SOME ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

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The principal arguments considered are in some ways similar to those offered in Anselm's *Proslogium*, Chapters II and III. In addition, two 'quick' versions of the ontological argument are examined. Finally, I worry a bit about the ineffable One. The general line of attack is similar to a procedure employed by David Lewis in discussing *Proslogium* II. My approach to *Proslogium* III is based upon the idea that the appropriate modal logic for these matters is much weaker than the standard S5. The hope is that this alternative perspective reveals features worthy of notice.

A Prototype Reference Fixing Description

We begin by trying to construct the appropriate reference fixing description for our task. The aim is to use it in attaching the name 'Max' to a real, or at least possible (or possibly possible, or…, and so on) entity worthy of worship. This maneuver simplifies the exposition of some fairly tangled matters. Unfortunately, it requires the assumption that we can name non-existent entities. Many philosophers say this is impossible.[1] If they are right, it is muddle-headed, or at least question-begging, to use the name 'Max' in an argument purporting to show that such an entity actually exists. Let's take a quick look at this preliminary obstacle.

Suppose we have before us all of the twenty-six parts necessary for the construction of a mechanical 'mouse.' Can we, or can we not, now name the particular 'mouse' that might be made of these parts? I think we can. In any case, it seems fairly clear we can produce a definite description that designates just that 'mouse.' The 'mouse' in question is the one we propose to construct of parts P_1, P_2, …, P_{26}. But, if this is so, why can't we now use that description to attach the name 'Mickey' to that possible 'mouse'?

"The answer is obvious," someone may say, "there is, as yet, no such individual. How can the name 'Mickey' denote anything, given that the thing allegedly denoted is non-existent?" At this point, one is tempted to insist that Mickey *does*, sort of, in some sense, exist. The temptation should be resisted. Mickey doesn't exist in any way, shape, form, or manner. He is merely possible. The case provides strong grounds for thinking we can name, and discuss, particular individuals that are just plain non-existent.[2]

"So you hold there *is* at least one artifact that is non-existent?" This is a

trick question. There is no such thing—that is to say, the artifact we have in mind (i.e., Mickey) doesn't (yet) exist. But it does not follow that we have no particular individual in mind.

Things become more difficult when we confront *incorporeal* entities—angels, and heathen gods. Can we name spirits who do not actually exist?[3] Here one cannot use the physical components, or stuff of which they might be made, to help insure unique reference. By hypothesis there are no such components and no such stuff. Nevertheless, perhaps the chore can be done if we are given, or ourselves provide, enough information about the alleged entity's distinguishing properties. For example, it is not absurd to think there cannot be more than one Thor, since, necessarily, if he exists at all, it is he alone who hurls the thunderbolts on planet Earth. Of course Thor isn't Zeus. So hurling Earthly thunderbolts is not enough to constitute Thorhood. Perhaps deities like Thor and Zeus are distinguished in part by the company they keep. Thor has to cope with Odin and Frigg, Zeus with Hera and her children. Admittedly, there are lots of puzzles in this area that merit further discussion; but let's proceed to the main task.

As a first effort in developing a workable reference fixing description we might try this:

> Let 'Max' designate the greatest person there is.

Have we succeeded in naming someone worthy of worship? Some people will say we have; but others will deny it. A member of the latter group might think that a person (i.e., a 'concrete individual' who can remember, plan ahead, see the point of jokes, have hopes and fears, tell right from wrong, and so on) is *ipso facto* unworthy.[4] Or they might hold that 'greatest' has no precise meaning in this context—hence the prototype naming device must misfire. Or they might claim that two or more candidates tie for the highest score in 'greatness.'

There is another more obvious and decisive difficulty. Ontological arguments are meant to prove the existence of a legitimate object of worship. If such a thing actually exists, and is a person, 'Max' may designate him or her. But, if there is no such thing, or there is, but it isn't a person (as defined above), then we have named someone else. Perhaps Max is a wise and powerful Tralfamadorian (the Tralfamadorians inhabit one of the planets of a very distant star).

Before we go any further, I would like to recommend four objectives for would-be ontological arguers:

(1) We must insure that our reference fixing description succeeds in designating something—doesn't just misfire.

(2) We must insure that the item designated is something possible (or possibly possible, or ..., and so on).

(3) We must insure that the designated item would not be unworthy (i.e. religiously, or morally, unacceptable) as an object of worship.

(4) We must insure that there is some absurdity, or contradiction, in the supposition that the item designated is not real, i.e. does not actually exist.

Suppose our prototype reference fixing description successfully fulfills objectives (1), (2), and (4). The claim that it fulfills (3) would still be unwarranted. If Max is a Tralfamadorian, there may well be serious religious and moral objections to worshiping him. And, for all the Anselmian fool, or the honest seeker, knows, Max may be that unworthy Tralfamadorian, given the prototype reference fixing description. Hence this description should be scrapped.

The First Anselmian Argument

Let 'Max' designate the greatest *possible* person.

(a) Max does not exist. (Assumption for *Reductio Ad Absurdum*)

(b) It is possible that Max should exist (i.e. Max is a possible person).

(c) Hence, it is possible that someone (e.g. Max) should have a higher 'greatness' score than the one Max actually has.

(d) But this (i.e. (c)) is absurd (presumably because we know *a priori* that Max has the highest score of any possible person).

(e) Hence, Max must exist. (by R.A.A.)

This argument is meant to be roughly similar to the one offered in Anselm's *Proslogium*, Chapter II. (One difference between this version and Anselm's is that this is explicitly about a possible *person*.) The new reference fixing description is used in assigning the name 'Max' to the greatest *possible* person, or at least to someone who ties for that rank. We assume, or pretend, that constraints (1), (2), and (3), have been satisfied.

What about (4)? Here is a snag. From the point of view of the fool or the seeker, why shouldn't the greatest possible person be one who, in fact, does not exist? Perhaps we can get around this difficulty by admitting, or assuming, that real existence—being actual—contributes a lot to one's 'greatness.'

Imagine that the Theological Research Center in Pasadena is about to launch a Naming Device. It will consider every possible person in every 'possible world' (i.e., each 'world' which is metaphysically possible with respect to the actual world) and score each such person on a 'greatness' scale.[5] When that job is done, it will find the highest score achieved and award the name 'Max' to the winner. In case of a tie, the first maximal scorer among those examined wins. To keep everything clear and simple, we will stipulate that the 'greatness' conferring features are knowledge, power, and moral

excellence. The highest possible score in regard to each of these is 100 points. In addition, candidates get 100 bonus points for actual existence. How is the Naming Device to assign these points? Is it supposed to figure out the score each candidate *would* have if he or she really existed (i.e., find the candidates '*hypothetical*' score)? Or is it meant to work out each candidate's *actual* score? This question focuses attention on more or less the same difficulty David Lewis found in the *Proslogium* II argument twenty years ago.[6]

Let's look at a particular pair of candidates. Pretend the two top contenders (Ralph and Perfecta) have these scores in two metaphysically possible worlds:

World One

Ralph	Perfecta
P: 47	P: 0
K: 85	K: 0
M: 12	M: 0
Bonus: 100	Bonus: 0
Total: 244	Total: 0

World Two

Ralph	Perfecta
P: 0	P: 100
K: 0	K: 100
M: 0	M: 100
Bonus: 0	Bonus: 100
Total: 0	Total: 400

Suppose World One is the actual world. In that case, Perfecta is a possible, but non-actual, person. If she were real, she would score 400 points (100 points for power, 100 for knowledge, 100 for moral excellence, plus the 100 point bonus). But she doesn't exist. Hence, Ralph, who, as a candidate, seems to be her inferior in at least three ways, has a higher *actual* score.

How is the Naming Device to handle this situation? If these were the only worlds in question, and the contest was just between Ralph and Perfecta, who would win? Clearly, if the Device were to go by the score each candidate *would* have if he or she really existed, Perfecta would be 'Max.' If, on the other hand, it goes by the score achieved in the actual world, and World One is the actual world, then 'Max' is Ralph. This latter policy would generate the sort of danger we faced earlier. It would prevent Fool and Seeker from knowing *a priori* that 'Max' designates a religiously and morally acceptable focus of worship. In order to avoid this, I think we should insist that the Naming Device rank candidates according to '*hypothetical*' scores—i.e., the scores they would achieve if they were real people. Under this procedure, 'Max' designates Perfecta no matter which world is the actual world. We assume even the fool admits Perfecta would be acceptable.

Suppose, for a moment, that the prototype reference fixing description were still in use. Suppose, that is, that someone had won the name 'Max' on the basis of his, or her, *actual* degree of excellence. Under that procedure, it would indeed be absurd to suppose that Max does not exist. Fool and Seeker could know *a priori* that Max is a real person. Hence, they could know *a priori* that (a) is false. But, as we have seen, this procedure has undesirable consequences (i.e., it violates recommendation (3)).

Notice, in addition, that on this supposition it would be entirely possible for someone to have a higher 'greatness' score than the score Max actually has. Suppose World One is the actual world. In that case, Max is Ralph and has just 244 points. But World Two is possible. And, if World Two were actual, Perfecta would have 400 points. Hence, if the Naming Device were to go by actual scores, and the actual world is World One, it would be entirely possible that someone should have a higher score than Max. (c) follows from (a) and (b), so if (c) is absurd, one of those premises must be false. But, given the prototype reference fixing description, there would be no demonstrable absurdity. Fool and Seeker could not know *a priori* that (d) is true.

I have suggested that the Naming Device should go by hypothetical scores. On this basis, it seems permissible to claim *a priori* knowledge that Perfecta, or someone her hypothetical equal, is 'Max.' But, once again, premise (d) is open to doubt. Suppose Max is Perfecta. For all Fool and Seeker know, World One is the actual world. Hence, Fool and Seeker can reasonably think that Max's actual score is, or at least might be, zero.

The up-shot is that the first Anselmian argument is unpersuasive. We could make the assumption that Max does not exist patently absurd by requiring the Naming Device to go by scores achieved in the actual world. But this procedure would deny Fool and Seeker *a priori* knowledge that 'Max' is worthy of worship. Furthermore, if we rig the device in such a way as to yield that knowledge, premise (d) remains open to doubt.

The Second Anselmian Argument

We turn now to an argument based upon the assumption that *necessary* existence contributes to a person's 'greatness.' This is meant to be similar to the argument offered in *Proslogium* III. The objective is to demonstrate that Max necessarily exists. At this point, if not before, the choice of an appropriate system of modal propositional logic becomes crucial. It is customary for people discussing these matters to use S5; but I will use systems B and T.[7] There are at least two reasons for this idiosyncrasy. (1) Working with the weaker systems allows me to re-apply something like the objection just offered (i.e., the Lewis-like objection to *Proslogium* II). (2) The stronger systems (S4 and S5) are suspect in regard to metaphysical matters since they yield invalid patterns of modal reasoning when applied, for example, to the 'Chisholm Problem.'[8]

Here is a version of the Chisholm Problem. Mickey has been constructed of parts P_1, P_2, ..., P_{26}. Consequently, we suppose, one of Mickey's essential properties is that he came into existence composed of a large number of those particular parts. Nevertheless, it seems clear that he *could have* been made of all but one of those parts—for example, P_1 could have been replaced by P_{27}. Thus there is a metaphysically possible world (W1) in which Mickey comes into existence composed of parts P_2, ..., P_{27}. But then, in that world, he could have been made of all but one of *those* parts. And so it goes until we reach a world (W26) in which Mickey comes into existence made of parts entirely different from his original parts in the actual world. But, according to our supposition, this isn't possible. That is to say, the last world in the series (W26) isn't a metaphysically possible world. Both S4 and S5 force us to hold that if a world, W, is possibly, possibly, ...(and so on) possible, then W is just plain possible. Presumably, then, W26 is metaphysically possible. But this contradicts our hypothesis. Should we say that Mickey *couldn't* have come into existence made of all but one of his original parts? This suggestion is in itself counter-intuitive, and leads to various thorny thickets. For instance, surely Mickey existed before his assembly was absolutely complete. But, given this, how could that last screw have been essential to his existence?[9]

It seems to me the best solution to the Chisholm Problem is to hold that the accessibility relation is not transitive (i.e., to reject one of the characteristic features of S4 and S5).[10] Given that W1 is metaphysical possible with respect to the actual world, and that W2 is metaphysically possible with respect to W1, it does not follow that W2 is metaphysically possible with respect to the actual world. Those who are fond of Lewis's 'counterparts' can express the same idea by pointing out that the 'counterpart' relation is not transitive.[11] Mickey has a 'mouse' counterpart that comes into existence composed of a slightly different set of parts. And that counterpart has a 'mouse' counterpart with a further difference in parts. But it does not follow that this third 'mouse' is one of Mickey's 'mouse' counterparts. In short, S4 and S5 are not valid systems of metaphysical modality.

Incidentally, it is tempting to think that before Mickey's creation, the name 'Mickey' was an abbreviation of a filled-in description something like: "The 'mouse' (to be) constructed of parts P_1, P_2,..., P_{26} (in such and such an arrangement, and so on)." But consider a metaphysically impossible state of affairs in which Mickey comes into existence composed of entirely different parts. In regard to that state of affairs, 'Mickey' designates Mickey; but "The 'mouse' constructed of parts P_1, P_2, ..., P_{26} (and so on)" might well designate a *different* 'mouse.' Apparently, the name is a rigid designator across the metaphysically possible, possibly possible,...and so on, worlds; but the description is not. If this is correct, the one is not an abbreviation of the other.

The second Anselmian argument requires one more assumption, namely

that it is possible for a 'person' (as I have defined the term) to have necessary existence (i.e., to exist in all the worlds which are possible with respect to a given world), or, at least, that this is possibly possible, or that it is possibly, possibly possible, or..., and so on *ad infinitum*. Somewhere out there there is at least one locally necessary person.

Let's imagine the situation to be this: the metaphysically possible worlds form linked clusters of mutually accessible worlds. For example, in one such cluster there are worlds in which Perfecta has (local) necessary existence— that is to say, she exists in every world which is possible with respect to such a world. In another cluster there is a world in which there is, so to speak, 'nothing'—no physical objects, no space, no time, no Trolls, no Angels; in fact, no minds, no spirits, no people at all. (Are there sets, propositions, numbers? Well *maybe*.) Let's call this the 'Empty' World. If the 'Empty' World is possible with respect to a given world, W, then, of course, there is no one who has necessary existence in W.[12]

The 'Empty' World gives the fool a quick S5 argument against the possibility of a necessarily existent person:

(a) If it is possible that a certain person should exist necessarily, then that person exists necessarily.

(b) But it is possible that there should have been 'nothing' (i.e. no physical entities, no minds, no space, and so on).

(c) Hence, it is impossible that someone should exist necessarily.

Those who are committed to S5 must accept this conclusion or insist it is impossible for there be 'nothing.' It seems to me this insistence is quite unnecessary. Premise (a) is not guaranteed by valid modal logic.

Here is a diagram of one conceivable arrangement of 'possible worlds.' The arrows represent 'accessibility' relations.

Arrangement One:
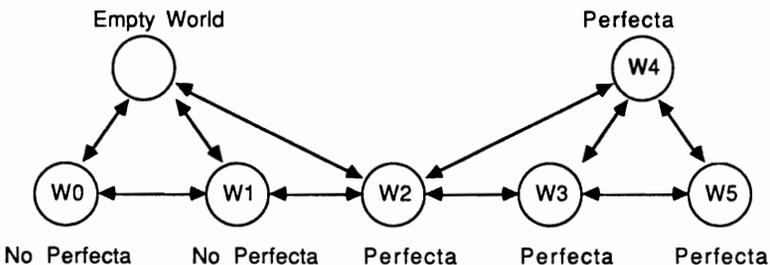
Think of W0 as a world in which there are people, planets, and so forth, but no Perfecta.[13] In fact she is impossible. Nevertheless, it is *possibly* possible that she should exist. That is to say, W1 is a way things might have been in

W0; and, if W1 had been the way things are, then Perfecta would have been a possible person. By way of contrast, in W5 Perfecta exists necessarily. She exists in every world which is possible with respect to W5. In fact, she is *necessarily* necessary, since she exists necessarily in all the worlds which are metaphysically possible with respect to W5.
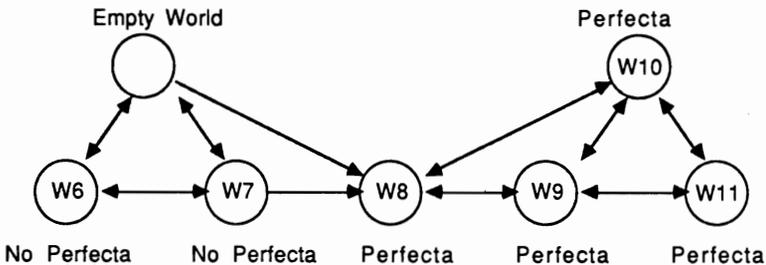
Arrangement One helps us spot two defects in the following (S5) argument:

    (a) If it is possible that a certain person should exist necessarily, then that person exists necessarily.

    (b) It is possible that Perfecta should exist necessarily.

    (c) Hence Perfecta exists necessarily.

In the first place, Fool and Seeker have no particular reason to think it metaphysically possible that Perfecta should exist necessarily. (Presumably they both admit that her necessary existence is *logically* possible—i.e., it is *conceivable* that she should exist necessarily.) For all they know, the actual world is W0. (Similarly, of course, someone who believes in Perfecta need not hold that the 'Empty' World is metaphysically possible. The believer may believe our world is W5.) Secondly (as I have already suggested in regard to the fool's argument) premise (a) is untrustworthy. Consider W2. If this is the actual world, then Perfecta actually exists, and it is possible that she should exist necessarily (W3 is accessible from W2). But she does not, in fact, exist necessarily since it is possible for there to be 'nothing' (i.e., the 'Empty World' is accessible from W2). We cannot know *a priori* that premise (a) is true.

Is it conceivable that Perfecta should exist merely contingently? (Notice that in Arrangement One there is a world, W2, in which Perfecta has contingent existence.) I think we should leave this matter to her worshipers. If they insist that this is simply *in*conceivable, we can modify the accessibility relations between W2 and both the Empty World and W1—we can make those relations nonsymmetric, and thus eliminate the unacceptable 'possibility.' That modification would yield a second arrangement of worlds:

Arrangement Two

Perfecta has metaphysically *necessary* existence in W8 (the erstwhile W2). If W7 is the actual world, it is possible that Perfecta should exist necessarily, even though, in fact, she is non-existent.[14]

Consider this quick argument:

(a) If it is possible that a certain person should exist necessarily, then that person actually exists.

(b) It is possible that Perfecta should exist necessarily.

(c) Hence Perfecta is a real person.

Once again, Fool and Seeker have no particular reason to think (b) is true. But the more interesting point is that Arrangement Two (i.e., modal system T) would make (a) false.

Back to the second Anselmian argument (i.e., the one in some ways similar to *Proslogium* III). We need a new scheme for awarding bonus points. What, for example, is Perfecta's hypothetical score in W0? If W0 were the actual world, Perfecta would be impossible, but possibly possible. It seems to me the relevant feature in calculating her 'degree of existence' bonus (in fact a debit) should be the *shortest distance* in accessibility steps to a world in which she is a real person.[15] Perfecta is minimally two steps from existence. If we deduct, say, 1000 points for each such step, Perfecta scores -2000 in W6.

Consider W5. Perfecta has necessarily necessary (i.e., $\Box^2$) existence there. Let's give her 2000 hypothetical bonus points for this accomplishment (1000 points for each degree of necessity). Hence her total hypothetical score in W5 is 2300. (What is Perfecta's hypothetical score in W2? Let's say 0 points for contingent existence—total score: 300.)

Clearly the Naming Device needs a new set of instructions. Once again we are faced with a choice between having the device assess *actual* scores and having it assess *hypothetical* scores. The argument against the first policy is more or less a repeat of the one we used earlier. Suppose the actual world is W1. In that case, Perfecta's actual score is -1000, and the person with the highest score might be Ralph or the admirable Tralfamadorian. We mustn't let either of *them* be 'Max.'

What, exactly, should our instructions to the Naming Device be? One is inclined to say something like the following: "Explore the possible worlds, and the possibly possible worlds, and the possibly possibly possible worlds,...and so on *ad infinitum*, until you find a person with a score (counting in the hypothetical bonus) such that it is not possible, and not possibly possible, and so on, that someone should have a score which is higher. Name that person 'Max.'"

Unfortunately, if the 'Empty' World is somewhere in the network, those instructions may well guarantee a misfire. Consider a world in which Perfecta is two steps from non-existence. Surely there could be someone (perhaps

Perfecta herself) somewhere 'further out' who is minimally *three* steps from non-existence? The new bonus system and the 'Empty World' apparently have the consequence that there is no one in any world who's hypothetical 'greatness' score is unsurpassable.

My suggestion is that we instruct the Naming Device to find the person with the highest hypothetical score within, say, one hundred accessibility steps of any world which might plausibly be thought (by Fool, Seeker, or Believer) to be the actual one. This is messy, and it may make it possible for us to conceive of a being 'greater' than Max (i.e., someone 'further out'); but I can't think of a better procedure.

Here, at last, is the second Anselmian argument:

(a) Max lacks necessary existence—i.e., Max either exists contingently, or is non-existent. (Assumption for *Reductio Ad Absurdum*)

(b) Hence, if someone did, in fact, exist necessarily, he or she would have a higher 'greatness' score than Max.

(c) It is possible, or possibly possible, or...(out to $\Diamond^{100}$) that someone should exist necessarily.

(d) Hence, it is possible, or possibly possible, or...(out to $\Diamond^{100}$) that someone should have a higher 'greatness' score than Max.

(e) But this (i.e., (d)) is absurd (presumably because we know *a priori* that Max has the highest score of anyone out to $\Diamond^{100}$).

(f) Hence, Max exists necessarily.

If a certain person does not exist, then, under the new bonus system, that person's greatness score is -1000, or -2000, or..., and so on. Given that Max does not exist, there is a clear sense in which, if there were someone who existed necessarily, that person would have a higher score. In fact, such a person would have a score of more than 1000 points. In this sense, (b) follows from (a). If Max did exist necessarily, he or she would not have a higher score *than Max would have*. The very idea is absurd. But Max would have a higher score than we are supposing he or she actually has.

Assume that Max is Perfecta and the only 'possible worlds' are those in Arrangement One. Premise (c) is clearly true. What about (d)? Just for the fun of it, pretend the actual world is W2. Max's score is 300, whereas if someone (e.g., Max herself) existed necessarily, then that person's score would be over 1000 points. Hence, if someone existed necessarily, that person would have a higher score then Max actually has. (d) follows from (a) - (c) provided it means:

(d') Hence, it is possible, or possibly possible, or...(out to $\Diamond^{100}$) that someone should have a higher 'greatness' score than the one Max actually has.

On the other hand, it does *not* follow if it means:

(d'') Hence, it is possible, or possibly possible, or...(out to $\lozenge^{100}$) that someone should have a higher 'greatness' score than the *hypothetical* score that earned someone the name 'Max.'

Premise (e) is plausible only if we take it to refer to (d''). But (d'') is not the legitimate consequence of the proceeding argument—(d') is the proper consequence. Hence, we must take (e) to say that (d') is an absurdity. Unfortunately, the alleged absurdity is far from apparent. In fact, our arrangements seem to show that (d') might well be true. Consequently, we have no good reason to accept premise (e), or the argument as a whole.

One Last Try

At this point it would not be surprising for someone to suggest that an Anselmian ontological argument is more likely to be successful in proving the existence of something like the Neo-Platonic One than in proving the existence of a maximally great person. Let's consider an ontological argument designed for this purpose.

First we will need to liberate the Naming Device in such a way as to admit non-persons as candidates. In fact, we might as well admit all conceivable individuals, properties, and relations.[16] 'Greatness' will no longer be measured solely by one's degree of knowledge, power, and moral excellence. (The new criterion may well be left 'open'—i.e., not fully defined.)

Presumably, it is a matter of *definition* (a 'grammatical rule') that the One is either *necessary* or *impossible*. That is to say, in each logically possible world the One is either necessary or impossible. If we are thinking of something that (as we suppose) exists, but *could* fail to exist, or (as we suppose) does not exist, but *could* do so, then we are not thinking of the One.

There are at least two ways of representing this modal situation. First, we might suppose the One must either exist in *all* the worlds that interest us (the 'I-Worlds'), or in *none*.[17] (We may have no idea which of these is the case). Or, second, we might suppose the One exists in one group of I-worlds, but fails to exist in another.

Consider the first option. Here is an analogy. Either platonism is correct in regard to numbers, or it isn't. If platonism is correct in this regard, then numbers are non-fictions in every mathematically possible world. If platonism is correct in one such world, it is correct in all; and, if there is a world in which it is false, it is false in all.

Here is a bad argument for platonism:

(a) If there is a possible world in which platonism is correct in regard to numbers, then that sort of platonism is necessarily correct.

(b) It is possible that platonism is correct in regard to numbers.

(c) Hence, platonism is correct in regard to numbers.

The argument is bad because premise (b) probably means nothing more than that platonism is *epistemically* possible. Thus understood, the premise is entirely compatible with the claim that it is equally possible that platonism is *false*. Similarly, it is epistemically possible that there are seven successive sevens in the expansion of pi, and equally possible that there is no such sequence. If, in fact, the sequence is there in the expansion, then, I suppose, it is there necessarily (i.e., there are seven successive sevens in the expansion of pi in every mathematically possible world). Conversely, if there is a mathematically possible world in which it does not occur, then in no mathematically possible world does it occur. When we now say seven sequential sevens are possible, we do not mean there is a mathematically possible world in which that sequence occurs somewhere in the expansion.

It is not obviously absurd to think of the One in a similar way. Either it exists in absolutely every I-world or it exists in none. When people say it is possible that there really is something of this sort, they just mean the One is *epistemically* possible. Unfortunately, on this view, given only that 'Max' designates something in some I-world, neither Fool nor Seeker can know *a priori* that it designates the One.

I think it preferable to think of the I-worlds as forming two distinct groups: A and B. The One exists necessarily in all the worlds of group A, and is impossible in all the worlds of group B. Thus there are no accessibility links between group A and group B. (I imagine an 'empty' world in both groups. The One is perfectly at home in such a world.[18])
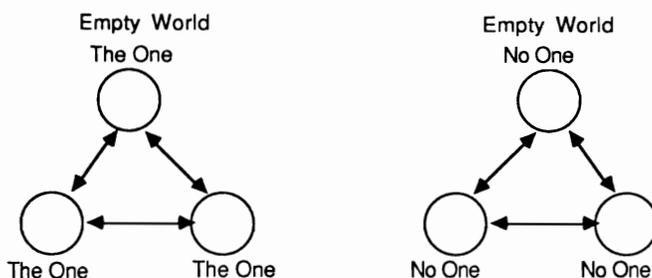
One consequence of this picture is that the necessity of the existence or of the non-existence of the One is, so tó speak, a brute fact. The nature of the concept of the One does not guarantee its existence, nor is there any incoherence in the concept that precludes it. Hence, on this view, it is a mistake to argue that since there is no incoherence in the concept, the One must be possible. Or rather, if the concept is coherent, this shows the One is *logically*

possible; but it does not show that there is a metaphysically possible, or possibly possible, or...and so on, world in which the One is not a fiction.

How should the Naming Device deal with these unlinked groups? If its search for candidates is confined to metaphysically possible worlds, possibly possible worlds, and so on *ad infinitum*, it may not find the One—or, at least, the fool can insist it will not, and the seeker may well notice that this is epistemically possible. We now want to give Fool and Seeker *a priori* assurance that the One is a candidate. Consequently, we must make the Naming Device explore at least one of the worlds in group A. Perhaps we should have it examine all the I-worlds.

Here is the final revision of the scoring system. The previous systems are scrapped, and we allow one thousand points for general 'excellence' and one million points for existing in every possible, and possibly possible, and..., and so on, world. But once again we face the old question. Is the Naming Device to go by actual, or hypothetical, scores, in deciding which candidate is 'Max'? If the actual world is in group A, then, we may suppose, the One is the winner. But suppose the actual world is in group B. In that case, if the Device is going by actual scores, the One is out of the running. Since we now want the One to win, the Device must (once again) go by hypothetical scores.

The argument itself is reduced to bare essentials. This is because we cannot now say, or imply, that Max is metaphysically possible, or possibly possible, or...and so on. Max is the One. For all Fool or Seeker know, the One may not exist in our local group of worlds.

(a) Max does not exist. (Assumption for *Reductio Ad Absurdum*)

(b) Hence, it is possible that someone, or something, should have a 'greatness' score higher than Max's.

(c) But this (i.e. (b)) is absurd.

(d) Hence, Max exists.

In effect, we are back to a familiar situation. If (as Fool thinks, and Seeker thinks possible) the actual world is in group B, it is obvious that anyone or anything that scores more than 0 will have a higher 'greatness' score than the actual score of the necessarily nonexistent One. Fool and Seeker have no reason to accept premise (c). Hence, this argument fares no better than the others.[19]

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NOTES

1. Nathan Salmon and Alvin Plantinga take this line. See Salmon's *Reference and Essence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 39, footnote 41, and Plantinga's *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Chapters VII and VIII.

2. Salmon reports that both Saul Kripke and David Kaplan hold that this sort of naming can occur (see the footnote referred to in footnote 1).

3. I am, for the purposes of this paper, simply assuming that incorporeal people are logically, and metaphysically, *possible*.

4. As I understand them, Anselm and Aquinas belong in this group.

5. Salmon takes a 'possible world' to be a maximal scenario describing a *way things might have been*. See his "The Logic of What Might Have Been," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XCVIII, No. 1 (January 1989), pp. 03-34. On this view, my talk about 'launching a Naming Device' is dangerous in that it tends to reinforce a mistaken view of 'possible worlds.'

6. See Lewis's "Anselm and Actuality," *Nous*, 4 (1970), pp. 206-12, reprinted in his *Philosophical Papers*, Volume I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 10-25.

7. For an introduction to these systems see, for example, Brian Chellas's *Modal Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

8. See Salmon's "The Logic of What Might Have Been," *op. cit.*

9. I pursue this cluster of problems a bit further in "Cook's Reductiones," *Philosophia*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Dec. 1987, pp. 509-15.

10. This is also Salmon's view, and it is powerfully defended in his "The Logic of What Might Have Been," *op. cit.*

11. Lewis applies his 'counterpart' theory to the 'Chisholm problem' in *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 243-48.

12. Alvin Plantinga, and subsequently J. L. Mackie, consider the closely related, but more general, claim that 'No-maximality is possibly exemplified.' See Plantinga, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-21, and Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 58-63.

13. There are various things that might block Perfecta's existence. Perhaps, for example, W0 is a world in which a morally despicable person ('Vilo') creates, sustains, and controls, the whole universe. The suggestion is that Vilo and Perfecta are not compossible. (If Perfecta exists, she is omnipotent and does not tolerate that sort of thing.)

14. This means we reject a characteristic schema of modal system B. We are down to T.

15. More accurately, we should speak of 'giant' accessibility steps here. By definition, any two *giant* steps in a row take us to a world which is inaccessible from our starting point (i.e., the world from which we took the first step). This refinement is made necessary by the fact that many pairs of possible worlds are separated by an infinite sequence of worlds each one of which is accessible from all the others.

16. Even this wide-open policy may not be liberal enough. Anselm seems to suggest that God isn't really either an 'individual' or a 'universal.' (See *Monologium*, chapters 26-27.) So is God a 'relation'? I think Anselm would be inclined to deny that too. The underlying suggestion appears to be that God doesn't quite fit any of the categories delineated by the syntax of our natural languages.

17. The notion of an 'I-World' is introduced here simply to avoid having to say what sort of worlds these are. Perhaps they are the logically possible worlds; but they might equally well be some proper subset of these.

18. In his *Commentum Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, Vol. Primum, Distinct. VIII, quaest. 1, Art. 1, Aquinas says, "...when with regard to God we proceed by way of negation (removal), we first deny of Him all things corporeal; secondly also intellectual things, insofar as they are found among creatures, such as goodness and wisdom; and then there remains in our intellect only *that he is*, and nothing more. Finally we remove from him even this *existence itself*, insofar as it is in creatures, And then our intellect remains in a sort of darkness of ignorance, but it is by this ignorance, insofar as it pertains to our present life, that we are most perfectly joined to God, as Dionysius says (Ch. 7, *On Divine Names*) and this is a sort of darkness in which God is said to dwell."

19. Robert McKim, and two referees for *Faith and Philosophy*, made very helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper.