Counterpossible Dependence and the Efficacy of the Divine Will*

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Abstract

The will of an omnipotent being would be perfectly efficacious. Alexander Pruss and I have provided an analysis of perfect efficacy that relies on non-trivial counterpossible conditionals. Scott Hill has objected that not all of the required counterpossibles are true of God. Sarah Adams has objected that perfect efficacy of will (on any analysis) would be an extrinsic property and so is not suitable as a divine attribute. I argue that both of these objections can be answered if the divine will is taken to be the *ground*, rather than the cause, of its fulfillment.

It is widely agreed that no being whose will could be thwarted could count as omnipotent. Alexander Pruss and I have formulated this necessary condition for omnipotence, which we call *perfect efficacy of will*, as follows:[1]

> x has perfect efficacy of will if and only if $(p)\square((x \text{ wills } p) \,\square\!\!\rightarrow\, (x \text{ intentionally brings about } p))$

It is stipulated as part of this analysis that all of the relevant conditionals, including those with impossible antecedents, must be non-trivially true.

Objections to the notion of perfect efficacy of will have recently been raised by Sarah Adams and Scott Hill. Adams' objection targets the notion of perfect efficacy in general by arguing that traditional theism requires God to be *intrinsically* omnipotent but perfect efficacy cannot (on any analysis) be an intrinsic property.[2] Hill's objection targets the specific analysis of perfect efficacy Pruss and I proposed by arguing that some of the relevant counterpossible conditionals are in fact false.[3] In this paper, I reply to these objections by showing how the counterpossible dependence of reality on God can be understood to follow from the intrinsic nature of the divine will.

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1. Pearce and Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence," 407.
2. Adams, "A New Paradox of Omnipotence."
3. Hill, "Giving Up Omnipotence," 113–114n10.

1   The Objections

According to the analysis of perfect efficacy Pruss and I proposed, God has perfect efficacy of will if and only if, for *absolutely any* proposition p, possible or impossible, it is non-trivially true that if God should will that p then God would intentionally bring it about that p. Thus, as Scott Hill correctly points out, this analysis is committed to the non-trivial truth of the conditional:

(1) If God should will that every necessary truth is false, then God would intentionally bring it about that every necessary truth is false.

This, Hill argues, is implausible:

> consider two worlds at which per impossible God wills [that every necessary truth is false]. At one God's will is frustrated. At the other His willing succeeds and every necessary truth becomes false. One world has only a few false necessary truths. The other has infinitely many. The larger the violation of necessary truth, the greater the distance of the world. Thus, the first world is closer to the actual world than the second world.[4]

It seems, then, that the efficacy condition, as Pruss and I have formulated it, cannot be satisfied.

Yet, as Sarah Adams points out, any satisfactory analysis of omnipotence will incorporate some version of the efficacy condition: if it is possible for a being's will to be thwarted then that being is not omnipotent.[5] Supposing that the analysis of perfect efficacy could be shored up to respond to Hill's objection, a further problem arises. Perfect efficacy is apparently an *extrinsic* property: it depends on the absence of any other being capable of resisting God's will. However, theists have traditionally held—and with good reason—that omnipotence and other core divine attributes are intrinsic properties of God.[6] The supposition that God's possession of the divine attributes depends *even counterpossibly* on the presence or absence of a being distinct from God threatens divine aseity.

Adams identifies four necessary conditions for omnipotence and argues that no being could satisfy these conditions just in virtue of its own nature, independent of its surroundings. Adams' four conditions are:[7]

(i) Necessarily, if x is omnipotent, then for any state of affairs, S, if x wills that S, S comes to fruition.

(ii) Necessarily, if x is omnipotent, then for any state of affairs, y, which x can actualise, actualizing y is in no way a struggle for x (x can do y with the minimum possible effort).

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4. Hill, "Giving Up Omnipotence," 114n10.

5. Adams, "A New Paradox of Omnipotence," 774–775.

6. Ibid., 765–775.

7. Ibid., 774–778.

(iii) Necessarily, if x is omnipotent, then there can be no y such that y is *overall* more powerful than x, *equal* in power to x, or *closely matched* in power to x.

(iv) Necessarily, if x is omnipotent, then it's impossible for there to be another individual, y, such that y is omnipotent.

Conditions (i) and (ii) presuppose conditions (iii) and (iv): if there were a close competitor to God with respect to power, then that competitor might sometimes thwart God's will, or at least require God to struggle to accomplish God's will. The absence of competitors, however, certainly appears to be an extrinsic condition.

As Adams recognizes, an adequate response to her objection would proceed by identifying some property that could be possessed intrinsically and would *entail* (i)–(iv). In other words, what needs to be shown is that God's own nature is sufficient to guarantee that these conditions obtain, independent of any external considerations.

In what follows, I argue that both objections can be answered by the observation that *an omnipotent being's willing is metaphysically sufficient for its fulfillment.* When we humans will (choose) something, our will (choice) *causes* happenings metaphysically independent from (neither partly nor wholly grounded in) the will or choice itself. The fulfillment of an omnipotent being's will, on the other hand, would be wholly grounded in the act of will itself. In §2, I argue that this suffices for the truth of all of the counterpossibles required by the Pearce-Pruss analysis of perfect efficacy, independent of any considerations about impossible worlds. In §3, I argue that this feature would be intrinsic to the being who possessed it and would entail all of Adams' conditions. Finally, in §4, I reply to some objections to this way of conceiving God's relation to the created world.

2   Counterpossible Dependence

Hill's argument for the falsity of his conditional (1) depends on the assumption that non-trivial counterpossibles can be evaluated by a straightforward extension of the possible worlds semantics for subjunctive conditionals to include impossible worlds. That is, on Hill's approach, a counterpossible conditional $A \,\square\!\!\rightarrow\, C$ is true iff all the nearest A-worlds (whether possible or impossible) are C-worlds.

Even supposing this assumption to be true, Hill's argument would not succeed. The argument depends on the claim that a world at which God wills that every necessary truth be false and God's will is fulfilled must be a world at which infinitely many necessary truths are false. This claim is unjustified. Since we are dealing here with *impossible* worlds, we cannot assume that if God intentionally brings about some proposition p God thereby brings about every logical consequence of p. Indeed, we cannot even assume that by making p true God makes its negation false. If there are impossible worlds at all, then there

is an impossible world at which the proposition *every necessary truth is false* is true and yet, for each necessary truth q, q is true.[8] As a result, there will be an impossible world at which God wills that every necessary truth is false and God's will is fulfilled *and yet there are no violations of necessary truth at all*. The world under consideration is one at which no necessary truths are false, but a few necessary falsehoods are true.

This points to a more serious difficulty. One of the most pressing problems for the standard worlds-based semantics (restricted to possible worlds) is to give an account of what it means for one world to be 'closer' than another. The introduction of impossible worlds magnifies this problem since, for any antecedent you like (possible or impossible) there will be a world at which that antecedent is true and everything else (including the truth of its negation!) is unchanged.

I have argued elsewhere that this and other problems with non-trivial counterpossibles motivate the rejection of the worlds-based semantics for subjunctive conditionals and its replacement with a 'covering law' semantics.[9] In the particular case of counteressential conditionals—those that ask us to make contrary to fact suppositions about essences—I have defended the following evaluation procedure. First, the antecedent of the conditional is to be read as instructing us to modify (in thought) some particular essence in some particular way. Then, beginning from this modified essence, we 'roll forward' certain metaphysical laws of grounding to see whether the consequent is made true as a result of this essence.[10] The conditional is true if and only if the truth of the consequent results from the modification described in the antecedent.[11]

This procedure can be made clearer by some non-theological examples. I use the term 'grounding' to refer to the relation, or genus of relations, that obtains between less fundamental entities and more fundamental entities whereby the less fundamental entities arise from the more fundamental ones. Thus, for instance, I take the constitution relation between a statue and its material to be a species of grounding.[12] This particular grounding relation falls under a metaphysical law along the lines of: *whenever some material x possesses a certain shape as a result of that shape's having been purposefully imposed by an agent with artistic intentions, x constitutes a statue.* This general law supports ordinary counterfactuals like:

(2) If Michelangelo, having artistic intentions, had purposefully shaped a block of marble into the shape of Hypatia, that marble would thereby have come

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8. I thank Alexander Pruss for this point. A similar error in counterpossible reasoning is criticized by Brogaard and Salerno ("Remarks on Counterpossibles," 649–650).

9. Pearce, "Counteressential Conditionals."

10. On metaphysical laws governing grounding relations, see Fine, "Guide to Ground," 75–76.

11. Alastair Wilson ("Grounding Entails Counterpossible Non-Triviality") has also argued that grounding relations are tightly related to non-trivial counterpossibles, though he does not use this connection to develop a semantics for counterpossibles.

12. I therefore use the term 'grounding' more broadly than some theorists (e.g. Audi, "A Clarification and Defense of the Notion of Grounding," 105). I use this term for the whole range of what Karen Bennett ("Construction Area") calls 'building relations'.

to constitute a statue of Hypatia.

It also supports bizarre counterpossibles like:

(3) If my desk, having artistic intentions, purposefully shaped some ectoplasm into the shape of the set of all sets, that ectoplasm would thereby come to constitute a statue of the set of all sets.

The antecedent of this conditional involves several impossibilities: my desk can't have intentions or act purposefully; the notion of ectoplasm is arguably incoherent; if there were such a thing as ectoplasm it probably couldn't be shaped; there is no set of all sets; and, more generally, sets don't have shapes. However, on my analysis, (3) gets to be non-trivially true for just the same reason (2) does: it is supported by the metaphysical law. On the other hand, some counterpossibles are false, such as:

(4) If Hillary Clinton had been a statue she would have been made by Michelangelo.

The supposition that Hillary Clinton is a statue involves a change to her essence, and we can follow the laws of grounding forward to find various results (e.g., that she would have been made by *someone*), but the claim in the consequent—that she would have been made by Michelangelo—is not one of these, so the conditional is false.[13]

Returning to Hill's proposed counterexample, the claim that's needed here is that, if some being is omnipotent, then the fulfillment of that being's will occurs as a matter of metaphysical law. These metaphysical laws are not supposed to be brute or arbitrary, but to follow from natures or essences. (The example law above holds because of *what it is to be a statue*.) So the claim that is needed to support these counterpossibles is that it is the nature or essence of a perfectly efficacious will always to be fulfilled.

If this is right, then Hill's conditional (1) is straightforwardly true (if God indeed has perfect efficacy of will). God's essence ensures that God does not will that all necessary truths are false because perfect rationality is essential to God. When the antecedent of the conditional asks us to suppose that God wills that every necessary truth be false, it is asking us to suppose that God is not perfectly rational. This alteration to the divine essence does not touch the efficacy of God's will. When we roll things forward, we find that God's will is still always fulfilled, so God intentionally brings it about that every necessary truth is false.

Hill has suggested a second problematic conditional:[14]

(5) If God should will that God lacks perfect efficacy of will, then God would intentionally bring it about that God lacks perfect efficacy of will.

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13. It might be thought that the worlds-based semantics can achieve similar results by prioritizing the minimization of violations of metaphysical laws in defining 'closeness'. Elsewhere I argue that this approach fails (Pearce, "Counteressential Conditionals," 77-79).

14. Personal correspondence.

This is indeed extremely odd, but on the analysis given this conditional is true for the very same reason (1) is. The supposition in the antecedent is not that God lacks perfect efficacy of will, but rather that God *wills that* God lacks perfect efficacy of will. To suppose that God wills in this way, we need to suppose a difference in God's character or knowledge (perhaps eliminating perfect rationality again), but the antecedent should not be understood as instructing us to suppose a difference in the efficacy of God's will. Hence, the perfect efficacy of the divine will is still in force when we roll forward this supposition and the result is that God's will would be fulfilled, i.e., God would lack perfect efficacy of will. Precisely because the lack of perfect efficacy is not part of the supposition, it turns out to be part of the result.

What is puzzling (and interesting) about this case, though, is the question of exactly what impossibility God would bring about by such an impossible act of willing. If God is temporal, then perhaps God would bring it about that God *no longer* had perfect efficacy of will.[15] However, we could then consider the conditional:

(6) If God should will that God *at all times* lacked perfect efficacy of will, then God would intentionally bring it about that God at all times lacked perfect efficacy of will.

The answer we must give, I think, is that if God willed that God at all times lacked perfect efficacy of will, then *God would both have and lack perfect efficacy of will*. If, as I think, God is in fact atemporal, then we must say the same thing about (5).

The more general moral of the story can be summed up in another counterpossible conditional: *if God were irrational, there might be true contradictions.* Is this an unpalatable result? I think not. Rather, it is an affirmation of the thesis, widely held by theists of a broadly Anselmian orientation, that God is 'the delimiter of possibilities'.[16] Contradictions are impossible because of God's essential rationality. Nevertheless, they *are* genuinely impossible, for it is genuinely impossible that God should will them (or anything that might lead to them). The necessary structure of reality depends counterpossibly on God's character.

3   Intrinsic Efficacy

Given the covering law semantics for counterpossibles, merely positing that a perfectly efficacious will has its effect by its essence or nature is sufficient to answer Hill's objection. Yet a more serious objection looms: how could there be an essence or nature of this sort? Of course, a will that could be thwarted

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15. Since the Pearce-Pruss analysis takes perfect efficacy to be a modal property, it is a property a being possesses necessarily and omnitemporally if at all. We are dealing with impossible scenarios here.

16. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations*, 47-48; cf. Pearce and Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence," 404–405.

wouldn't count as perfectly efficacious, but the analytic truth that *a perfectly efficacious will is perfectly efficacious* is not what is needed here. A genuine essence, of the sort that could support conditionals and of the sort appropriate for a divine attribute, should be an *intrinsic* property of the being that possesses it.[17] That is, the perfect efficacy of God's will must follow from how God is in Godself, independent of the presence or absence of any other beings. The efficacy of God's will must thus be understood as a *de re* necessity concerning God, and not a *de dicto* necessity concerning the conditions a being must satisfy in order to have perfect efficacy of will. To make the answer to Hill's objection fully satisfactory, and to answer Adams' objection, we need to understand what a perfectly efficacious will would be like in itself such that it would be impossible for it to be thwarted.

To see the way forward, think about ordinary cases where our will is thwarted. For instance, suppose I try and fail to make a putt on the golf course. What happens in this case is that, following my willing, a sequence of events outside—metaphysically independent of—my willing occurs. It is because the events are in this way *separate* from my willing that my willing may fail to have its effect. I have only indirect control over the motion of the putter and the ball, no control over the wind, etc. My suggestion is that the will of an omnipotent being would not be like this. The fulfillment of such a being's will would not be metaphysically independent of that being's willing. In other words, if God is omnipotent, the world God created is *grounded* in (not caused by) God's willing.[18]

Let us distinguish between having a *grounding will* and having a *causing will*.[19] An agent has a grounding will iff the agent's acts of willing ground their fulfilment. An agent has a causing will iff, in cases in which the agent wills successfully, the agent's willing causes its fulfilment. Perhaps humans do have grounding wills with respect to certain objects of will. For instance, perhaps my choice to form a resolution grounds, rather than causes, my being so resolved. Generally, though, humans have causing wills: when we will successfully, our willing causes its fulfilment.

To understand the significance of this distinction, it is crucial to keep in mind an important difference between the relations of grounding and causing: a cause is always distinct from its effect, not only numerically but metaphysically. That is, the effect is something over and above the cause in precisely the way that the statue is *not* anything over and above the clay. However, just as in the case of the statue and the clay so also in other cases of grounding the grounded entity is numerically but not metaphysically distinct from the grounding entity. That is, although the statue and the clay differ in their properties the statue is nevertheless nothing over and above the clay.[20] The fact that a causing

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17. Adams, "A New Paradox of Omnipotence," 765–769.

18. In "Foundational Grounding" I argue at length, on the basis of different considerations from those raised here, that God's relationship to creation should be conceived in terms of grounding rather than causation. That paper also provides a detailed account of how that grounding relation might be understood.

19. I do not mean to commit to the reification of wills; having such a will may be understood as a feature of an agent.

20. In my view, the analogy between the statue/clay case and divine creation is very close:

will attempts to 'reach outside itself,' so to speak, gives rise to the possibility of external interference that might block its fulfilment. The fulfilment of a grounding will, however, is nothing over and above the willing itself and there is therefore no possibility of interference between the willing and its fulfilment.

The difference between having a grounding will and having a causing will is an intrinsic difference in an agent. According to Adams' own analysis (which I am happy to accept), a being possesses a feature intrinsically if that being's possession of that feature is not wholly or partially grounded in the presence or absence anything distinct from itself.[21] It follows from this that the power possessed by a causing will is at least partly extrinsic: whether I have the power to open a given door at a given moment depends on features of my situation and not only on the nature of my will.[22] However, whether an agent's will is a grounding will or a causing will does not depend on external circumstances in this way. This is not a matter of external factors cooperating or interfering, but a matter of how the willing functions in the first place. Further, the scope of a grounding will could not depend on the objects affected by it since grounding is asymmetric and those objects are (*ex hypothesi*) grounded in that will.

We can say, then, that the unique feature of an intrinsically omnipotent being, which stands behind perfect efficacy of will and supports those counterpossible conditionals, is the possession of a *universal grounding will*—that is, a grounding will that is unlimited as to its objects. For any proposition p, if God should will that p God would intentionally bring it about that p *because the truth of p would be wholly grounded in God's act of willing.* Conversely, it is the nature of creatures to be grounded in God's willing.

Let us return now to Adams' four conditions.

(i) Necessarily, if x is omnipotent, then for any state of affairs, S, if x wills that S, S comes to fruition.

If omnipotence requires the possession of a universal grounding will, then this clearly follows. A grounding will cannot be thwarted.

(ii) Necessarily, if x is omnipotent, then for any state of affairs, y, which x can actualise, actualizing y is in no way a struggle for x (x can do y with the minimum possible effort).

This too plausibly follows. Since a grounding will is not attempting to impose itself on a recalcitrant world external to itself, it has no need for effort or struggle.

Since (i) and (ii) follow, (iii) and (iv) must as well. More generally, a causing will could not compete with a grounding will. This follows from a general feature of the relationship between grounding and causation: if the mental is grounded in the physical then no change to the mental facts could be caused in a way that is independent of (or opposed to) the physical facts. Similarly, if created reality

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on the model I propose in "Foundational Grounding," God's act of will constitutes the Causal History of the Universe.

21. Adams, "A New Paradox of Omnipotence," 763–764.

22. On these kinds of limitation on our powers, see Pearce, "Infinite Power."

is grounded in God's will, then no change to created reality could be brought about in a way that is independent of (or opposed to) God's will. Further, there cannot be two universal grounding wills, for a grounding will *wholly* grounds its object. I conclude that a being with a universal grounding will would possess perfect efficacy of will (as Pruss and I have defined it) intrinsically.

4 Could the World be Grounded in God's Willing?

So far, I have argued that a certain hypothesis about God's relation to the created world would answer the objections of Adams and Hill by allowing it to follow from the intrinsic nature of the divine will that, for any proposition *p*, *if God should will that p then God would intentionally bring it about that p.* That hypothesis states that an act of the divine will grounds, rather than causes, its fulfillment. In order for this hypothesis to succeed as a response to the objections, however, the hypothesis must be a reasonable one for the theist to accept. In this section, I respond to some objections that may be raised to this way of understanding the divine will.

First, my hypothesis makes use of the notion of grounding and the legitimacy of this notion is at least somewhat controversial.[23] However, many defenses of grounding (or ontological dependence) already exist in the literature.[24] Accordingly, I will not further consider this objection at present.[25]

Second, it might be thought that this view commits me to a radical form of voluntarism. After all, I am committed to the claim that *if God should will that a triangle have four sides, then God would intentionally bring it about that a triangle has four sides and the obtaining of this state of affairs would be grounded in God's willing.* Am I not thereby committed to the claim that the necessary truths are grounded in God's will? In fact, if God's will is free, won't it turn out that these truths are not necessary after all, since God can change them?

I am indeed committed to the conditional in question, and I am therefore committed to the counterpossible dependence of even necessary truths on God. However, it does not follow that necessary truths are in fact grounded in the divine will, nor does it follow that God can change these truths, nor does it follow that these truths turn out not to be necessary.

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23. See, e.g., Hofweber, "Ambitious, Yet Modest, Metaphysics," §2; Daly, "Scepticism about Grounding."

24. See, e.g., Fine, "The Question of Realism"; Correia, "Ontological Dependence"; Schaffer, "On What Grounds What"; Audi, "A Clarification and Defense of the Notion of Grounding"; Raven, "In Defence of Ground."

  Some critics of grounding reject it because they do not take the phenomena subsumed under that notion to be importantly unified (e.g., Wilson, "No Work for a Theory of Grounding"; Koslicki, "The Coarse-Grainedness of Grounding"). This thesis, if correct, would not undermine my point but merely require me to be more precise about which ontological dependence relation I take to obtain between God's act of will and its fulfillment. I undertake this project in "Foundational Grounding."

25. Note also that Adams is not in a position to raise this objection since her objection to omnipotence rests on a grounding analysis of intrinsicness.

The claim to which I am committed is that if (*per impossibile*) God were to will that a logical or mathematical truth should be false (or that it should be true) then God would intentionally bring about the falsity (or truth) of that logical or mathematical proposition, and the falsity (or truth) of that logical or mathematical proposition would be grounded in God's will. However, the antecedent of this conditional is impossible. It is, in other words, impossible that God should will a logical or mathematical proposition (whether true or false), and it is therefore impossible that such a proposition should be brought about by God or grounded in God's will. The reason for this is that God's omniscience and essential perfect rationality ensure that God knows that these propositions are true prior to God's willing and does not wish to alter them.

However, it will be objected, if God has perfect freedom of will, then couldn't God will mathematical or logical propositions and thereby alter the (allegedly) necessary truths in these domains? The word 'could' employed in this objection is a notoriously slippery one. In other work I have argued that talk of 'can,' 'powers,' or 'abilities' in connection with God is systematically misleading and, in metaphysical contexts, should be avoided.[26] The actual facts, according to my theory, are just these: if God should will that one of these necessary truths should be false, then God would intentionally bring this about. If God should will that God will in this way, then God would intentionally bring it about that God wills in this way. Nevertheless, it is impossible that God should will in this way.

Does not this impossibility conflict with God's freedom? Pruss and I have argued that the answer is 'no'.[27] Many accounts of free will, both compatibilist and incompatibilist, agree that the impossibility of willing or choosing in a certain way may be compatible with freedom if that impossibility stems from the agent's character and/or choices in the right way. In the present case, the impossibility stems from God's character of essential perfect rationality whereby God *endorses* or *values* the laws of logic and mathematics (and other necessary truths), so that these are not constraints on God's willing.

Because God possesses this character of perfect rationality essentially, it is genuinely impossible that God should will that $2 + 2 = 5$. The counterpossible dependence of mathematics on the divine will is therefore consistent with the genuine necessity of mathematics.

A third objection that may be raised is that my hypothesis gives rise to divine omnidetermination and therefore to the denial of human freedom.[28] If created reality is grounded in God's will, doesn't it follow that God determines every aspect of reality, including human choices?

In response note, first, that insofar as Adams and Hill intend to be raising problems for traditional theism *in general* this objection is of no use to them. Some paradigmatic forms of traditional theism (including most interpretations of Stoicism, Thomism, Calvinism, and Islam) have endorsed the conclusion that

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26. Pearce, "Infinite Power."

27. Pearce and Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence," 410-412.

28. This and the following objection to the idea that created reality is grounded in the divine will are discussed at greater length in Pearce, "Foundational Grounding," §2.1.

divine omnipotence/sovereignty entails omnidetermination and is therefore inconsistent with the attribution of libertarian freedom to humans.[29] Accordingly, even if it is true that responding to these objections requires rejecting libertarianism, the objections will have lost their force *as objections to* (all forms of) *traditional theism.*

Perhaps the objector will at this point alter her strategy and argue that the theist needs libertarianism because the problem of evil can be answered only by means of the free will defense. This, however, is a different argument against traditional theism than the objections given by either Hill or Adams. The objections made by Hill and Adams purported to be problems with the very notion of an omnipotent being, independent of issues about the existence of evil. Furthermore, the objector would have a great deal of work to do to make the objection stick, for it is disputed whether the free will defense really requires libertarianism.[30] Additionally, there are many other responses to the problem of evil, most famously 'skeptical theism,'[31] which have do not rely on particular views about human freedom.[32]

Certainly, however, most theists within analytic philosophy are libertarians about human freedom and so must reject divine omnidetermination. As a result, if my hypothesis really does require omnidetermination then, although I may have shown that the objections of Adams and Hill do not endanger all forms of traditional theism, I will not have shown that these objections do not endanger the forms of traditional theism actually endorsed by theistic analytic philosophers.

As it turns out, the hypothesis that God has a universal grounding will does not entail divine omnidetermination. The hypothesis does entail that *if God should will that Jones freely mow his lawn tomorrow, then God would intentionally bring it about that Jones freely mows his lawn tomorrow and this fact would be wholly grounded in God's willing.* But this, by itself, does not entail that God actually wills one way or another about Jones's lawn-mowing. Accordingly, Jones's lawn-mowing (or refraining therefrom) may not actually be

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29. By 'libertarian freedom' here I mean the kind of freedom endorsed by *theological* libertarians, i.e., those who take us to have a kind of free will that is incompatible with God's determining our actions. Those who reject theological libertarianism may of course endorse either theological compatibilism or fatalism. Any form of traditional Abrahamic religion will require the attribution of moral responsibility to humans. As a result, if free will is required for moral responsibility then the theological anti-libertarian should endorse theological compatibilism. Theological compatibilism is consistent with *physical* incompatibilism, the view that free will requires that our actions not be determined by prior physical causes. In fact if, as I am suggesting here, God's relation to creation is a grounding relation, not a causal relation, then our actions may not be determined by any prior causes at all, even if they are determined by God.

30. See, e.g., Bishop, "Compatibilism and the Free Will Defense"; Perszyk, "Compatibilism and the Free Will Defence"; Pruss, "A New Free-Will Defence."

31. For a review of the enormous recent literature on the problem of evil, with emphasis on skeptical theism, see Dougherty, "Recent Work on the Problem of Evil."

32. It is of course controversial whether any of these other responses actually works, but then it is also controversial whether the free will defense works, so even if the free will defense does require libertarianism it is not clear that this gives the theist good reason to endorse libertarianism.

grounded in God's willing.[33]

A fourth and final objection is that if the world is grounded in God's act of will then the world is in some sense nothing over and above God's act of will. This might be thought to lead to pantheism. On the contrary, grounded entities are in general numerically distinct from the entities that ground them. For instance, the statue *David* must be numerically distinct from the block of marble that constitutes it since the former was created by Michelangelo but the latter was not. Nevertheless, *David* is metaphysically dependent on that block of marble—the continued existence of the marble is metaphysically necessary for the continued existence of the statue. That the world is numerically distinct from but metaphysically dependent on God is precisely what classical theists have always held.[34]

5   Conclusion

I have argued that divine omnipotence can be defended from the objections of Hill and Adams by positing that God's willing grounds, rather than causes, its fulfillment. This would be an intrinsic feature of the divine will that differentiates it from ordinary human willings which (when successful) typically cause their fulfillment. This intrinsic feature of the divine will would ensure that the divine will is perfectly efficacious, that is, that it cannot fail to have its effect. More broadly, this approach secures the counterfactual—and indeed counterpossible—dependence of all truths on the divine will without lapsing into voluntarism or pantheism.[35]

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33. The model I propose in "Foundational Grounding," §2.1 does require that Jones's lawn-mowing (or refraining) be grounded in God's willing. However I there argue that even this does not commit one to the claim that God determines Jones's choices since not all theories of grounding require that a grounding entity determine every feature of the entities it grounds.

34. For a systematic development of this point, see Pearce, "Foundational Grounding," §2.1.

35. I thank Scott Hill, Mark Murphy, and two anonymous referees for helpful comments on previous drafts.

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