose Charles knows in advance that Tek will murder their neighbor
- t2: Tek murders neighbor

While Charles did not *cause* the neighbor's death, Charles is still *partially* morally responsible.

Key Point: we have a moral obligation to prevent evil **when it is in our power** and since God is all-powerful, God should prevent unnecessary evil.



Open theism and other revisionist theories

Revisionist theories

There are numerous other theories, but we will focus on a set of solutions that involve **weakening or revising** the conception of God even further

Option 1: God is not good

Many of the problems of reconciling God with free will stem from trying to preserve God's goodness (omnibenevolence)

- Weakening God: If God were not good, then these problems would go away

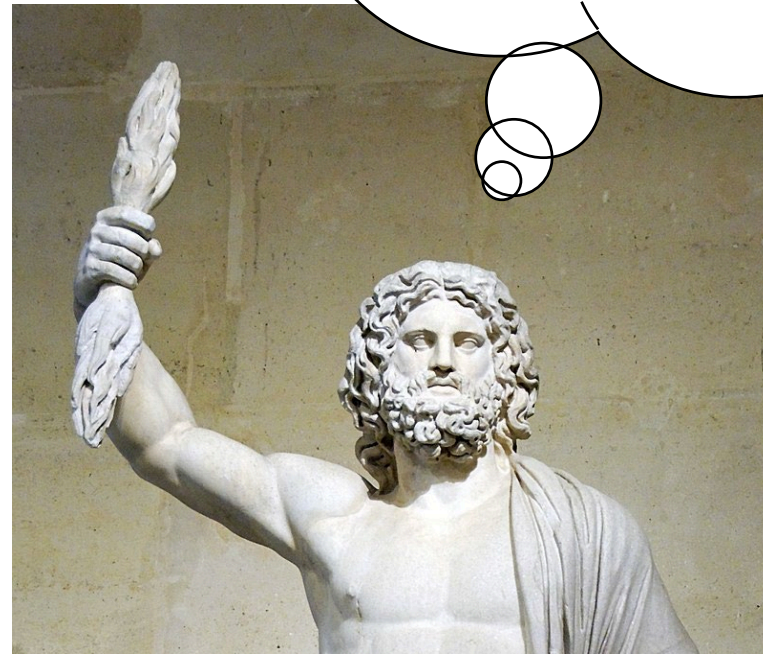
Indifferent Omni-God: God is the omni-God but not omnibenevolent

- The idea would be that God is the creator and smasher of cosmoses
- More interested in creating universes (e.g. dimensionality, speed of light, space, time), exhausting good and evil, then just goodness

Position 1: God is not good

- Sort of a depressing doctrine
- God is unconcerned with the affairs of human beings
- Mere dust to God

I'm a GOD.
I care nothing for
puny humans!





Position 2: Open Theism

Open theism: the theory that

1. growing block / presentism
2. Indeterminism is true
3. There is free will
4. God is still omniscient

Position 2: Open Theism

- **Presentism / Growing Block:** God knows all past and present facts
- **Indeterminism:** God knows what can be determined by the laws of nature and past state of affairs but some events are undetermined
- **Free will:** there are free acts that are undetermined
- **God still omniscient:** knows everything that can be known

God gives free will but does not know in advance what we will do with it.

Objection: Requires revision to God

Objection 1: God is typically regarded as **unchanging**, immutable, but open theism implies that God changes (moves from a state of not-knowing P to knowing-P)

Objection 2: God is typically regarded as **impassible** (unable to be influenced or altered by humans). But since God changes due to human choice, we change God with our actions

Objection 3: God is typically regarded as **capable of prophecy**. But this prophecy would only apply to natural (predictable) events. God could give prophecy about free human action.

Response: Divine compromise

Create your own conception of God that would be consistent with the reality of freedom.

