

*The*  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
*of*  
PHILOSOPHY

PAUL EDWARDS, *Editor in Chief*

VOLUME THREE

*Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press*  
NEW YORK  
COLLIER MACMILLAN PUBLISHERS  
LONDON

**GAUNILO** was an eleventh-century Benedictine monk of Marmoutier, who attacked Anselm's Ontological Proof for the existence of God shortly after its appearance in the *Proslogion*. Anselm had undertaken to show that the fool of the *Psalms*, who says in his heart that there is no God, is truly a fool since his denial contradicts itself. Gaunilo's reply was entitled *Pro Insipiente* ("In Behalf of the Fool").

Gaunilo urged a variety of objections to Anselm; they turn, however, mainly on one central point, which may be put—however little in Gaunilo's terms—as follows: in no case does the sense of a concept imply that it has a reference; in no case does the sense of a concept imply that there is an existent to which it is applicable. Gaunilo supports this by an argument from analogy. All sorts of objects exist in the understanding. Nevertheless, they are understood to be unreal, and, further, their (hypothetical) excellence has no bearing on the question of whether they really exist. For example, the Islands of the Blessed, which are conceived to be the most excellent of lands, are not thereby conceived to exist. Anselm's argument is invalid because it contains an illicit transition from the conceptual order to the real order.

Gaunilo's argument found favor with St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*, Q. II., Art. I., Reply Obj. 2) and for that reason continues in some quarters to be urged as an objection to Anselm. Yet it is difficult to understand why, for it is not an argument but, as Anselm pointed out in his reply to Gaunilo, a mere *petitio*. One cannot assume that no concept implies its own applicability in order to refute a proof that there is one concept that does. Nor can an argument from analogy be used to refute a proof whose conclusion implies that the terms in question are not analogous. The concept of that than which a greater cannot be conceived, Anselm thought, differs from ordinary concepts precisely because it can *not* be conceived not to exist.

### *Bibliography*

Deane, S. N., *St. Anselm*. La Salle, Ill., 1962. Includes Gaunilo's reply to Anselm in an English translation.

Schmitt, F. S., ed., *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia*. Seckau, 1938. Vol. I.