Anselm's Neglected Argument

BRIAN LEFTOW

Anselm is commonly credited with two *a priori* arguments for God's existence, the non-modal argument of *Proslogion* 2 and a modal argument some find in *Proslogion* 3. But his *Reply to Gaunilo* contains a third. The argument as Anselm gives it has flaws, but they are not fatal, and its main premise can serve as the basis of a simpler, stronger argument.

The argument stated

Anselm states the Neglected Argument in this passage:

> Whatever can be thought and does not exist, if it existed, would not be something than which no greater can be thought. So [if that than which no greater can be thought can be thought but does not exist], if that than which no greater can be thought existed, it would not be something than which no greater can be thought, which is absurd. It is false, then, that that than which no greater can be thought does not exist.[1]

Let 'G' abbreviate 'thing than which no greater can be thought' and 'the G' abbreviate 'that than which no greater can be thought.' Then if we render Anselm's 'can be thought' as 'possibly exists,' Anselm here reasons that

> Whatever possibly exists and does not exist, if it existed, would not be a G. So if the G possibly exists and does not exist, then if it existed, it would not be a G. But this is absurd: that is, it is not the case that if the G existed, it would not be a G. So the G exists.

Using Russell's definite-description operator 'ιx,' the Neglected Argument is this:

1. $(x)((\Diamond(\exists w)(w = x) \bullet \neg(\exists y)(y = x)) \supset ((\exists z)(z = x) > \neg Gx))$. premise
2. $(\Diamond(\exists w)(w = \iota xGx) \bullet \neg(\exists y)(y = \iota xGx)) \supset ((\exists z)(z = \iota xGx) > \neg G(\iota xGx))$. 1, UI
3. $\Diamond(\exists w)(w = \iota xGx) \supset (\neg(\exists y)(y = \iota xGx) \supset ((\exists z)(z = \iota xGx) > \neg G(\iota xGx)))$. 2, exp.

[1] Anselm, *Reply to Gaunilo*, in M. J. Charlesworth, tr., *St. Anselm's Proslogion* (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 170. My translation.

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4. ◊(∃w)(w = ιxGx).	Premise
5. ¬(∃y)(y = ιxGx) ⊃ ((∃z)(z = ιxGx) > ¬G(ιxGx)).	3, 4 MP
6. ¬((∃z)(z = ιxGx) > ¬G(ιxGx)).	Premise
7. (∃y)(y = ιxGx).	5, 6, MT

Let's now examine this.

Ontology

(1) quantifies over possible objects, and hints that some of these do not actually exist. It does not actually imply this. It's compatible with (1) that only actual objects are possible objects. But if the hint troubles us, we can parse possible objects away. Plantinga dispenses with reference to the non-existent *via* individual essences.[2] On his account, Anselm's

W. whatever possibly exists and does not exist, if it existed, would not be a G

turns into

W*. whatever individual essence is not exemplified but could have been, were it exemplified, would not be co-exemplified with *being a G*.

This replaces (1) with a statement with a second-order quantifier, and transforms the rest of the argument accordingly. Its price, of course, is commitment to individual essences. To avoid this, we might instead render (W) as

W**. whatever type of thing is not exemplified but could have been, were it exemplified, would not be co-exemplified with *being a G*.

This moves to a second-order quantifier over first-order universals.[3] To change the rest of the argument accordingly, we would replace (2) with a statement to the effect that if the G-type is not but could have been exemplified, then were it exemplified, what would exemplify it would not be a G.

Appealing to individual essences and replacing talk of singular possibility with talk of general are the main ways to avoid merely

[2] Alvin Plantinga, 'Actualism and Possible Worlds,' in Michael Loux, (ed.), *The Possible and the Actual* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), 253-73.

[3] Individual essences are attributes F such that □(x)(y)((◊Fx •◊Fy) ⊃ x=y). Universals are attributes for which this is not so.

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possible individuals. Since one can run Anselm's argument in either of the other ways, there is no harm in continuing to use his own formulation of it.

Validity

(2) instantiates (1) for ιxGx. It treats 'ιxGx' as a singular term rigidly designating a unique possible item. There is no problem with 'rigidifying' definite descriptions, in general. If we want to, we can e.g. just so use 'the inventor of bifocals' as to pick out in any possible world the person who actually invented them. (This amounts to using it as we would 'the actual inventor of bifocals.'[4]) And arguably we can use such descriptions as if they were singular terms referring to possible items without settling whether the possible items actually exist. Given objects A and B, we can use 'the sum of A and B' as if it were a singular term referring to an object consisting of all and only the actual parts of A and B, without knowing whether A and B ever actually compose anything. We can say, for instance, that on mereological universalism, the thesis that any set of objects has a sum, there is such a thing as the sum of A and B—while not knowing whether mereological universalism is true. Nor need such rigid descriptions involve actual parts.

Most who've believed in souls—e.g. Plato, Aquinas, Descartes-have held a uniqueness thesis, that necessarily, if there are souls, they pair 1:1 with possible persons.[5] On this view, nobody but Socrates could have had Socrates' soul; the result of placing Socrates' soul in appropriate relation to a human body could only be Socrates; there could be two Socrates-souls only if there could be two Socrates'. Thus 'Socrates' Platonic soul' can only refer to a unique immaterial object. Its sense is in effect a definite

[4] Where 'actual' picks out the world that is in fact actual, rather than acting indexically, to pick out W itself in each world W.

[5] Anyone who holds that reincarnation is a form of survival holds this. Most Western religious believers in souls take it as true too. On the Plato/Descartes view, which some Western believers hold, we just *are* souls, and so the uniqueness thesis is trivially true. Others take it with Aquinas that their souls' surviving guarantees their survival once the soul rejoins a suitable body, i.e. that the result of joining their soul to a suitable body must be them. One could not hold both this and that one's soul might have produced a different person than oneself when first joined with a suitable body- at least without a good argument for distinguishing the *post-mortem* from the pre-birth case.

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description, *the one and only soul that could animate Socrates*. Given the uniqueness thesis, we can use 'Socrates' Platonic soul' as if it refers, without settling whether there are souls. For consider the statement

S. were there such a thing as Socrates' Platonic soul, Epicurus would have been disappointed that it existed.

(S) seems true. And its truth does not seem to hinge on whether there are souls; we can be sure that (S) is true while being unsure about souls. But its form is

(x)(y)((y = ιxSx) > Ey).

This uses 'ιxSx' as a singular term. If 'ιxSx' is not a singular term, (S) is nonsense, for then it is presumably not any other sort of referential term either, and so 'y = ιxSx' does not flank '=' by terms of the right sort to compose an identity-statement, or any other kind of statement. For those who reject the uniqueness thesis but tolerate higher-order quantification, one can run a similar argument with universals. For surely at most one possible immaterial item is the universal, yellowness. And it surely seems that were there such a thing as yellowness, Ockham would have been disappointed that it existed, *qua* nominalist.

To license his use of 'ιxGx' as a singular term for a possible object, Anselm should argue a uniqueness thesis, that any G in any possible world must be identical with every G in any possible world. Anselm must in effect show not just that possibly something is a G, but that being a G is some possible item's individual essence. Anselm never argues this. But we can give two arguments on his behalf.

Anselm argues that being a G entails being intrinsically simple, i.e. not having distinct purely intrinsic attributes.[6] Suppose that this is so. For any x, being x is intrinsic to x: it is a matter settled entirely within x's boundaries, so to speak. Being simple is also intrinsic. So necessarily, for any x, if x is simple, being simple and being x must be the same attribute. But then suppose that some possible individual x is simple. Then in some possible world, being simple = being x. Attribute identities are necessary. So it follows that that possibly necessarily, being simple = being x. Anselm subscribed to the Brouwer axiom, that possibly necessarily P entails P.[7] So on his terms, it follows that being simple = being x. Moreover, if being simple = being x, being simple is not possibly identical with being any y not identical with x. For if it were, it would follow too that

[6] *Proslogion* 12; see *Monologion* 16–17.

[7] See Anselm, *Reply*, 170.

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being simple = being y, hence that being x = being y—which cannot be so if x ≠ y. But if it were possible that some y not identical with x be simple, it would be possible that being simple = being y. So there is at most one possible simple being. So if being a G entails being simple, there can be at most one G. Thus there is at least a good argument from premises Anselm accepted for the belief that at most one possible being is a G.

But of course, the simplicity doctrine here will give many pause. So perhaps a better argument lies with what Anselm means by 'greatness.' Anselm tells us little here. But he means it to be some sort of value-property the God of Western theism has supremely. So Findlay's suggestion[8] that we take it as worthiness of worship can't be too far off the mark: Anselm was steeped in Scripture, in which such statements as 'great is the Lord and most worthy to be praised' repeatedly forge a conceptual link.[9] So let's say that greatness is either desert of worship or some combination of attributes on which this supervenes. Oppy suggests that we need reason to think that a G, if actual, would be 'a being of religious significance' since there may well be numbers too great (large) for us to 'form a positive conception of.'[10] Agreed. The only non-logical vocabulary in 'thing than which no greater can be thought' is 'thought (-of)' and 'greater.' Since no religious significance attaches to the first, the second must provide some. My Findlay suggestion in effect stipulates that it does. And why not? Now it's axiomatic in Western theism that whatever precisely worship *is*, at most one thing deserves it[11], and this thing co-exists with no rivals for worship.[12] This doesn't *seem* a contingent matter; it has to do with the kind of attitude worship is.[13] Anselm argues that any G must as such exist necessarily and necessarily be a G.[14] If he's right, and it's also the case that maximal greatness in a possible world W excludes having

[8] J. N. Findlay, 'Can God's Existence Be Disproved?,' in Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, (eds), *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1955), 47–55.

[9] *Psalm* 48: 1; see also e.g. *Psalm* 145: 3.

[10] Graham Oppy, *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 16

[11] See e.g. *Deuteronomy* 6:4, *Isaiah* 42:8.

[12] See e.g. *Isaiah* 40:25, 44:6–7, 46:5, 9.

[13] Western worship, as Findlay notes (op. cit., 51–2), treats its object as infinitely greater than all else and as deserving this treatment. This is among the attitude's defining notes. What is infinitely less than something deserving worship is not a rival for worship.

[14] Anselm, *Reply*, 170.

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a rival in W, then in no possible world does a G co-exist with another G, and there is at most one possible G.

I think, then, that given reason to think that possibly something is a G, we can let 'ιxGx' act as a rigid singular term. But even so, instantiating (1) for ιxGx is problematic. For atheists might justly complain that this begs the question. In standard logic, one can use UI only for terms which denote actual things. So if one uses UI on 'ιxGx,' one assumes that it denotes something, and so assumes this argument's conclusion. Here one might think to invoke free logic, letting 'ιxGx' do its work without supposing that it refers. But this would not help. For while free logics let one use singular terms which don't refer to anything actual, they let one use UI only on terms which do.

Still, if Anselm can back (1) adequately, there is another way he can use it, which avoids these objections. So let's look at his backing for (1).

Perfect being

Anselm rests (1) on a perfect-being argument, which I update thus: to be a G in a possible world W, a thing must in W be such that no greater being can be thought-of in W, under any coherent description. Putting this another way, for x to be a G in W, it must be the case that there is in W a coherent description D such that whatever satisfies D in W is greater in W than whatever does not, and in W, x satisfies D. Existing necessarily is in all worlds compatible with the rest of what it takes to be a G. And existing necessarily would add to a G's greatness. (That is, were two candidate Gs indiscernible save that one was necessary and one was not, the necessary one would *ipso facto* be greater.) If so, then in any world, being necessary is a conjunct of D. And so for any x, to be a G in a possible world W, x must be a necessary being in W. But any necessary being in any possible world actually exists. So nothing not actual is necessary. So nothing not actual would if actual be a G. For it would be a G only if it is one in some possible world. But if in some possible world it *were* a G, it would there be necessary, and so actual.[15]

This argument has two disputable premises. One is the Brouwer principle, invoked in the last sentence. The other is the claim that being necessary makes a G greater than it would otherwise be, i.e. that

N. existing necessarily would add to a G's greatness.

[15] Anselm, *Reply*,170.

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What we make of (N) depends on what we think 'greatness' *is*.

(N) does not say that being necessary adds to just *any* being's greatness. Anselm needs no broader claim than that it makes a G greater, and so there is no reason to ascribe more to him. And in any case, numbers and like abstracta, if any, cannot deserve worship at all. Worship is a form of address, and so a thing can deserve worship only if it can be the case that we ought to talk to it. It cannot be the case that we ought to talk to a number, or to anything else of a kind no member of which can be aware of us.[16] So necessity can't add to numbers' desert of worship, since they cannot have any: the broader claim that necessity contributes greatness to just anything is just false. But that necessity adds to *a G*'s greatness admits of support. Assume that the G's other properties will include many standard attributes of God—being personal, all-powerful, all-knowing, the source of all concrete things other than itself, and having all these attributes by nature. (Fairly convincing 'perfect being' arguments are available for each of these.) Then adding necessary existence to the mix has these results:

a. It makes a G's existence wholly inescapable, part of our ineluctable fate, a thing to which we must merely bow, like the existence of the universe.[17] Even numbers, if any, might deserve some awe for this property, of the sort we can have on catching sight of an imposing mountain. So a G would deserve some awe for this as well. Rendering more awesome a being otherwise of the right sort to worship moves it more toward deserving worship, as deserving awe is one note of deserving worship.
b. It lends a G's existence the 'hardness' of a logical truth, making it even more ineluctable than the universe's. This again moves a G toward deserving awe.
c. We regret that we will cease to be. We can in some moods be disturbed that we need not have been, that our very being depends on a lucky meeting of gametes. Thus we find both things defects. A necessary G is free of these defects, a

[16] The odd formulation allows for cases like this: your aunt is in a coma, and perhaps can no longer be aware of anything, but you do not know this and have been told that talking to her might bring her out of it. So you (perhaps) are obliged to try. But perhaps this is talking *at* your aunt rather than talking *to* her; if there is such a distinction to be made, the text's claim is all the stronger.

[17] Weaker modal properties would also do this, e.g. inability to cease to exist, unbacked by any sort of necessity. But this does not entail that necessity does not do it.

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perfection we cannot imagine having. It thus is a better kind of thing than we, *ceteris paribus*. Every respect of superiority moves a being of the right kind to deserve worship at least a bit toward deserving the acknowledgement of utter superiority which worship involves.

d. Assume that being a G includes being the source of all concrete existents other than itself and being necessarily a G. Then adding that the G is necessary entails that in no possible world is there any concrete thing which does not owe its existence to the G—that nothing can exist independent of the G, that whatever exists depends essentially on it for existence. This entails that every possible non-G depends essentially on the G for existence. This is an awesome status.

e. If it exists necessarily, the G can act as ground of all necessary truth.[18] Anselm held that it does[19], as did almost all major theist philosophers after him (Suarez being the main exception). If the G grounds necessary truths, it is the sole ultimate reality in all possible worlds (rather than sharing that duty with whatever accounts for necessary truths). Again, this is an awesome status.

f. If the G grounds necessary truths, the way is open to hold that the G is the sole necessary being. This is a pleasing ontological economy, but it also has a religious side: the G becomes the sole answer to the question 'why is there something rather than nothing?' Again, this role renders the G more awesome.

More could be said here. So (N) admits of good support.

This leaves Anselm the Brouwer principle to argue, but actually he faces a more basic problem. Anselm's supporting argument for (1) includes what is actually an independent argument for a G's existence, the familiar one from a G's being possibly necessary to its being actual. If one does not grant this argument, Anselm has given one no reason to accept (1). If one does, the Neglected Argument is otiose—whence its neglect. And if one can support (1) without relying on an existence-proof for a G, a shorter, neater argument for a G opens up. For what (1) says, in a nutshell, is that no merely possible object would if actual be a G. But if x is a G in W, then were W actual, x would be a G. So (1) implies that no merely possible object *is* a G—that among possible objects, not being actual rules out an object's being a G. But then if it is possible that there be a G, some not-merely-possible object is a G: that is, a G exists.

[18] See my *Divine Ideas*, Cornell University Press, forthcoming.
[19] *Cur Deus Homo* **II**, 17.

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We shortly look at this Neater Argument. But let's first consider whether Anselm could simply start the Neglected Argument with (2).

Starting with (2)

(2) is at least a licit form of statement in any free logic. While all free logicians allow the use of singular terms which do not refer, they divide over the truth-values they assign to simple predications involving such terms. Positive free logicians allow that some such statements are true (e.g. that Santa Claus has a beard). Negative free logicians hold that they are all false (Santa has no beard, for there is no Santa to grow it). Neutral free logicians deny them any truth-value. But any such logic will license statements of the same form as $(\Diamond(\exists x)(\iota xGx) \bullet \neg(\exists x)(\iota xGx))$, e.g. $(\Diamond(\exists x)(x = \text{Santa Claus}) \bullet \neg(\exists x)(x = \text{Santa Claus})$. For there are no simple predications here. The only predication involved in (2) is $\neg G(\iota x)(Gx)$, *if* we read it as the predication of a negative property rather than the negation of a predication. But even so read, this occurs in a modal context—the counterfactual connective '>' establishes one. In modal contexts, neutral and negative free logicians' objections to such predications fall away. Perhaps if there is no $(\iota x)(Gx)$, then $(\iota x)(Gx)$ actually has no properties at all, and so there can be no true statements ascribing properties to $(\iota x)(Gx)$, nor even any false ones. But the modal context in (2) shifts the evaluation of $\neg G(\iota x)(Gx)$ to other worlds in which something *does* satisfy the term. In these worlds, free logic's distinctive features aren't even in play, for '$(\iota x)(Gx)$' refers. So (2) is licit on any version of free logic, whether or not it counts predications of empty names in non-modal contexts true. And if we start from (2), rather than inferring it from (1), we beg no questions.

The question, then, is whether (2) is defensible on its own. Atheists or agnostics might object that in taking 'ιxGx' as a usable singular term, one at least presupposes that there is a G in some possible world—and this, they might say, needs argument.[20] One countermove would be to just conditionalize (2) on $\Diamond(\exists x)(\iota xGx)$. As the argument premises $\Diamond(\exists x)(\iota xGx)$ anyway, conditionalizing leaves the Neglected Argument exactly where it would have been anyway,

[20] If nothing in any possible world is the G, we can treat 'the G' as singular only by treating it as (in effect) a singular term for an impossible object. But if we deal in impossible objects—at least for the sake of following this out—it will not turn out true that just one is the G. There will be the G, the G that isn't the G, and so *ad infinitum*.

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but with the objection deflected. There is a case for (2). For (2) overall says this. Suppose that something can be ιxGx, but nothing is ιxGx. Then if you go to a closest possible world W in which something is ιxGx, and that item does not exist in @ (the world which is actual, which may or may not be W), that item is in W not a G. A simple argument that (2)'s consequent is true given its antecedent would be that

9. in any world W, existing in @ is great-making for Gs,
10. any possible G possibly is actually a G, and so
11. existing in @ is part of D in any possible world.

If (11) is true, nothing in any world satisfies D unless it is actual. But if this is so, then any item in W which is not actual is not a G, even ιxGx. Thus if (9) is true, (2)'s consequent is true if (2)'s antecedent is, and so (2) is true. So too, if (9) is true, (1) is. And given (1), we can execute the Neater Argument noted above. The Neater Argument is:

1. No merely possible object would if actual be a G. So
12. if possibly something is a G, something is actually a G.
13. Possibly something is a G. So
14. something is actually a G.

Thus if (9) is true, we can both salvage the Neglected Argument beginning with (2) and leave the Neater Argument with only (13) to support.

What then can be said for (9)? There are two cases to consider here, W = @ and W ≠ @. For the first, I support (9) in two ways. One appeals to a general claim,

15. for any F and x, if x would be F were x to exist, then for x, existing in @ is F-making.

Suppose that Leftow would be human were he to exist. Then whoever gives Leftow existence *ipso facto* makes him be human. So for Leftow, existence is human-making: it makes him actually what he would be were he actual, and so human. But for a G, what it would be actually includes great. So for a G, existing in @ is great-making. Oppy suggests that (9) must rest on or be supplanted by some more general principle connecting greatness and existence, which atheists and agnostics would be reasonable to reject: 'after all, there seems to be no good reason to suppose that existence in reality is a great-making property solely in the case of a [G].'[21] But the only general

[21] Oppy, op. cit., 10, cf. 11. But see also p. 68, where Oppy seems to waver.

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principle in the vicinity is (15). (15) does not connect existence with greatness any more than with any other property, and I cannot see that atheists or agnostics have any particular reason to object to it.

The second line of argument begins that surely

16. nothing that doesn't exist ought to be worshipped.

For (again) worship is a kind of talking-to, and it makes no sense to talk to something that isn't there. Atheists and agnostics will of course insist on (16). If (16) is true, then any G would be more deserving of worship if actual than if merely possible. For a merely possible G does not deserve worship at all, and an actual G does deserve worship. If greatness is worthiness of worship or whatever property (-ies) subvene it, this implies that any G would be greater if actual than if merely possible, and *because* it is actual, not merely possible. So a G's being actual surely moves it at least a bit in the direction of maximal greatness. (In fact, it moves it all the way, if (as it were) the only thing standing between this possible G and actual greatness is the little detail of actually existing.) But then existing in @ is great-making for Gs.

Suppose on the other hand that W ≠ @. We then must ask why existing in some other world contributes to a G's greatness in W. One reason lies in arguments that necessary existence is great-making: if it is, then *a fortiori* existing in another world is. Now the claim that being a G entails existing necessarily leads to its own sort of *a priori* theistic argument. But it does so only given certain principles of modal logic. The Neglected and Neater Arguments do not commit themselves to any such principles. So this sort of support would not make them depend on modal ontological arguments. It would at most show that they have one root these other arguments do.

Another sort of response begins with two premises, that worship consists largely of giving thanks and praise, and that @, as it happens, contains concrete things whose maker might in some circumstance deserve thanks and praise for them, and for whose existence a G would account if it existed. Now here I propose to simplify slightly Anselm's description 'thing than which no greater can be thought-of.' 'A G' has a modal element: it speaks of items to which someone *can* refer.[22] So we can explicate it this way: something x is a G only if no-one in any possible world can refer to any being greater than x actually is. Now surely, for every possible being,

[22] Actually, in light of *Proslogion* 15, it would be better to say 'someone non-divine.' But we can ignore this for present purposes.

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possibly someone refers to it. In fact, arguably in some possible world, there is an omni-referrer, someone able to refer to every possible being. So we can, I think, simplify our account of 'a G': if for every possible being possibly someone refers to it, then being a G is strictly equivalent to being something than which there can be no greater. I'll now take Anselm to be arguing in terms of this property.

A being which can have no greater is one than which none can be more worship-worthy. So it must deserve the greatest thanks and praise compatible with the rest of its nature and activities. Those who worship thank and praise God for their existence, if they believe it good, because they believe He gave it to them; they thank and praise God for items in the world around them if those items seem good for the same reason. So if a G is to deserve maximal thanks and praise, it must be such as to deserve thanks and praise for whatever should inspire these in worlds it graces. All things in any way good must depend on it for their very being. This is a case of 'perfect being' reasoning, of a sort limned in *Pros*. 4–5. To put it more carefully: the more complete the extent of this dependence, the greater the thanks and praise deserved. We can conceive that everything in any way good depend on one G—that absolutely no good thing with which any non-divine being deals lies outside its causal scope. Nothing in the concept of a G seems to rule out ascribing this sort of role to it: and so a G would be less great than could be described if we did not ascribe this causal role to it. So we conclude that a G must have this sort of role.

Another axis along which to magnify the thanks/praise a G is owed is depth of dependence: the deeper it is, the greater the thanks/praise deserved. One way dependence can be deeper is this: an item depending on the G could depend on it so thoroughly that it could not exist without the G's causal support. The pattern of 'perfect being' reasoning just used gives maximal depth of dependence the same warrant. So we can conclude that whatever is in any way thanks/praiseworthy and co-exists with a G depends so completely on it for existence that it could not exist without the G.

Turning now to our G in W, @, again, contains many thanks/praiseworthy things. Either some of these also exist in W, or none do. Suppose first that some do, but our G does not exist in @. Then some things in W could have existed without depending on the G for their existence. But we've just ruled this out. And so if a G exists in W but not in @, nothing thanks/praiseworthy in @ exists in W. If a G exists in W but not in @, nothing thanks/praiseworthy in @ co-exists with it in any world. For if it co-existed with the G in some world, it would there depend on the G so completely as to

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be unable to exist without it, and so it would not exist without the G in @. Thus everything in @ is such that W's G does not possibly account for its existence. If so, the G of W is not omnipotent: there are perfectly possible contingent beings for whose existence it cannot account. Omnipotence is surely great-making and exemplifiable; surely nothing can be a G without it. So nothing which does not exist in @ can be a G in any world. And so any G in any world exists in @.

We can take the omnipotence problem a step further. For on a reasonable ontological assumption, it follows from the reasoning just given that if W's G does not exist in @, @ is replete with *kinds* of contingent things of which W's G can make no members. The assumption is that kinds are not Platonic objects and there are no non-existent objects.

If kinds are Platonic objects, they exist whether or not instanced. If there are non-existent objects with properties, then kinds exist even if nothing actually is of those kinds: if there were no dogs, there would still be non-existent Lassie who could have existed, and so Doghood would still exist. If neither thing is true, then kinds exist only if actual things instance them, and so a G which accounts for the existence of all actual thanks/praiseworthy non-kinds other than itself accounts for their kinds' existence too. (For one obvious example, if kinds are sets of their instances, they owe their being to the G because their members do.) Thus on this reasonable assumption, thanks/ praiseworthy kinds themselves owe their being to a G if they co-exist with it: and so a thanks/praiseworthy kind which exists without actually owing its being to a G does not possibly co-exist with it. So on this reasonable assumption, if a G in W does also not exist in @, it is so far from omnipotent that every thanks/praiseworthy kind of thing with which we actually co-exist is such that that G cannot create one single instance of it. For if it did, it would co-exist with the kind- and then the kind could not have existed without it in @. This sort of radical limit on power is surely unacceptable in a G. Surely nothing is a G if it is not omnipotent. But then nothing is a G in W unless it exists in @. Existence in @ follows from a clearly great-making property. This might well make existing in @ great-making, but if it does not, we can of course just modify (9) and the rest of the argument accordingly.

I submit, then, that Neglected Argument beginning with (2) and the Neater Argument are valid, and that (1) and (2) have strong support. Some might cavil that the consequent of (2)'s consequent draws the wrong conclusion: 'why doesn't (9) just show that the item we thought was a referent for 'ιxGx' in W isn't one, rather than

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that it is, but would not be a G were W actual?' (2)'s antecedent asserts that something in some world is ιxGx. (2)'s consequent is a lemma on the way to that stronger conclusion, given the plausible further thesis that (∃x)(ιxGx) > G(ιxGx).

Given my backing for (1), the Neater Argument *in effect* embodies a still simpler sort of argument Oppy discusses:

17. There is a possible world in which God bears the property *exists in @*. So
18. God exists.[23]

Oppy comments that there is a parallel argument in the other direction,

19. There is a possible world in which God bears the property *does not exist in @*. So
20. God does not exist[24],

suggesting that an agnostic has no more reason to accept (17) than to accept (19). But given theists' freedom to mean by 'God' what they please, and so to accept that God is by definition *inter alia* a G, whether to accept (17) turns in the end on the arguments for (9). (19), on the other hand, requires that God exist in some possible world but not all worlds (unless we hold that God can bear a property in a world W even though He does not exist in W, which is controversial). But the claim that God would exist contingently if He existed has strong *a priori* arguments against it, based finally on what theists mean by 'God': almost all reflective theists reject it, and it is more than reasonable for agnostics to defer to theists on what 'God' means. So if the case for (9) has any real weight at all, agnostics have more reason to accept (17) than to accept (19). What someone who wants to be agnostic needs are reasons for

21. in no possible world does God exist

which are roughly as strong as those for (9). But these would not provide an argument in any sense parallel to the Neater Argument, or (17)–(18). And as they would almost certainly have to involve claims that the concept of God is internally inconsistent or incoherent, it's doubtful that such reasons are to be had.[25]

Oppy also comments that

> it seems most unlikely that there is (an *a priori* theistic argument) involving 'actually' that cannot be reasonably rejected by an

[23] Ibid., 66.
[24] Ibid., 66.
[25] A good case for this is Thomas Morris, *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 23–5.

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> agnostic. For… judgments that one makes about what is possibly (the case in @)… are simply constrained by the judgments that one makes about what is the case. If I am reasonable, then I will judge that it is possible that (in @) p iff I judge that p. Thus… reasonable judgments of the form 'it is possible that actually p' will be based on precisely the same considerations that form the foundation of nonmodal judgments.[26]

But given the case for (9) and theists' freedom to call God a G, whether to accept (say) (17) boils down simply to whether to accept that God exists in at least one possible world. And the arguments for and against this will surely be of the usual a priori, largely conceptual sorts. Of course, Oppy could be suggesting that the atheist/agnostic say (in effect) 'but if I concede that God is in at least one world, I'll be conceding God's existence. So I demand some reason to think that God actually exists before I concede that He possibly exists.' This sort of move can be made against any conclusion one does not want to accept. If it is legitimate, then every argument for any conclusion requires backing by a further argument for the same conclusion, and so no argument is ever a good, non-question-begging reason to accept any conclusion.

Final question

The Neglected Argument also premises (6). So we need to see what can be said on its behalf. We ought to be chary of granting claims of the form 'the G is a G' just because of their form. For 'the round square is a round square' might not be true, there being no round square, and if the object that is F and not F were itself F and not F, contradiction would ensue. But what seems patent is that if there *were* a round square, it *would be* a round square. So too, if something were *the* round square, it would be round. But then in parallel,

22. if something were ιxGx, it would be a G.

(22) seems guaranteed by its form. Given (22) and (4), it is not the case that if there were ιxGx, it would not be a G: which is (6). That (4) is needed should be clear. For suppose that (4) is false. Then it's true that if there were ιxGx, it would be a G—but this is a counterpossible, and on the standard treatment of these, they are all true.[27]

[26] Oppy, op. cit., 69.

[27] So e.g. David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 16, 24–25.

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So it is equally true that if something were ιxGx, it would not be a G—so that (6) comes out false. Thus perhaps what's beyond question is

23. ((4) • (22)) ⊃ (6),

but given that Argument premises (4) anyway and (22) seems certain, conditionalizing (6) on these leaves the Argument where it would have been regardless. I take it, then, that (6) has almost exactly as much support as (4) has.

In sum, the Neglected Argument beginning with (2) is valid, (2) has strong support, and (6) adds almost nothing beyond (4) to the burden of defending its premises. The Neater Argument is also valid, and again, if my case for (1) holds water, the chief burden its defender bears is arguing that possibly something is a G. Even the supporting sub-arguments I've given avoid contentious modal principles. So these arguments avoid modal debate that arguments employing Brouwer or S5 theses inevitably face. They also avoid certain objections to (4). In an S5 context, to grant (4) and that a G must be necessary is to make a hypothesis about the whole of logical space, that every possible world includes a G. Some jib at this.[28] In a context without S5 or even Brouwer, to grant (4) involves no such hypothesis.

The Neater and Neglected Arguments may remind some of *Proslogion* 2. But the resemblance is only superficial. *Proslogion* 2's argument is this:

> We believe [God] to be something than which nothing greater can be thought… The Fool… when he hears… 'something than which nothing greater can be thought,' understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his intellect. (But) it cannot exist in the intellect alone. For if it exists only in the intellect, it can be thought to exist also in reality, which is greater. If therefore it… exists only in the intellect, this same thing than which a greater cannot be thought, is a thing than which a greater can be thought. But this surely cannot be. So something than which no greater can be thought… exists… both in the intellect and in reality.[29]

On one reading, this argument's premises are that

24. someone thinks of a possible object which is a G, and that
25. if any possible G is thought-of but not actual, it could have been greater than it actually is.

[28] So Graham Oppy, 'Modal Theistic Arguments,' *Sophia* **32** (1993), 17-24.
[29] Anselm, *Proslogion*, in Charlesworth, op. cit., 116. My translation.

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Anselm's *reductio* then runs this way. The thought-of possible object is a G. By definition, if a possible object is a G, no possible object in any possible state is greater than it actually is. It is in a state than which there is no greater. Let g be the G someone thinks of. Then as a G, g is in a state than which there is no greater. *Per* (24), if g is not actual, g could have been greater than g actually is. So *per* (24), if g is not actual, g is not in a state than which there is no greater. So if g is not actual, g both is and is not in such a state. So g is actual. So a G exists. Now this argument assumes that some possible being *actually* is a G: that something *actually* has a G's degree of greatness. The Neater and Neglected Arguments do not. They assume only that some possible item is such that if it were actual, it would have that degree of greatness. This is a significantly smaller claim. Both arguments, then, have strengths to commend them.

Fordham University, New York

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