

Metaphysics

Theories of free will

Chapman University. PHIL305. Lecture 24. 4/28/2022.

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Discussion board (w12) due 4/30

- ▶ **Post 1:** What is the most plausible theory of free will, and why? Explain your answer. 200-300 words.
- ▶ **Post 2:** Provide constructive feedback to a post on another student's thread. 150-250 words.

Assignment Rubric Details

Discussion Board Posts				
Criteria	Ratings			Pts
Post 1 Response to prompt	5.0 pts Excellent The post clearly answers the prompt, demonstrates understanding of the reading, and illustrates independent thinking.	3.0 pts Adequate The post attempts to answer the prompt, demonstrates partial understanding of the reading, but lacks independent thinking.	1.0 pts Inadequate Does not provide clear answer to the prompt and does not demonstrate understanding of the reading.	5.0 pts
Post 2 Constructive feedback	5.0 pts Excellent The post responds clearly to another student's post, offers constructive ideas, and is respectful.	3.0 pts Adequate The post attempts to respond to another student's post, but lacks either constructive ideas or respectful language.	1.0 pts Inadequate Does not respond to another student's post in way that demonstrates thoughtfulness.	5.0 pts
Total Points: 10.0				

Determinism

- ▶ The laws of nature are *deterministic*:
 - ▶ Given any past state of the universe, the laws of nature ensure that:
 1. There is only one physically possible future.
 2. The complete future of the universe is entirely predictable.

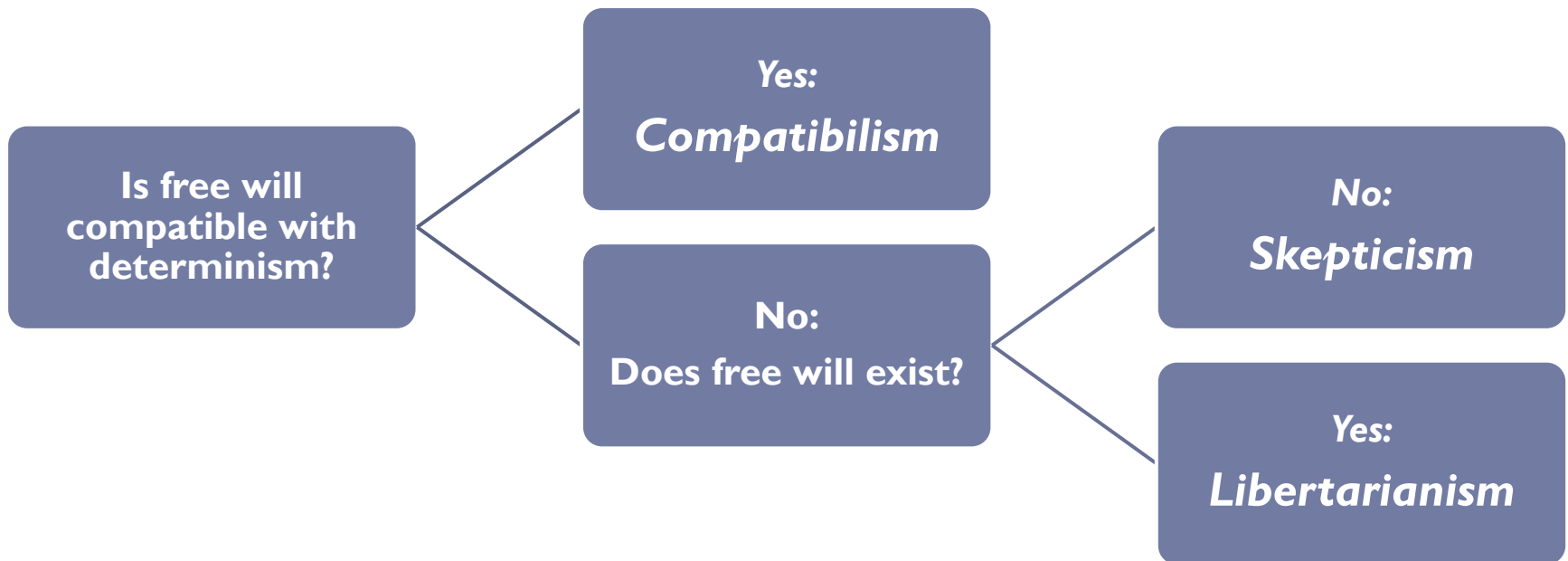
“We may regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its past and the cause of its future. An intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed, if this intellect were also vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes.”

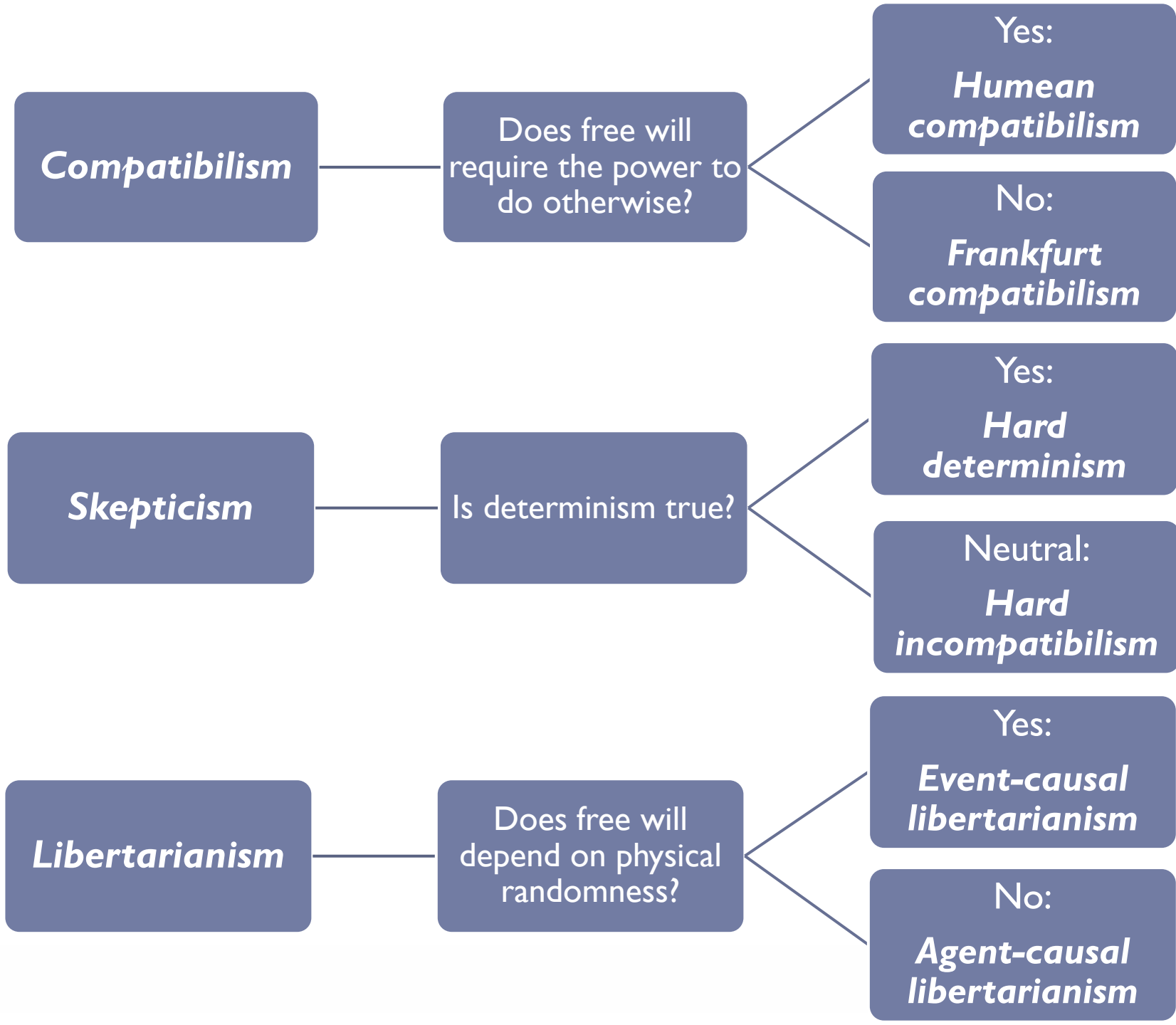
- ▶ *Pierre Simon Laplace, A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities, 1814.*



Pierre Simon Laplace
1749-1827

The free will debate





The consequence argument against free will

- (3) There is nothing we can do now to change the past and the laws.
- (4) If determinism is true, then our present actions are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature.
- (5) So, if determinism is true there is nothing we can do now to change the fact that our present actions are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature. (From 4.)
- (6) So, if determinism is true, then there is nothing we can do to change the fact that our present actions occur. (From 3&5.)
- (7) So, if determinism is true, then no one has the power to do otherwise than what one actually does. (From 6.)
- (8) Free will requires the power to do otherwise.
- (9) So, if determinism is true, then no one has free will. (From 7&8.)

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Frankfurt compatibilism

- ▶ **Key claim:**
 - ▶ Free will does **not** require the power to do otherwise.
- ▶ **Locke's thought experiment:**
 - ▶ You walk into a classroom, it looks like a nice place to study, so *you (freely!) choose to stay* and study there.
 - ▶ Unbeknownst to you, the door locked behind you, so you could not have left—you could not have done otherwise.
 - ▶ Problem: you still could have *chosen* to do otherwise.
- ▶ **Frankfurt cases:**
 - ▶ Cases involving implanted devices that *force you to choose A but only if you choose not to do A* (assassin example).
- ▶ **Frankfurt compatibilists must give an alternative definition of free will.**
 - ▶ *Surface freedom*: being able to act (without constraint) to satisfy your desires.
 - ▶ *2nd-order desire freedom*: being able to act to satisfy your *desired* desires.
 - ▶ *Reasons-responsive freedom*: being able to act *in accord with reasons*.

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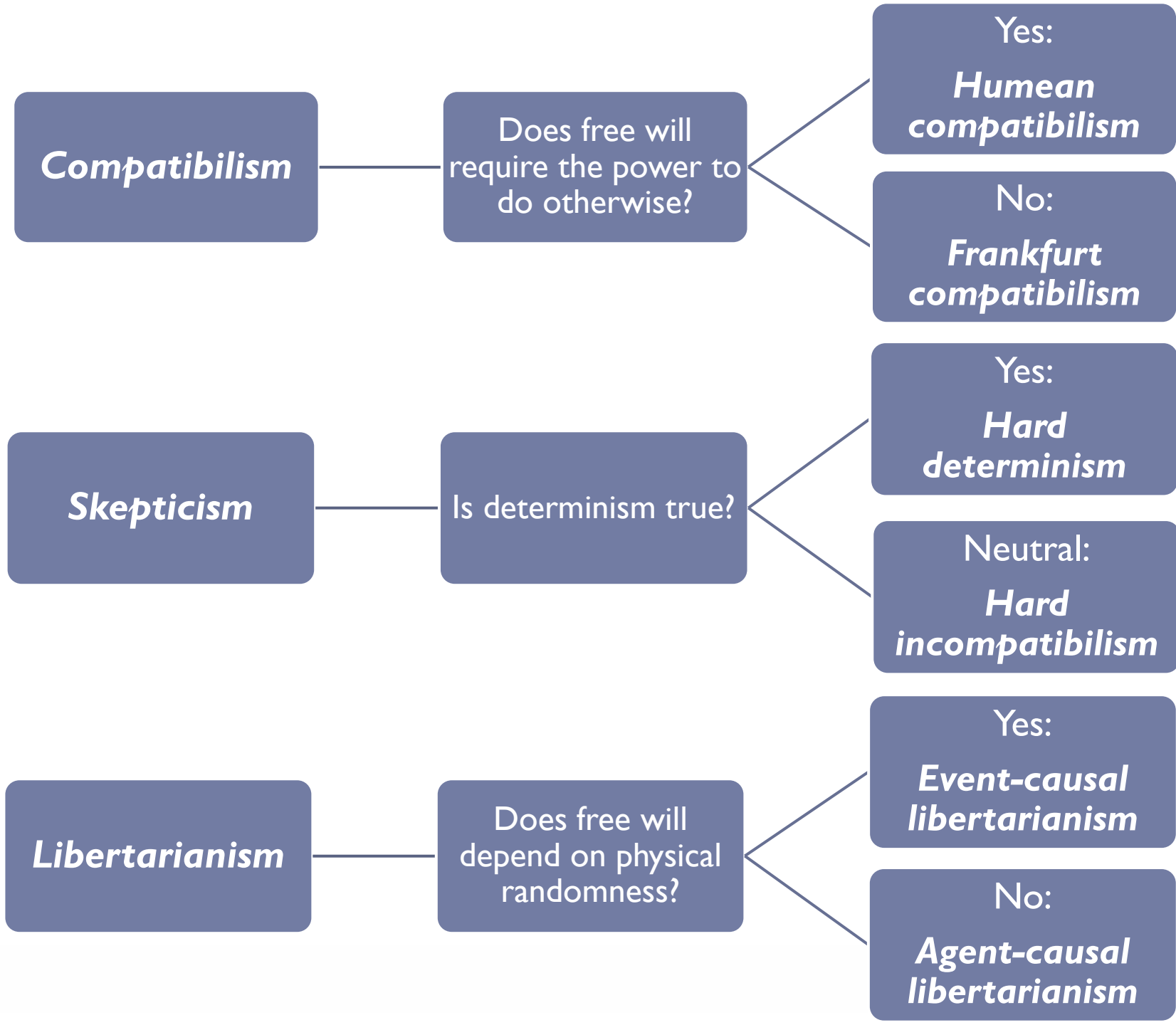
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Humean compatibilism

- ▶ **Key claim:**
 - ▶ The inference to (6) is invalid.
 - ▶ It assumes the *transfer of powerlessness principle (TPP)*, which is false.
 - ▶ TPP: If you can't change X or the fact that X entails Y, then you can't change Y.
- ▶ **How could TPP be false?**
 - ▶ I can't change X (X = the past and the laws).
 - ▶ I can't change the fact that X entails that I will attend today's lecture.
 - ▶ But I *can* choose *not* to attend.
- ▶ **How can these three statements be consistent?**
 - ▶ If you had *not* attended, *the laws of nature would have been different!*
- ▶ **The Humean account of laws:**
 - ▶ Laws *are determined by* the pattern of events across space and time.
 - ▶ Our free actions are components of the pattern.



Libertarianism

▶ Key claim:

- ▶ Determinism is false: your choices are *not* determined by the past and the laws.
 - ▶ *Main challenge*: then how can they be *your* choices?

▶ Agent-causal libertarianism:

- ▶ *You* cause your actions. But *you* are not governed by the laws of physics (mind-body dualism).

▶ Event-causal libertarianism (Kane's version):

- ▶ Most daily actions are not freely chosen.
- ▶ Only *self-forming actions* are truly free.
- ▶ They are preceded by intense deliberation (should I do A or B?).
- ▶ Deliberation involves a deadlock in your brain that is broken by *quantum randomness*.
- ▶ The deadlock creates a butterfly effect, which magnifies microscopic randomness up into your decision-making.
- ▶ *You* cause your (self-forming) actions, because they could not have occurred without *your* prior desires.

Skepticism about free will

▶ Hard determinism:

- ▶ Free will is incompatible with determinism and determinism is true. So, free will does not exist.

▶ Hard incompatibilism:

- ▶ Free will is incompatible with *both* determinism *and* indeterminism. So, free will *cannot possibly* exist.

▶ Main challenge: moral responsibility

- ▶ You are *morally responsible* for those actions that were *up to you*, that you *freely* chose to perform.
- ▶ You are *not* morally responsible for those that were *not* up to you, that you did *not* freely choose.
 - ▶ So, we are not responsible *for anything*.
 - ▶ So how can we justify our practices that involve praise and blame?

Six theories of free will

1) Humean **compatibilism**:

- ▶ The inference to (6) is invalid. I have the power to “change the laws” in the sense that if I *had* chosen otherwise, the laws *would* have been different, which is compatible with determinism.

2) Frankfurt **compatibilism**:

- ▶ Premise (8) is false due to Frankfurt cases. Free will only requires the power to *satisfy your desired desires*, which is compatible with determinism.

3) Agent-causal **libertarianism**:

- ▶ *You* cause your actions. But *you* are not governed by the laws of physics (mind-body dualism).

4) Event-causal **libertarianism**:

- ▶ Indecision between actions A and B is resolved by quantum random events in the brain.

5) Determinist **skepticism**:

- ▶ Free will is incompatible with determinism, determinism is true. So, free will does not exist.

6) Incompatibilist **skepticism**:

- ▶ Free will is incompatible with *both* determinism *and* indeterminism. So, free will *cannot possibly* exist.

