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Richard DeWitt
Fairfield University, rdewitt@fairfield.edu

R. James Long
Fairfield University, rjlong@fairfield.edu

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RICHARD DE WITT and R. JAMES LONG: Richard Rufus's Reformulations of Anselm's *Proslogion* Argument

ABSTRACT

In a Sentences Commentary written about 1250 the Franciscan Richard Rufus subjects Anselm's argument for God's existence in his *Proslogion* to the most trenchant criticism since Gaunilon wrote his response on behalf of the "fool." Anselm's argument is subtle but sophistical, claims Rufus, because he fails to distinguish between signification and supposition. Rufus therefore offers five reformulations of the Anselmian argument, which we restate in modern formal logic and four of which we claim are valid, the fifth turning on a possible scribal error. Rufus's final conclusion is that the formulation in *Proslogion*, chapter 3, is convincing, but not that of chapter 2.

Notwithstanding the fact that St. Anselm rather soon acquired the status of an *auctoritas*, especially for his views on the Incarnation, his *Proslogion* for some reason went virtually unnoticed for nearly a century after his death. That was to change with the blossoming of scholasticism in the thirteenth century. Beginning with Alexander Nequam in 1201,¹ nearly every master at both Paris and Oxford tried his hand at Anselm's intriguing argument. All more or less uncritically accepted Anselm's *unum argumentum*.²

It is not a little surprising, therefore, to find a Franciscan,

Richard Rufus of Cornwall, who circa 1250 was somewhat grudgingly writing a Commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*,³ subjecting Anselm's argument to the most trenchant criticism since the monk Gaunilo wrote on behalf of the atheist.⁴ Following a fair and succinct restatement of chapters two and three of the *Proslogion*,⁵ Rufus raises the following *dubitatio*:

These arguments (*rationes*), although subtle, nevertheless seem sophistical. For that expression (*sermo*) "quo aliquid maius excogitari non potest" has both a signification (or meaning) and a supposition (or designation); its meaning is in the understanding even of the fool, when he hears it and also thinks it. For how did he say this in his heart unless he thought it? For it is the same to say in the heart and to think. This meaning that the fool has thought and placed in his heart, however, has no supposition; and thus he can think that what is designated (*suppositum*) can be thought not to exist. "In one way therefore," as Anselm himself says, "the thing is thought, when the word signifying it is thought; in another way when that which the thing is is understood."⁶ Thus in the former way (of thinking) one can think that God does not exist, but in the latter way not at all.⁷

Thus, to Rufus's way of thinking, Anselm, in attempting to explain the fool, has raised a fatal objection to his own argument and therefore has need of stronger and subtler arguments (*fortiores, subtiliores*).⁸

These Rufus is more than happy to provide. In a syllogism that he later identifies as being in the fourth mood of the second figure (in Peter of Spain's taxonomy⁹), he argues as follows:

Therefore, let "that which a greater cannot be thought" be called a. I say: if it can be thought that a exists, it is necessary that a exist. Therefore, let this hypothesis be granted: it can be thought that a exists. He argues thus: whatever can be thought to exist and does not exist, can be thought to exist by means of a beginning [*per initium*]; a cannot be thought to exist by means of a beginning: therefore a cannot be thought to exist and does not exist. If therefore it (that is, a) can be thought to exist, it (a) exists.¹⁰

Parsed in detail, the argument looks like this:¹¹

- [1.1] *I say*: if it can be thought that a exists, it is necessary that a exist.
- [1.2] *Therefore, let this hypothesis be granted*: it can be thought that a exists.
- [1.3] *He argues thus*: whatever can be thought to exist and does not exist, can be thought to exist by means of a beginning;
- [1.4] a cannot be thought to exist by means of a beginning:
- [1.5] *therefore* a cannot be thought to exist and does not exist.
- [1.6] if therefore it [where "it" is a] can be thought to exist, it [that is, a] exists.

[1.1] is a preliminary statement of the conclusion, and so is not itself a part of the argument. Note that the conclusion [1.6] is a conditional statement. Rufus is using what today we would call a Conditional Proof strategy, in which he will hypothesize the antecedent of the conclusion, derive the consequent, and this will then justify drawing, as a conclusion, the conditional statement itself.

Thus line [1.2] is his hypothesis, that is, this is where he hypothesizes the antecedent of the conclusion. Lines [1.3] and [1.4] are the premises of an argument that can reasonably be translated as a syllogism having the form of the fourth of the second figure. From this sub-argument he derives [1.5], and [1.5] straightforwardly entails the consequent of the overall conclusion of the argument (that is, [1.6]). So in short, at line [1.2] Rufus hypothesizes the antecedent of the conclusion, at line [1.5] he derives the consequent of that conclusion (or at least, a statement that clearly entails the consequent), and this justifies his deriving the conditional statement itself, that is, line [1.6].

The detailed structure of Rufus's argument can be most clearly illustrated using modern formalism. We can then translate (portions of) the argument into a reasonable syllogistic equivalent. This should then show the syllogistic form that Rufus would have viewed the argument as having.

Therefore, let:

a = that than which a greater cannot be thought

E = exist
 TE = can be thought to exist
 TEB = can be thought to exist through a beginning
 → = it is necessary that

Using a standard notation, the numbered sentences in Rufus's argument would then be formalized as follows:

- [1.1] $TEa \rightarrow \Box Ea$
- [1.2] TEa
- [1.3] $(x)((TEx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow TEBx)$
- [1.4] $\sim TEBa$
- [1.5] $\sim (TEa \ \& \ \sim Ea)$
- [1.6] $TEa \rightarrow Ea^{12}$

Modern Translation of Argument 1

- [1.3] 1. $(x)((TEx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow TEBx)$ Assumption *All B are A*
- [1.4] 2. $\sim TEBa$ Assumption *Some C are not A**
- [1.2] 3. | TEa Hypothesis
- 4. | $(TEa \ \& \ \sim Ea) \rightarrow TEBa$ From 2
- [1.5] 5. | $\sim (TEa \ \& \ \sim Ea)$ From 3,4 *Some C are not B**
- 6. | Ea From 1,5
- [1.6] 7. $TEa \rightarrow Ea$ From 3-6, Conditional Proof

This reconstruction of Rufus's argument is a straightforward translation of the passage in question, and the argument he presents here is clearly valid. This focuses the issue, then, on whether the key assumptions of the argument--especially statements [1.3] and 1.4] --are plausible.

Needless to say, Rufus would not have had in mind an argument given in terms of modern predicate logic, so one remaining question is how he himself would have viewed the structure of the argument. As mentioned, he states that the argument seems to be (or at least importantly involves) a syllogism whose form is the fourth of the second figure. This form is as follows:

All B are A

Some C are not A

Therefore, Some C are not B

It is far from clear how Rufus's argument is supposed to fall into this form. This is true both of the modern translation above, as well as with the phrasing that Rufus uses. But we think this form is present in Rufus's argument, most easily seen by extracting this form from the modern translation. Begin with statement [1.3], whose modern translation, as noted above, is " $(x)((TEx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow TEBx)$." This is a universally quantified statement, the most straightforward categorical translation being "All (things that can be thought to exist and do not exist) are (things that can be thought to exist through a beginning)." If we take this to be the first premise in the syllogism, then B is

the category of (things that can be thought to exist and do not exist), and A is the category (things that can be thought to exist through a beginning).

If this is the first premise, then having established the category represented by A, the second premise of the syllogism must be "Some C are not (things that can be thought to exist through a beginning)." This suggests that [1.4] is (or more precisely, entails) the second premise of the syllogism. Again, the modern translation of [1.4] is " \sim TEBa," and the straightforward categorical translation of this is "No (things that are a) are (things that can be thought to exist through a beginning)." An immediate inference from this statement is "Some (things that are a) are not (things that can be thought to exist through a beginning)." Although this categorical statement is not explicitly in Rufus's text, the statement is an immediate inference from a statement that he does explicitly give, that is, [1.4]. Rufus in other words seems to be giving an immediate inference from [1.4] as the second premise of the syllogism rather than [1.4] itself. Given this structure, the category represented by C in the syllogism must be the category (things that are a).¹³

So, the conclusion "Some C are not B" must be "Some (things that are a) are not (things that can be thought to exist and do not exist)." As was the case above, this statement is not explicitly in Rufus's text. But this again is an immediate inference from a statement that he does explicitly make, namely, statement [1.5]. Again, [1.5] is " \sim (TEa & \sim Ea)," and the most unequivocal categorical translation of this is "No (things that are a) are (things that can be

thought to exist and not exist).” An immediate inference from this is the categorical statement “Some (things that are a) are not (things that can be thought to exist and not exist).”

In short, if we take [1.3] and [1.4] as premises of a syllogism, and [1.5] as the conclusion, then we have a syllogism whose form is the fourth of the second figure, as Rufus notes in the text. Or more precisely, if we take these statements, or immediate inferences that follow from these statements, as the premises and conclusion of a syllogism, then we have a syllogism that is in the form of the fourth of the second figure.

To summarize: Rufus begins with the hypothesis “TEa,” shows that “Ea” follows from this hypothesis, and thus concludes “TEa \rightarrow Ea,” that is, that if a can be thought to exist, then a exists. Moreover, the key move in the argument, showing that “Ea” follows from “TEa,” involves a syllogism whose form is the fourth of the second figure.

Rufus follows with a second syllogism, of the same figure and mood:

Likewise, if a can be thought at all, it is necessary that a exist. Therefore, let there be another hypothesis, and it is argued as follows. Whatever can be thought and does not exist, if it were to exist, could either in fact or in understanding not exist, because, namely, it could be thought to exist through a beginning; a, if it were to exist, would not be able not to exist either in reality or in the mind, otherwise a would not be a; therefore a cannot be thought and still not exist. If therefore it (that is, a) can be thought, it exists.¹⁴

Structurally, this argument is similar to the first, and so a briefer analysis will suffice. Argument 2 is as follows, again with numbers for later reference and with extraneous material italicized.

- [2.1] If *a* can be thought at all, it is necessary that *a* exist.
- [2.2] *Therefore, let there be another hypothesis*, [note: Rufus does not explicitly state the hypothesis, but he clearly intends the antecedent of the conditional in [2.1], that is] *a* can be thought
- [2.3] *and it is argued as follows*: whatever can be thought and does not exist, if it were to exist, it could either in fact or in understanding not exist,
- [2.4] *because namely* it could be thought to exist through a beginning;
- [2.5] *a*, if it were to exist, would not be able not to exist either in reality or in the mind,
- [2.6] *otherwise a* would not be *a*;
- [2.7] *therefore a* cannot be thought and still not exist.
- [2.8] if therefore it [that is, *a*] can be thought, it exists.

Formalization of Argument 2

Let:

a = that than which a greater cannot be thought

E = exist

TA= can be thought at all

FE= in fact exists (that is, exist in reality)

UE= in understanding exist

TEB= can be thought to exist through a beginning

→ = it is necessary that

Then Rufus's statements are translated as:

[2.1] $TAa \rightarrow \Box Ea$

[2.2] TAa

[2.3] $(x)((TAx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow (Ex \rightarrow (FEx \vee UEx)))$

[2.4] [this provides some additional support for [2.3], but otherwise is not important in the overall structure of the argument]

[2.5] $\sim(Ea \rightarrow (FEa \vee UEa))$

[this is an awkward statement in Rufus's text, but this seems the correct interpretation]

[2.6] [this provides some additional support of [2.5], but also is not important in the overall structure of the argument]

[2.7] $\sim(TAa \ \& \ \sim Ea)$

[2.8] $TAa \rightarrow Ea$

This argument is similar in structure to Argument 1. In particular, Rufus begins with a hypothesis, derives a statement from that hypothesis, and thus concludes with a conditional, statement [2.8]. And again, as we will see below, a syllogism having the form of the fourth of the second figure plays a prominent role.

Modern Translation of Argument 2

[2.3]	1.	$(x)((TAx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow (Ex \rightarrow (FEx \vee UEx)))$	Assumption	<i>All B are A</i>
[2.5]	2.	$\sim(Ea \rightarrow (FEa \vee UEa))$	Assumption	<i>Some C are not A*</i>
[2.2]	3.	TAa	Hypothesis	
	4.	$(TAa \ \& \ \sim Ea) \rightarrow (Ea \rightarrow (\sim FEa \vee \sim UEa))$	From 1	
[2.7]	5.	$\sim(TAa \ \& \ \sim Ea)$	From 2,4	<i>Some C are not B*</i>
	6.	Ea	From 3,5	
[2.8]	7.	$TAa \rightarrow Ea$	From 3-6, Conditional Proof	

As with Argument 1, the second formulation is clearly valid. Moreover, it too contains a sub-argument which, when translated into syllogistic form, has the form of the fourth of the second figure. More specifically, the syllogistic form of argument runs as follows. Begin with statement [2.3], whose modern translation is " $(x)((TAx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow (Ex \rightarrow (FEx \vee UEx)))$." The most straightforward categorical translation of this rather complex statement is "All (things that can be thought at all and do not exist) are (things that, if they exist, do not exist in fact or do not exist in the understanding)." If, as Rufus claims, we are dealing with a syllogism whose form is the fourth of the second figure, then this first premise of the syllogism has the form "All B are A." So the category represented by B would be the category of (things that can be thought at all and do not exist). The category represented by A would be the category of (things that, if they exist, do not exist in fact or do not exist in the understanding).

Recall that the second premise of this type of syllogism is of the

form "Some C are not A." Having established the category represented by A above, the second premise must be "Some C are not (things that, if they exist, do not exist in fact or do not exist in the understanding)." This suggests that [2.5] is (or at least entails) the second premise of the syllogism. Again, the modern translation of [2.5] is " $\sim(Ea \rightarrow (FEa \vee UEa))$," and the most straightforward categorical translation of this is "No (things that are a) are (things that, if they exist, do not exist in fact or do not exist in the understanding)." As was the case with Argument 1, an immediate inference from this is "Some (things that are a) are (things that, if they exist, do not exist in fact or do not exist in the understanding)." So it is likely that, when Rufus states that the syllogism is in the fourth of the second figure, he has this immediate inference from [2.5] in mind as the second premise of the syllogism. This, then, makes the category represented by C the category of (things that are a).

Finally, then, the conclusion of this type of syllogism, of the form "Some C are not B," would have to be "Some (things that are a) are not (things that can be thought of at all and do not exist)." This categorical statement is an immediate inference from [2.7], so again it appears that Rufus has in mind, as the conclusion, not the exact statement that he gives, but rather an immediate inference from the statement that he does give.

In short, the pattern here is almost exactly parallel to Argument 1. In particular, if we take statements [2.3] and [2.5] as the premises of a syllogism, and take [2.7] as the conclusion, then we

have a syllogism whose form is the fourth of the second figure. Or again, more precisely, if we take Rufus's statements or immediate inferences from those statements as the premises and conclusion, then we have a syllogism of the form Rufus suggests.

To summarize: the situation here is almost exactly parallel to Argument 1. Rufus hypothesizes "TAa," shows that "Ea" follows, and thus concludes "TAa \rightarrow Ea," that is, if a can be thought at all, then a exists. Moreover, an important part of the argument, showing that "Ea" follows from "TAa," involves a syllogism whose form is the fourth mood of the second figure.

The third argument, which Rufus identifies as being in the fourth mood of the first figure,¹⁵ runs as follows:

Let it be posited that a does not exist and yet that it can be thought. I say the following: whatever can be thought and does not exist, if it were to exist, would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought; a can be thought, and does not exist: therefore a, if it were to exist, would not be that than which a greater could not be thought. Therefore, if a were to exist, a would not be a--which is absurd to say.¹⁶

This argument is a bit odd. On the one hand, this is the easiest of the five arguments to translate directly and cleanly into modern symbolic notation. On the other hand, Rufus appears to be making a basic logical mistake. He is presenting a *reductio* argument, in which he hypothesizes the opposite of what he wants to prove and attempts to

derive a contradiction as follows: "if a were to exist, a would not be a--which is absurd to say."

Using "E" to represent "exists," in modern form Rufus's claim would be symbolized as $Ea \rightarrow \sim(a = a)$. Now, $\sim(a = a)$ is a contradiction, but the conditional statement $Ea \rightarrow \sim(a = a)$ is in no way a contradiction. It merely states that *if* a exists, then a contradiction follows. Moreover, the correct conclusion to make from $Ea \rightarrow \sim(a = a)$ is $\sim Ea$. That is, the only conclusion Rufus can draw at this point is the conclusion that, if the hypothesis he used to begin the proof is correct, then a does not exist.

One more preliminary note on this passage: Rufus says that this argument seems to be in the fourth mood of the third figure. However, we can find no way to reconstruct this passage so that it in any way resembles a syllogism of this form. For that matter, we can find no reconstruction of this passage that resembles any valid syllogism, or any valid argument--syllogistic or not. In short, this is a rather puzzling passage. By far the most clear and unambiguous of all the five arguments, it also seems clearly to be defective.¹⁷

With these caveats in mind, we present the reconstruction of Argument 3. As usual, extraneous material is italicized.

[3.1] Let it be posited that a does not exist, and yet that it can be thought.

[3.2] *I say the following:* whatever can be thought and does not exist, if it were to exist, would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought

[3.3] a can be thought, and does not exist

[3.4] *therefore*, if a were to exist, a would not be a-which is absurd
to say.

Formalization of Argument 3

Let:

E = exist

T = can be thought

GNC= greater not conceivable being

[gnc] = name for the being greater than which cannot be conceived
(that is, this is the name for the GNC)

Then the premises of Rufus's argument would be formalized as:

[3.1] $\sim Ea \ \& \ Ta$

[3.2] $(x) ((Tx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow (Ex \rightarrow \sim(x = [gnc])))$

[3.3] $Ta \ \& \ \sim Ea$

[3.4] $Ea \rightarrow \sim GNCa$

[3.5] $Ea \rightarrow \sim(a = a)$

Modern Translation of Argument 3

1. $a = [gnc]$ Assumption

[3.2] 2. $(x) ((Tx \ \& \ \sim Ex) \rightarrow (Ex \rightarrow \sim(x = [gnc])))$ Assumption

[3.1] 3. $\mid \ \sim Ea \ \& \ Ta$ Hypothesis

[3.3] 4.	Ta & ~Ea		From 3
5.	(Ta & Ea)	(Ea ~ (a = [gnc]))	From 2
6.	Ea	~ (a = [gnc])	From 4,5
7.	[3.5]	Ea ~ (a = a)	From 1,6
8.	***	~ (~Ea & Ta)	From 3-7, R
9.	***	Ea v ~Ta	From 8
10.	***	Ta Ea	From 9

Again, the above translation seems to be a straightforward translation of the passage from the Rufus text. Note that line 8 is a mistaken inference (because line 7, as noted earlier, is not a contradiction). Thus lines 8, 9, and 10 do not follow.

To summarize: it is difficult to see this passage as anything other than a substantial logical mistake. From his hypothesis, Rufus seems to believe that he has derived a contradiction, when he has in fact merely derived a conditional statement whose consequent is a contradiction. But such a conditional statement is not contradictory, nor are there any other ingredients in this argument that would enable Rufus to derive the contradiction he needs for his *reductio* strategy.

Fourthly, Rufus formulates a syllogism which is also the fourth mood of the second figure¹⁸:

Whatever in some place or at some time does not exist, even if it

does exist in some place and at some time, can be thought to exist in no place and at no time, and thus can be thought not to exist; *a*, if it exists, cannot be thought not to exist, for otherwise if *a* exists, *a* is not *a*: therefore, in no place nor at no time does it not exist; therefore, it exists always and everywhere.¹⁹

In this argument Rufus seems to include more extraneous (and thus confusing) phrases than in the earlier arguments. In numbering the lines from the passage, we have omitted what seems to us to be this extraneous material (the ellipses indicate omitted words or phrases). We use "GNC" to abbreviate "the being greater than which cannot be conceived." For this reconstruction, phrases that are implied but not explicitly stated are in italics.

[4.1] Whatever at any place or at any time does not exist...can be
thought not to exist.

[4.2] *The GNC*, if it exists, cannot be thought not to exist.

[4.3] *The GNC*, if it exists, at no place nor at no time does it not
exist.

(The final line in the passage, that if the GNC exists, "it exists always and everywhere," is merely a rephrasing of line [4.3].)

Formalization of Argument 4

Let:

NESPT = not exist at some place or time

TENPT = can be thought to exist at no place and at no time

TNE = can be thought not to exist

GE = is the GNC and exists

Then Rufus's statements are to be translated as:

[4.1] $(x) (NESPTx \rightarrow TNEx)$

[4.2] $GEa \rightarrow \sim TNEa$

[4.3] $GEa \rightarrow \sim NESPTa$

Modern Translation of Argument 4

[4.1]	1.	$(x) (NESPTx \rightarrow TNEx)$	Assumption	<i>All B are A</i>
[4.2]	2.	$GEa \rightarrow \sim TNEa$	Assumption	
	3.	$(\exists x) (GEx \rightarrow \sim TNEx)$	From 2	<i>Some C are not A</i>
	4.	$NESPTa \rightarrow TNEa$	From 1	
	5.	$\sim TNEa \rightarrow \sim NESPTa$	From 4	
[4.3]	6.	$GEa \rightarrow \sim NESPTa$	From 2,5	
	7.	$(\exists x) (GEx \rightarrow \sim NESPTx)$	From 6	<i>Some C are not B</i>

As with Arguments 1 and 2, this argument is clearly valid. Also as with those arguments, we can recover the categorical argument that Rufus seems to have in mind. Begin with statement [4.1], which appears as line 1 in the proof. The categorical translation of this line is "All B are A," which is the appropriate first line of a syllogism in the fourth mood of the second figure. The categorical translation of

line 3 of the proof is "Some C are not A," which is the appropriate form for the second premise of a syllogism in the fourth of the second. Continuing a pattern we found in Arguments 1 and 2, this line is not explicitly in Rufus's passage, but is rather an immediate inference from Rufus's statement [4.2] (that is, line 2 of the proof). Finally, the categorical translation of line 7 is "Some C are not B," which is the appropriate form for a syllogism of the mood and figure indicated by Rufus. This line again is not found explicitly in the Rufus passage, but is an immediate inference from Rufus's statement [4.3] (that is, line 6 of the proof).

To summarize: as with Arguments 1 and 2, this argument is clearly valid, that is, the conclusion follows from the basic assumptions of the argument. And as with these earlier arguments, this argument does importantly involve a syllogism whose form, as Rufus indicated, is the fourth mood of the second figure.

Lastly, Rufus provides his fifth and final argument:

Likewise, let someone say that he can think that a does not exist. I ask: when he thinks this, he either thinks something than which a greater cannot be thought or not. If not, therefore he does not think a; therefore, he does not think that a does not exist, which is contrary to the hypothesis. But if yes, therefore he thinks something which cannot be thought not to exist. For if that which he thinks could be thought not to exist, it could be thought to have a beginning and an end; but this a cannot be thought: therefore, a cannot be thought not to

exist. Therefore, if he thinks such a thing, he is not thinking that a does not exist. In no way, therefore, can a be thought not to exist.²⁰

This is a complex and ambiguously phrased argument. Removing the ambiguities required a longer proof than needed for the previous passages, but eventually the argument is shown to be valid.

Incidentally, Rufus does not indicate that this argument is a syllogistic argument, and indeed it does not appear to be directly translatable into any valid syllogism. As usual, extraneous material in italicized.

[5.1] let someone say that he can think that a does not exist

[5.2] *I ask: when he thinks this*, he either thinks something than which a greater cannot be thought or not.

[5.3] If not...he does not think that a does not exist

[5.4] if that which he thinks could be thought not to exist, it could be thought to have a beginning and an end

[5.5] but this a cannot be thought

[5.6] a cannot be thought not to exist

[5.7] in no way therefore can a be thought not to exist

Formalization of Argument 5

Let:

GNC = the being greater than which cannot be conceived

[gnc] = the name for the GNC

TNE= thinks does not exist (note: this is a 2-place predicate,
 e.g., "TNEab" would represent that "b" thinks "a" does not
 exist)

TBE= could be thought to have a beginning and an end

Then Rufus's statements can be formalized as:

[5.1] TNEab

[5.2] TNE[gnc]b \vee \sim TNE[gnc]b

[5.3] \sim TNEab

[5.4] $(x) (TNExb \rightarrow TBExb)$

[5.5] \sim TBE[gnc]b

(Note: we've substituted "[gnc]" for Rufus's "a")

[5.6] \sim TBEab

[5.7] \sim TNEab

Reconstruction of Argument 5

	1.	$a = [gnc]$	Assumption
[5.4]	2.	$(x) (TNExb \rightarrow TBExb)$	Assumption
[5.5]	3.	\sim TBE[gnc]b	Assumption
[5.1]	4.	TNEab	Hypothesis
[5.2]	5.	TNE[gnc]b \vee \sim TNE[gnc]b	Theorem
6.		\sim TNE[gnc]b	Hypothesis
[5.3]	7.	\sim TNEab	From 1,6

8.		TNEab & ~TNEab	From 4,7
9.		~TNE[gnc]b & ~TNEab & ~TNEab)	From 6-8, Conditional
	Proof		
10.		TNE[gnc]b	Hypothesis
[5.6] 11.		~TNEab	From 1,3
12.		TNEab TNEab	From 2
13.	[5.7]	~TNEab	From 11,12
14.		~TNE[gnc]b	From
		1,13	
15.		TNE[gnc] & ~TNE[gnc]b	From 10,14
16.		TNEab & ~TNEab	From 1,15
	17.	TNE[gnc]b (TNEab & ~TNEab)	From 10-
		16, Conditional Proof	
18.		TNEab & ~TNEab	From
		5,9,17	
19.		~TNEab	From 4-18,
	<i>Reductio</i>		

As with Arguments 1, 2, and 4, Argument 5 is clearly valid, although, as noted, it is a substantially more complex argument and does not appear to have a syllogistic equivalent.

We can see, then, that Rufus's arguments (except the problematic Argument 3) are valid, that is, the conclusions do follow from the basic assumptions used in the arguments. Moreover, we can clearly see the basic assumptions on which each argument rests. For Argument 1, the basic assumptions are lines [1.3] and [1.4]; for Argument 2, the

basic assumptions are lines [2.3] and [2.5]; for Argument 3, line [3.2]; for Argument 4, lines [4.1] and [4.2]; and for Argument 5, lines [5.4] and [5.5].

What do we find when we look closely at these basic assumptions? Well, insists Rufus, even these strengthened and subtler arguments appear to be flawed, in the sense that they do not conclude to God's existence in reality. Why? One could correctly make the claim that "a is not" (that is, "a does not exist") is different from "a is not a". For whether a exists or does not exist, it remains true that a is a, just as the chimera is the chimera. Therefore the opponent will claim that "a" can indeed be thought not to exist, but "a is not a" cannot be thought.²¹

Of course, concedes Rufus, whoever truly sees God (presumably in the next life) would not be able to think that God does not exist, for he would be affirming and denying the same thing, which no intellect can do. For the infinite conditions of the divine essence, argues Rufus, even taken separately are each directly opposed to non-being. But in this life the fool (that is, the non-believer) is indeed able, as has been said, to think that this divine nature has no supposition.²² Though this is a wrinkle not considered by Anselm, what this means for Rufus (as for Aquinas after him) is that atheism is a respectable intellectual position, only because prior to demonstration in the strict sense God's existence can indeed be denied.²³

This failure to distinguish between signification and supposition amounts to a fallacy, in Rufus's view, the fallacy, namely, of *propositio plures*.²⁴ For Anselm's fool is thinking of the common

meaning of *a*, but is thinking of no designation to which this common meaning would fit; that is, he is not thinking that anything is designated to which this admittedly easily understood nature would apply.²⁵

For example, let someone think that something white does not exist; and let another say and posit that nothing in the world of beings (*nullum entium*) is in any way white. I say, asserts Rufus, that the hypotheses are different.²⁶ Within five years, curiously, Thomas Aquinas was arguing the same line in his own commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*:

From this it does not follow that someone could deny or think that God does not exist; for he can think that nothing of this kind exists [in reality] namely that than which a greater cannot be thought.²⁷

In short, Rufus accepts as valid what for him is the stronger argument: namely, that it is impossible to think that "something than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought not to exist" for the subject is opposed to the predicate. And here, says Rufus, Anselm argues well, and his argument none can resist.²⁸ This is, incidentally, roughly the line argued in our time by Norman Malcolm.²⁹

The second hypothesis, however, falls victim to the fallacy of accident. Although it appears that the divine nature, which is a substance, namely, "something than which a greater cannot be thought" is opposed to this predicate "able to be thought not to exist"; the

predicate in this case is merely an accident, that is an intention, the object as it exists in the knower, to which there is another intention which stands in opposition.³⁰ This way therefore does not seem to provide a necessary proof that God exists.³¹

Again, Aquinas in the *Summa contra Gentiles* makes the very same distinction:

Because given that by this name "God" is understood something than which a greater cannot be thought, it will not be necessary that something than which a greater cannot be thought exist in the nature of things. For it is necessary that a thing and the imposition of its name be posited in the same way. However, from the fact that what is put forward by this name "God" is conceived in the mind, it does not follow that God exists except in the intellect. Hence it will not be necessary that that than which a greater cannot be thought exist except in the intellect. And from this it does not follow that there be anything in the nature of things than which a greater cannot be thought. And thus those who posit that God does not exist are guilty of no inconsistency, for it is not unreasonable for a person to grant that something greater can be thought either in the mind or in reality, unless that person concedes that there is something in fact than which a greater cannot be thought.³²

Thus, in conclusion, we find in Rufus a thoroughgoing and subtly argued treatment of Anselm's *Proslogion* argument. Reformulating the

argument, Rufus agrees with one formulation, the argument namely in *Proslogion*, chapter 3, but objects to the argument in chapter 2. In so doing, he is the first since Gaunilo, notwithstanding the status of Anselm as a theological authority, to object to the (by now) famous argument.

NOTES

1. The date is given as a *terminus ante quem* by Rodney M. Thomson, ed., *Alexander Nequam: Speculum speculationum* (Oxford UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), p. ix.

2. F. S. Schmitt, ed., *Sancti Anselmi Opera Omnia*, Vol. I (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. Neslon, 1946), p. 93.

3. Note this passage from Rufus's proemium: "At this point some people like to raise certain general questions regarding theology itself, and this thanks to this *summa* of the Master [Lombard]. This does not seem to me to be necessary, since this *summa* is not theology itself, nor even any part of it. For the divine Scripture is whole in itself, perfect quite apart from this and every other *summa*.... Nevertheless because this is the custom, we too will touch on some of [these issues]" (translation ours),

Oxford, Balliol College MS. 62, col. 3.

4. The text, which survives in a single manuscript (cols. 57-59 of the Balliol College manuscript cited above), was originally edited by Gedeon Gal in "Viae ad existentiam Dei probandum in doctrina Richardi Rufi OFM," *Franziskanische Studien* 38 (1956): 187-202. Gal's transcription with minor changes, mostly of punctuation and spelling, is provided below as an appendix. (When checked against the original, Gal's edition proved nearly flawless, a tribute to a very meticulous scholar.) Gal's stated intention, however, was not to analyze Rufus's argument, but rather to indicate its influence on Bonaventure and Scotus (*ibid.*, p. 182).

5. Appendix 1-3.

6. Schmitt, p. 103.

7. See below, Appendix 4-5. The translations in all cases are ours.

8. Appendix 6.

9. Categorical syllogisms are classified into figures based on the relative positions of the middle, minor, and major terms in

the premises, and into moods based on the type of categorical statements found in the syllogism. So, for example, a syllogism that is in the fourth mood of the second figure has the middle term appearing in the predicate spot of both premises, and consists of a universal affirmative and a particular negative concluding to a particular negative: as, for example, every man is an animal; some rock is not an animal; therefore, some rock is not a man. I. M. Bochenski, ed., *Petrus Hispanus, Summulae logicales*, tract. 4 (Rome, Italy: Marietti, 1947), p. 39.

10. Appendix 6.

11. The bracketed numbers are for later reference; the italicized portions are extraneous material, with the non-italicized phrases constituting the actual premises of the argument.

12. In the proofs to follow an Assumption can be introduced at any point in the proof. A Hypothesis can be introduced at any point, but only for a Conditional Proof or a Reductio strategy. All lines other than assumptions or hypotheses are justified by straightforward applications of the rules of predicate logic. Whenever a hypothesis is in effect, a vertical line (|) is used to indicate this. All hypotheses must be discharged by the end of the proof. Thus, the lines introduced as Assumptions are the only unjustified lines remaining at the end of the proof, and

so these Assumptions are the basic premises of the argument, that is, the premises on which the conclusion ultimately rests.

Relevant categorical translations are given on the far right, with an asterisk (*) indicating that the categorical statement is not a direct categorical translation of the line in question, but is rather a straightforward inference (usually an immediate inference) from the line in question. Finally, in Argument 3, three asterisks (***) at the beginning of a line indicate that the line is, or is the result of, a logical mistake.

13. Although on the face of it this is an odd-sounding way to phrase this, it is a standard way of dealing, in categorical terms, with individual objects.

14. Appendix 7.

15. The fourth mood of the first figure is: "No B are A; some C are B; so some C are not A."

16. Appendix 8.

17. There is also the possibility that the Balliol scribe nodded at this point. Since there is extant only the single witness, there is no chance to check for variant readings. The option comes down to affirming either that Rufus erred or that the

nameless scribe erred (and then attempting a conjectural reconstruction of the text). Since there appears to be no obvious scribal error, we have chosen the former.

18. Bochenski, p. 39.

19. Appendix 9.

20. Appendix 10.

21. Appendix 11.

22. Appendix 12.

23. Compare this position with Anselm's, for whom the *insipiens* can think that God does not exist only if he/she is indeed a fool (see *Proslogion.*, cap. 3, in Schmitt, ed., p. 103), that is, that he/she is thinking only the verbal formula ("God does not exist") and paying no heed to what the words signify (*ibid.*, cap. 4, pp. 103-04).

24. Bochenski, p. 89. This is a proposition in which many are predicated of one or one of many or many of many: many of one, as in the case of "Socrates runs and disputes"; one of many, as in man being this one and this one (Socrates and Brunello); many of many, as in "Socrates and Plato run and dispute" (*ibid.*).

25. Appendix 13.

26. Appendix 14.

27. Translation ours, from *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* 1, dist. 3, q. 1, art. 1; ed. Parma, 6:32.

28. Appendix 18.

29. Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," *The Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): 41-62.

30. Appendix 18.

31. Appendix 19.

32. Translation ours, from *Summa contra gentiles* 1.11, ed. Leon. manualis, 9.