

The Divine Decision Tree

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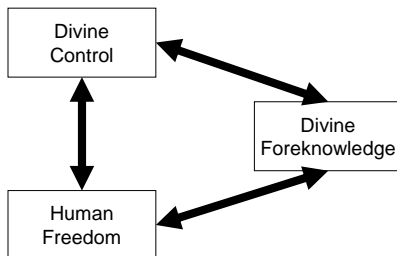
Outline

- ✦ Three doctrines in conflict.
- ✦ Two views on freedom.
- ✦ Two views on nature of divine control.
- ✦ Divine Decision Tree.
- ✦ Compatibilism and Molinism.

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Three Doctrines in Conflict



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Foreknowledge & Freedom

- ✦ If God foreknows that I will do X, then can I do otherwise?
- ✦ How can God foreknow something that has not yet been freely decided upon?
- ✦ If God already foreknows what is going to happen, what's the point of praying?

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Control & Freedom

- ✦ If God has complete control over all His creation according to His will, then how can humans choose?
- ✦ If humans are free to choose, then aren't humans able to act against God's will?
- ✦ If God controls what is going to happen, what's the point of praying?

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Foreknowledge & Control

- ✦ Does God have foreknowledge because He foreordained?
- ✦ Does God act by using His foreknowledge?
- ✦ Exactly what does God need to foreknow in order to have control?

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Apologetic Motivations

- ✦ "If God exists then the future is determined and I am not free; I am free; therefore, God does not exist."
[Jean Paul Sartre]
- ✦ An understanding of these issues is important in apologetics (defending the reasonableness of our faith).

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Considerations

- ✦ Human freedom. ←
- ✦ Divine control. ←
- ✦ Problem of evil. ←
- ✦ Theological fatalism.
- ✦ Problem of divine agency.

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Two Views on Freedom

- ✦ Compatibilism:
 - Calvinism
 - Motivation: Accord God complete control over his creation.
- ✦ Libertarianism:
 - Arminianism, openism, Molinism
 - Motivation: Nondeterministic freedom.

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Divine Control

- ✦ God controls his creation by acting on it.
- ✦ God acts based on his knowledge.
- ✦ Two views on nature of divine control:
 - Risky control: God's prevolitional knowledge (including how he decides to act) does not uniquely specify an actual world.
 - No-risk control: Not risky.

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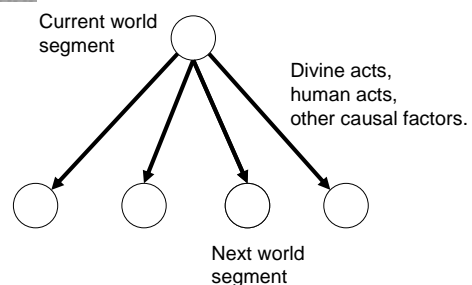
Worlds and World Segments

- ✦ Need a way to describe a complete set of facts (state of affairs) associated with how the world could possibly be created.
- ✦ **World**: maximal state of affairs.
 - Maximal: Either includes or precludes every other state of affairs.
- ✦ **World segment**: world up to some point in time.
- ✦ Possible world: A possible state of affairs that is maximal.

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How World Segments Grow



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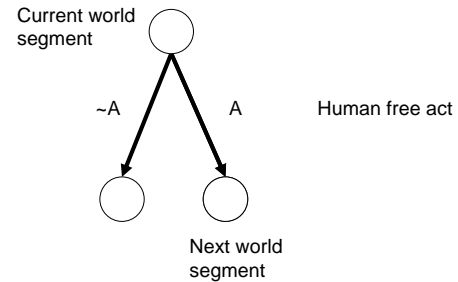
Free Will

- ✦ "To say that one has free will is to say that when one decides among forks in the road of time (or, more prosaically, when one decides what to do), one is at least sometimes able to take more than one of the forks."
[Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 1993]

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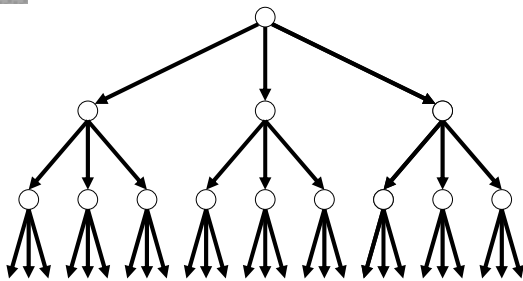
Freedom Fork



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Divine Decision Tree



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World Paths

- ✦ In the DDT, a *path* represents a world.
- ✦ Some paths are *possible*: these are paths that correspond to possible states of affairs.
- ✦ But what really matters is not what paths are possible, but what paths are *feasible* at the creative decree.

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No-Risk Control

- ✦ Everywhere there is a fork of human freedom, God must *know* how it actually resolves.
- ✦ How does God know this?
- ✦ Two proposed solutions:
 - Compatibilism
 - Molinism (middle knowledge).

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Compatibilist Freedom

- ✦ Claim: All actions are caused, even human free acts.
(*Principle of universal causality.*)
- ✦ Causes could be external or internal (e.g., a belief or a desire).
- ✦ For every free action, the cause is known *before* the creative decree.

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Compatibilism and Control

- ⌘ Determinism: For every world segment S and every free action A in S, performance of or refrainment from A is determined and known.
- ⌘ All forks are resolved by knowing, for each given world segment, whether an action is performed or not.
- ⌘ Therefore, knowing all God's actions specifies a unique world (unique path through the DDT).

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Middle Knowledge

- ⌘ Middle Knowledge: God knows (prevolitionally) how every creature would act if placed in any given circumstance.
- ⌘ Counterfactual of freedom: If placed in circumstance C, Adam would do A.
- ⌘ Recall: In compatibilism, such counterfactuals are also known to God, because of determinism.

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Molinism and Control

- ⌘ Middle Knowledge: For every world segment S and every free action A in S, performance of or refrainment from A is known.
- ⌘ All forks are resolved by knowing, for each given world segment, whether an action is performed or not.
- ⌘ Therefore, knowing all God's actions specifies a unique world (unique path through the DDT).

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Greater Control?

- ⌘ Traditional view: Compatibilism accords God greater control than does libertarianism.
- ⌘ "Greater control" means that God has more flexibility in choosing among worlds to actualize.
- ⌘ Paths open to God: feasible worlds.
- ⌘ *World alternatives*: Set of feasible worlds.

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Feasible Worlds

- ⌘ Pruning of DDT by counterfactuals of freedom.
- ⌘ Compatibilism: Feasibility is limited by *determinism*.
- ⌘ Molinism: Feasibility is limited by *middle knowledge*.

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Degree of Control

- ⌘ Even in compatibilism, not all paths in the DDT are feasible to God.
- ⌘ Indeed, compatibilism and Molinism have identical world alternatives.
- ⌘ Conclusion: Compatibilism and Molinism accord God the *same* degree of control.

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Problem of Evil?

- ✦ Traditional view: Libertarianism provides an easier way out than compatibilism in dealing with the problem of evil.
- ✦ “Compatibilists have a more difficult time with the existence of evil because, on their view, God determines everything that happens, including the sinful acts of his creatures.”
[Moreland & Craig 2003]

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Free-Will Defense

- ✦ Free-will defense of Plantinga: based on Molinism.
- ✦ Compatibilism and Molinism have identical world alternatives.
- ✦ Conclusion: Essentially the *same* free-will defense is available to the compatibilist.

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Summary

- ✦ Traditional motivations for embracing either compatibilism or Molinism:
 - Compatibilism: Accords God greater control.
 - Molinism: Free-will defense.
- ✦ On my view, these motivations appear to be unfounded.
- ✦ Choice between compatibilism and Molinism based on *other* criteria.

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Questions?

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