

Divine Control & Human Freedom: Part 5

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Outline

- # What is Molinism?
- # Some history.
- # Middle knowledge.
- # Divine control in Molinism.
- # Philosophical issues.

Distinctives of Molinism

- # Human freedom: Libertarian.
- # Divine foreknowledge: based on *middle knowledge*.
- # Divine control: Cooperation with human free acts in middle knowledge.

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3

Some History

- # Luis Molina (1535–1600): Spanish Jesuit theologian.
- # *Concordia*, 1589: expounded on doctrine of divine middle knowledge (*scientia media*).
- # Rejection of Thomistic account of grace and free will (whose chief exponent was the Dominican Bañez).

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4

Natural and Free Knowledge

- # **Natural knowledge:** What God knows *before* He creates anything.
 - Example: What are all the possible things He could create.
- # **Free knowledge:** What God knows *after* the creative decree.
 - Example: Which things He chose to create.

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5

Middle Knowledge

- # Is there anything “in between” natural knowledge and free knowledge?
- # Molina: yes, middle knowledge.
- # Knowledge of not just what is possible, but what would turn out to be the case under different circumstances of creation.
- # Important component: counterfactuals of freedom.

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6

Counterfactuals

- # Counterfactual: A conditional statement in subjunctive mood, with possibly false antecedent.
- # Examples:
 - If I were a rich man,
I would buy a Rolls-Royce.
 - If kangaroos did not have tails,
they would fall over.

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7

Everyday Counterfactuals

- # A counterfactual expresses the “connection” between the antecedent and the consequent.
- # Counterfactuals are used in analyzing “what-if” scenarios, hypothetical situations, underlying beliefs and intentions, etc.

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8

Counterfactual of Freedom

- # A counterfactual where the consequent describes a free act.
- # Example:
If Peter were placed in circumstance C, he would freely do A.
- # Provided C is sufficiently “rich,” such a counterfactual is part of God’s middle knowledge.

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9

Example of Biblical Support

- # “... If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”
[Matt. 11:21] (Also Luke 10:13.)

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10

Divine Control in Molinism

- # God uses middle knowledge to exercise control over His creation.
- # He can make decisions at any given time *in advance* (even before creation!) without violating human freedom.
- # Less (?) control than Calvinism, more control than Arminianism, and much more control than open theism.

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11

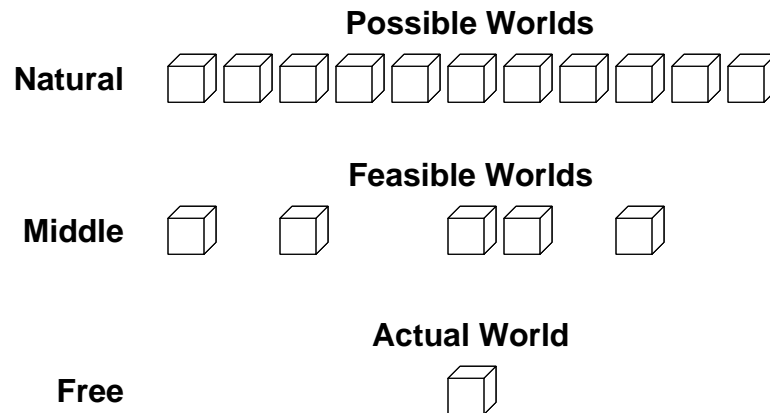
Before Creation?

- # “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” [Eph. 1:4]

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12

Divine Decision-Making



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13

Problem of Evil

- # How do Molinists deal with the problem of evil?
- # Libertarian freedom constrains the “feasible worlds” he create.
- # Possible hypothesis:
in *all* feasible worlds, there is evil (“transworld depravity”).
[Plantinga 1974]

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14

Prayer

- # Why doesn't God grant us everything we ask in prayer?
- # Molinist: God can only actualize feasible worlds, and he has to pick only one. His criteria for choosing which one may conflict with our request.
- # Example: Craig suggests God picks a feasible world to maximize the number of saved souls.

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15

Grounding Objection

- # What "grounds" the truth of counterfactuals of freedom?
- # Remember: these are conditionals about free creatures that haven't even been created (or will never exist!).
- # Probably the most serious philosophical objection to middle knowledge.
- # Common response: who says they need to be grounded?

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16

Summary

- # Molinism: Divine middle knowledge.
- # Full human freedom (libertarianism).
- # Divine foreknowledge and control based on middle knowledge.
- # Philosophical issues.

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17

Further Reading

- # William Lane Craig, *What Does God Know?* Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 2002.

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18