



The Conflict of Divine Control and Human Freedom

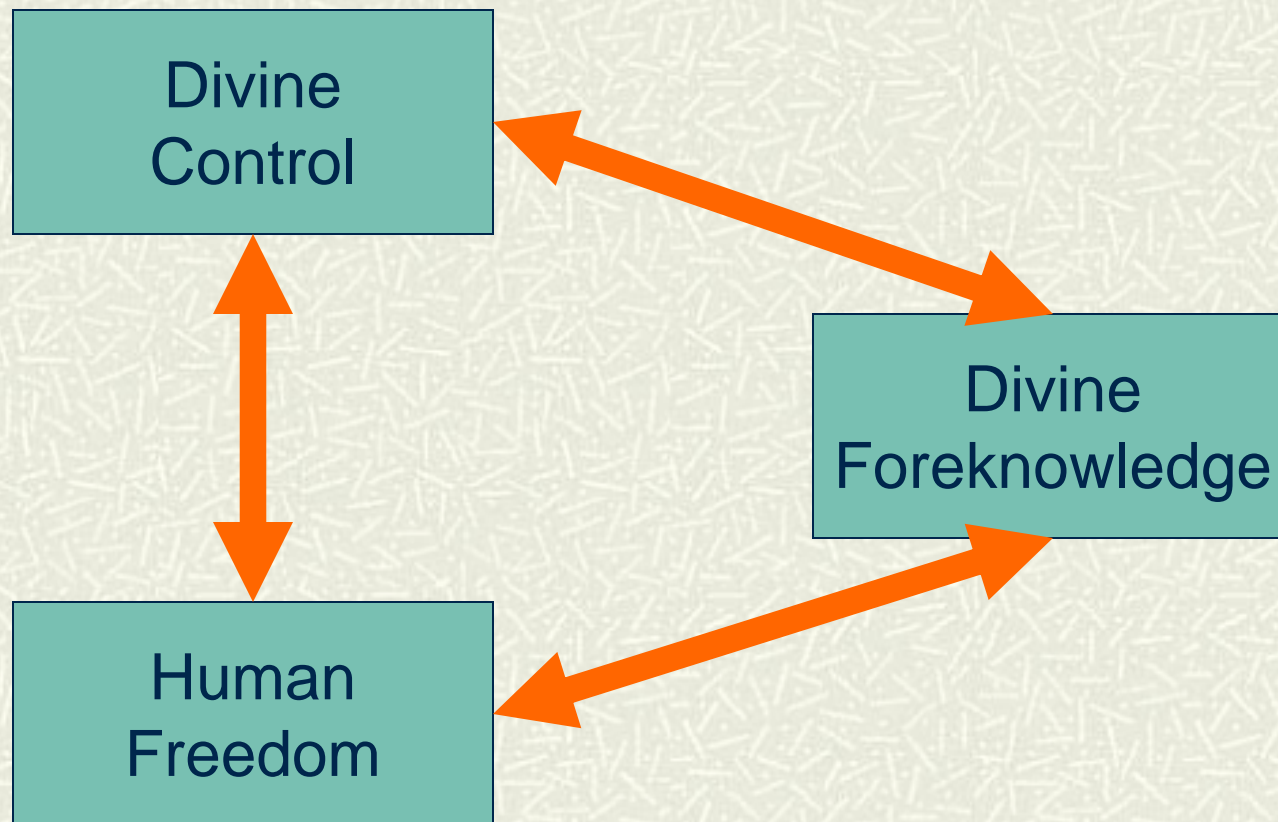
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Outline

- # Three doctrines in conflict.
- # Divine control.
- # Human freedom.
- # Compatibilism and Molinism.
- # Some consequences.

Three Doctrines in Conflict



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?



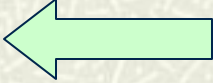
Control & Freedom

- # If God has complete control over all His creation, 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?

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?

Considerations

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

Divine Control Model

- # Prevolitional decision point: When God made His decision on what to create, just “before” the creative decree.
- # God’s creative decision based on *prevolitional 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.
 - Risk-free control: Not risky.

Prevolitional Knowledge

- # What were the objects of God's prevolitional thoughts?
 - Possible worlds
 - Free acts in world segments

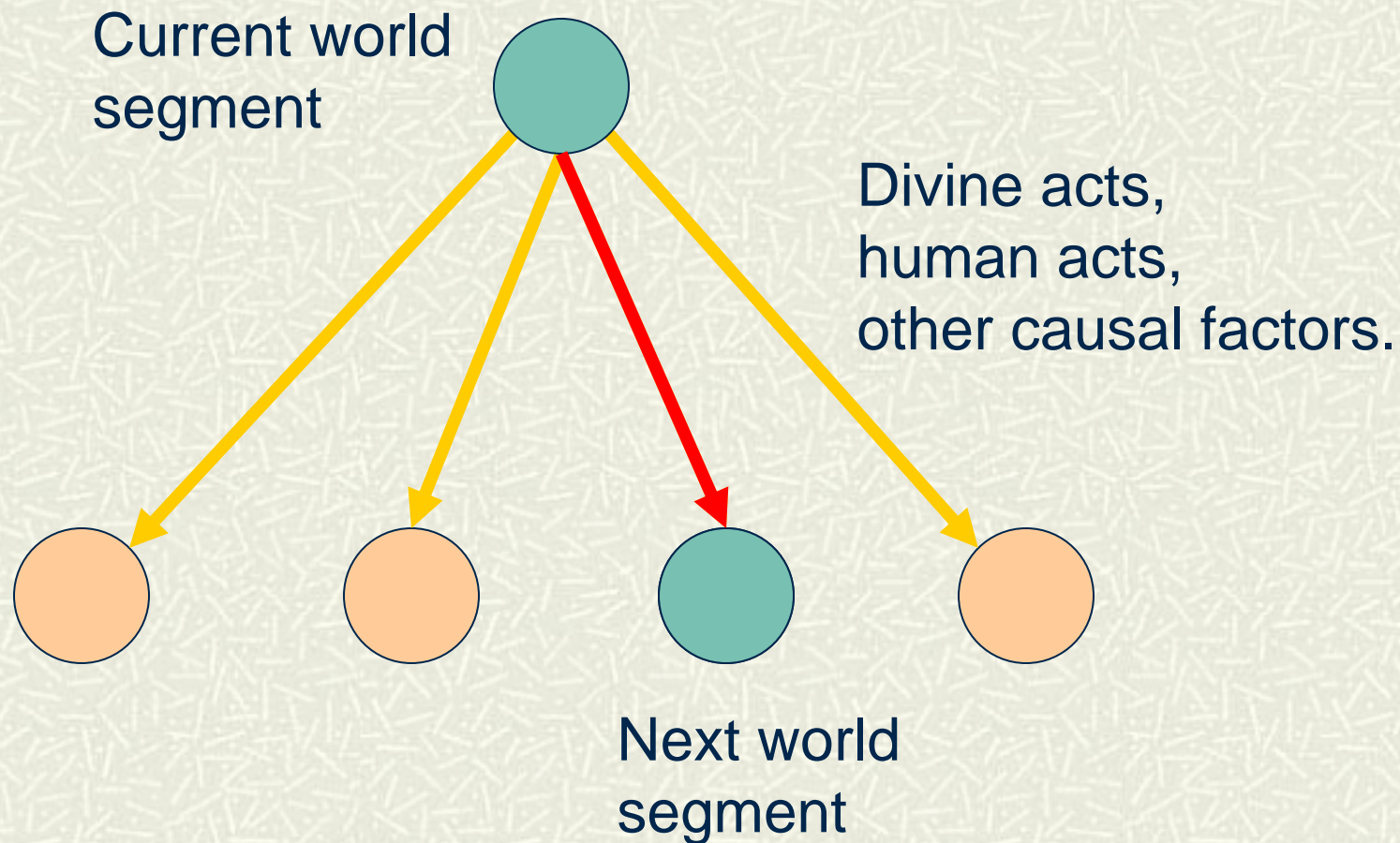
Worlds and World Segments

- # 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.
- # **World book**: contains all true propositions (for the particular world).

World Types

- # Possible world: A possible state of affairs that is maximal.
- # Feasible world.
- # Fathomable world.
- # Etc.

How World Segments Grow



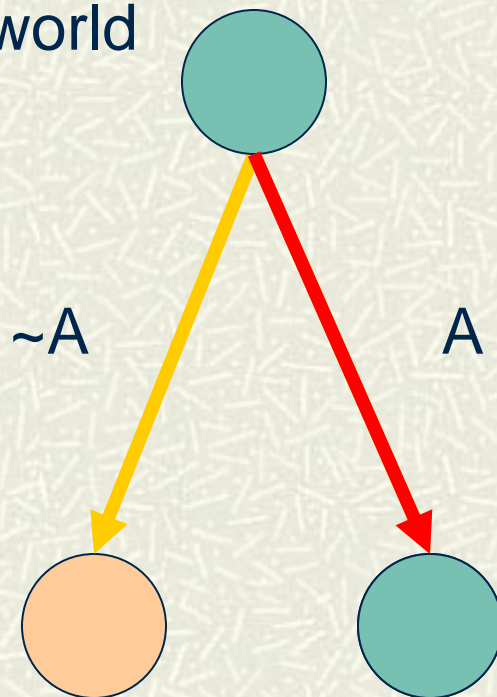
Free Will

“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]

Freedom Fork

Current world
segment

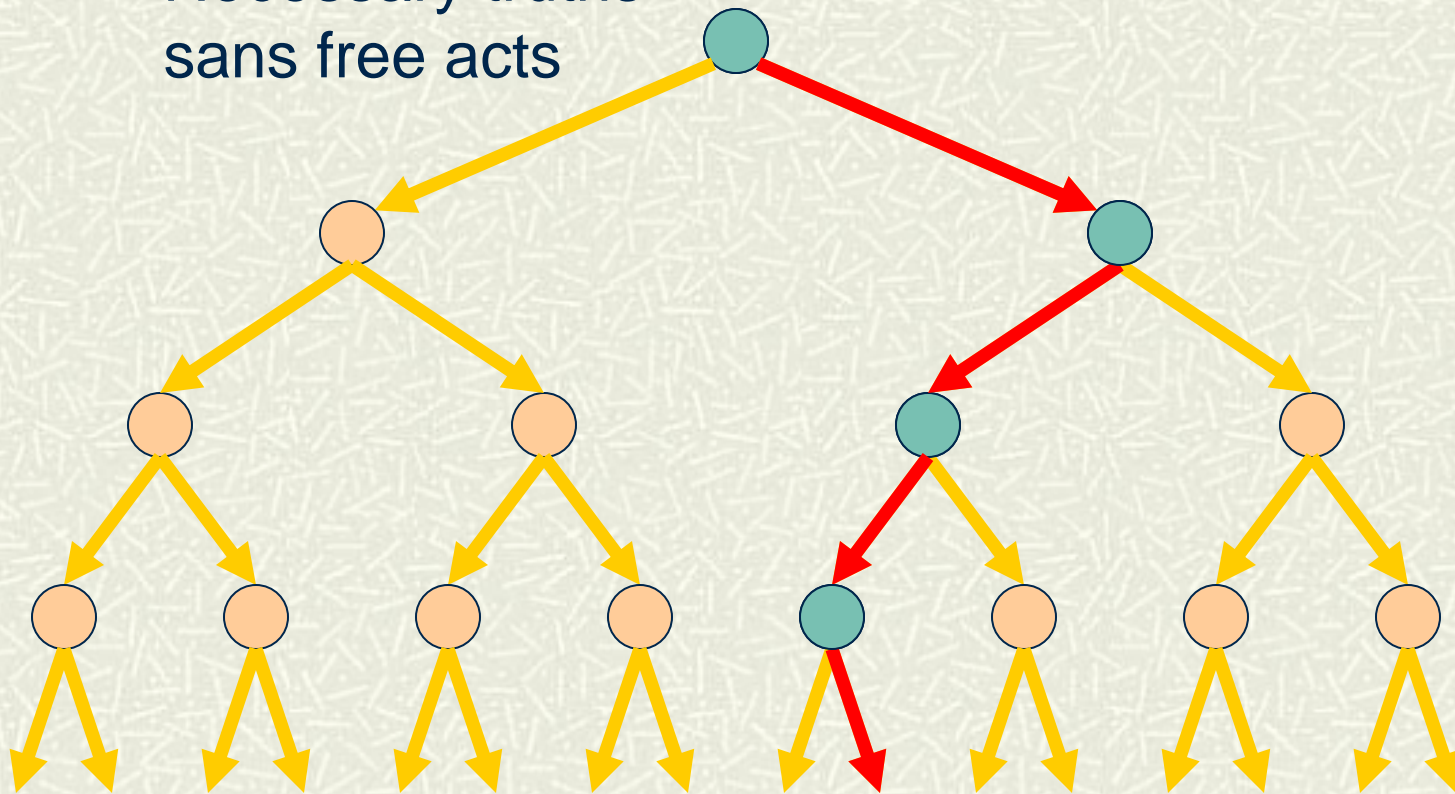


Human free act

Next world
segment

Divine Decision Tree

Necessary truths
sans free acts



World Paths

- # In the DDT, a *path* represents a world.
- # Some paths are *possible*: these are paths that correspond to possible states of affairs.
- # What really matters is not what paths are possible, but what paths are *feasible* at the creative decree.
- # Feasibility is determined by human free acts.

Risk-Free Control

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

Two Views on Freedom

Compatibilism:

- Deterministic
- Calvinism
- Motivation: Accord God complete control over his creation.

Libertarianism:

- Nondeterministic
- Arminianism, openism, Molinism
- Motivation: “real choice” freedom. Free-will defense.

Compatibilist Freedom

- # Basic premise: Every action, even a human free act, has a cause.
(Principle of universal causality.)
- # Causes could be external or internal (e.g., a belief or a desire).
- # How does this account for freedom?
- # Feinberg, Helm, and Tiessen

Freedom in Compatibilism

- # If the relationship between cause and free act were part of God's decree, then it would be meaningless to defend compatibilist freedom per Feinberg/Helm/Tiessen.
- # Implicit assumption: every free act and causes of it are known *before* the creative decree.

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).

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.

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).

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.
- # Feasible worlds: Paths open to God.
- # *World alternatives*: Set of feasible worlds.

Feasible Worlds

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

Degree of Control

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

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]

Free-Will Defense

- # Logical problem of evil: Evil in the actual world is logically incompatible with existence of God (omniscient, omnipotent, wholly good).
- # Free-will defense of Plantinga: based on Molinism.
- # Basic idea: It may be the case that there is no evil-free feasible world (hence no logical problem). “Transworld depravity.”

Compatibilist Free-Will Defense

- # Compatibilism and Molinism have equivalent world alternatives.
- # Conclusion: Essentially the *same* free-will defense is available to the compatibilist.

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.

Questions?

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