ANSELM'S ONE ARGUMENT

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I would like to show that *Proslogium* II is self-invalidating and that, moreover, it must be so in order for *Proslogium* III to be a valid argument[1]. If we were to use the language of Thomas Morris, we could express the second portion of my claim as follows: the axiom distinctive of S_5 modality, the principle that a proposition which is possibly necessary is necessary is logically impossible to assert[2].

Necessary existence cannot ever be a matter of logical possibility. Necessary existence either necessarily is or it necessarily is not. Necessary existence is not a matter of possibility. For, if necessary existence were in the range of possibility, some aspect of contingency would have to be implied. The notion of possibility, as I understand it, is that which may be but which need not be. However, and this is the crux of the matter, the concept of 'may be' is logically incomplete without its correlative 'may not be'. To put it in another way, the notion of mayness makes no sense if -mayness is not an equipossibility.

What I am arguing above is that possibility is not definable completely without input from the concept of contingency. For an existence to be in the range of the possible, it must be a contingent existence. Contingency is a status that need not be, or, in Aristotle's well-known phrase, that could be otherwise. A contingent existence that is actual must have been possible or it could not have been. But, once it is actual, it is actual and *eo ipso* is no longer merely possible.

The concepts of possibility and contingency are logically symbiotic. We can differentiate possibility and contingency in terms of the tense of temporality. What is possible must be contingent. What is contingent must have been possible. Possibility and contingency cannot be defined in exclusion of each other. The logical completeness of contingency is dependent upon the logical priority of possibility. The logical completeness

of possibility is dependent upon the absence of necessity and actuality; or, the pluperfect of contingency. Contingency can only be defined backwards in terms of possibility as that which must have been possible. Possibility can only be defined forwards in terms of contingency as that which can only become a contingent actuality.

Possibility is, in a word, an enthymemic logical notion. It is logically incoplete without the concept of contingency. Mayness implies the equi-possibility of maynotness. Contingency is possibility more fully expressed. If we add the concept of existence to the contingent we can then differentiate between the two concepts as the possible being that which may or may not be and the contingent being that which has actualized the may be of the two sides of the possible.

How does all of this apply to Anselm? As logically perverse as it might sound, necessity can in so sense be possible for the possible implies the contingent at some future time. The possible implies that which might be but that which might equally also not be. The actuality of the possible is contingent: it is that which might not have been. In matters of Divinity whether one is Theist or Aetheist one must be a necessitarian. Bonaventure's argument, *Si Deus Deus, Deus Est,* is necessarily self-re-futing. There can be no "Ifness" with respect to Necessary existence. If the Divine could possibly not be, then the Divine cannot not not be. We cannot argue for necessity on the grounds of possibility. From possibility we can only argue for necessary non-existence. This leads us to the curious but true proposition; if the Divine is possible, it is impossible. If we construe Divinity in terms of necessary existence, then the concept of Divinity can never be a merely possible concept.

The status of arguments about the Divinity cannot be on the level of logical possibility. Major critics of the ontological argument do not question the validity of arguing from possibility to necessity. In Kane's article, 'The Modal Ontological Argument', he takes possibility as a premise in the argument towards necessity. He does see that the possible existence of the Deity is *weaker* that the desired conclusion of necessity: "All that must be assumed, besides... is [the] premise..., 'it is logically possible that a perfect being exists', a premise that is also weaker than the desired conclusion"[3]. What he does not see is that it is not only that it is weaker; such a premise is logically incompatible with the conclusion in such a way that the conclusion cannot follow from such a premise.

If we were to employ the language of McGrath, what I am saying above is that the so-called B principle is logically incoherent. McGrath's succinct description of the so-called B principle, 'that a proposition that

is possibly necessary is true', is a contradiction *in adjecto*[4]. This is Bona-venturism all over again in modal dress. Incidentally, one conclusion does follow from this which should allay McGrath's fear of the proliferation of less than perfect necessary beings (LPN$_s$). If the B principle is logically incoherent and hence *logically* unstatable, then, since the existence of LPN$_s$ is a consequence of the validity of the B principle (in his view), then he may lay his fears of the existence of LPN$_s$ quite comfortably to rest.

To Anselm. To paraphrase *Proslogium* II, if we can conceive of that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived that *could* [implying equally that it could not by the application of the completed notion of possibility] exist (but only in imagination), then this part of the argument is sound enough because we would not be conceiving of that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived. However, as the argument progresses, it refutes itself. For Anselm concludes that, "... then it can be conceived to exist in reality"[5]. But if this is so, then the argument is self-negativing because 'can' equally implies 'cannot'. If it is only true that it *can* be so conceived (not that it must be so conceived to exist), then it is equally true that it can be conceived as not existing. But if the Deity is not existing, this is an existence which is in the imagination only. *Proslogium* II never achieves the that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived status because we can always conceive of a greater, that being that exists of necessity.

To the second part of our argument: the conclusion of the argument of *Proslogium* III invalidates the argument of *Proslogium* II. For, if III is taken as valid, then II must be invalid. In fact, it is precisely this version of Deity (as that which can be conceived not to exist), which is employed to stand for that which is not Deity in order to establish *Proslogium* III. Anselm as much as admits to the invalidity of II by employing the conclusion of II as a false but necessary premise in establishing the validity of III. A necessary being is proven to be that than which nothing greater can be conceived by showing the superiority of this conception over that of the conception employed in II. But it is not merely a superior conception. It is a conception, which, if superior, draws, its superiority from the fact that the concept advanced in II (according both to Anselm and to me) cannot be a concept of the Divine. It draws its validity from the invalidity of II. (Anselm, however, does not seem to be aware that in constructing *Proslogium* III, he has destroyed the validity of *Proslogium* II, but for all that, he has).

Retrospectively and prospectively, II must be invalid. It is invalid

retrospectively as its invalidity is a logical consequence of the validity of III. It is invalid prospectively as the condition for the validity of III. Once it is used as a premise in the argument of III, it cancels itself out as a valid conclusion in II.

If II were valid, it would invalidate III. It is not that II does not prove enough. What it does prove (if it proves it), would invalidate III because it proves a contingent actuality only. What is more important, however, is that II is used as precisely that which is not that-than-which-nothing-greater-can be-conceived in III in order to establish the 'that which cannot be conceived not to exist' of III as the that-than-which nothing-greater-can-be-conceived. If we understand III correctly, we realize that in II we were not and could not have been conceiving of that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived. It is not that III is merely the stronger of the two arguments; it is, if correct, the only valid argument.

NOTES

1. In that which follows I would like to express my appreciation to Charles Hartshorne for his kindness in reading an earlier version of this paper and in responding to it. He is, of course, in no way responsible for the views taken in this paper.
2. 'Necessary Beings', MIND 94 (1985), pp. 263-272.
3. R. Kane, 'The Modal Ontological Argument', MIND 93 (1984), p. 338.
4. P. J. McGrath, 'Discussion, the Modal Ontological Argument -Reply to Kane and Morris', MIND 95 (1986), p. 373.
5. St. Anselm, *Basic Writings,* transl. S. N. Deane (La Salle: Open Court, 2nd Edition, 1966), p. 8.